NTRCS Community Advisory Board Meeting

On Friday May 23rd, the NTRCS held its annual Community Advisory Board meeting in Alice Springs. This meeting reports to the various stakeholders of the NTRCS – Commonwealth Government Department of Health & Ageing, Flinders University, partner organisations of CRH and NTGPE, and most importantly the local community which is formally linked by the Local Advisory Groups – Alice Springs, Nhulunbuy and Katherine.

Apart from the reports on NTRCS activities, Yr 4 GEMP students Jacinta Spry and Tara Kurrang reported on the importance of the Local Advisory Groups in their placements. The LAG’s are committed to creating links between NTRCS medical students and the community, providing welcome functions, sporting and social opportunities and support to meet a wide range of student needs.

After the meeting a CAB dinner was held at Undoolya Cattle Station, with a menu of damper and thick steaks. We were privileged to be welcomed to this country by a traditional owner, Pat Ansell-Dodds, who spoke movingly about her life experiences.

The next CAB will be held in Nhulunbuy in 2009 and already the organisers are planning how to outdo Alice Springs as a truly unique venue for a Rural Clinical School meeting. There is a rumour that the army (Norforce) could be part of the exercise.
UPDATE FROM KATHERINE CAMPUS

KATHERINE NEWS
We are sorry that our Senior Lecturer Dr PJ Spafford resigned in March. However Katherine has been buzzing for the last few months. We have had the honour of visiting (Acting Senior Lectures) to fill the gap, Prof Frank Plani, Dr Alan Rueben, Prof Michael Lowe, Prof Sarah Strasser, Dr Jenny Presser & Dr Simon Morgan.

A meeting for the Katherine Local Advisory Group was held at the RSL on the 19.03.08. During the Meeting Prof Sarah Strasser & Geoffrey Veness presented Gwenda Gless (member) with a small token of appreciation for her achievements in Health—Gwenda received an Award late 2007 as 2007 "NT Aboriginal Health Worker of the Year". During the 2007 Aboriginal Health Worker Excellence Award Gwenda was named the winner in the Urban category of the awards and also took out the Health worker of the year accolade during the awards ceremony.

Second semester students Emma Tucker & Carmen Gittens visited our beautiful town for a fun filled weekend last month. Their Hosts Sheree Cross and Peter Webb took great pleasure in being tour guides, a great weekend was had by all. Peter and Sheree have been out exploring our natural wonders—May long weekend found them canoeing for 40 hours down the gorge, I have been told no one fell out of the canoes... is this because they are experienced or have a real respect for what lies beneath the water...

UPDATE FROM NHULUNBUY CAMPUS

NHULUNBUY OFFICIALLY OPENED
The Northern Territory Rural Clinical School was officially opened on the 23rd of April 2008 by the Local Member for Nhulunbuy the honourable Sid Sterling.

The Director of NT Rural Clinical School, Associate Professor Sarah Strasser was pleased to attend the campus opening, stating "The East Arnhem Region provides a unique and valuable learning environment for our students as they are able, through their training, to develop an acute understanding of the reality of life as a remote medical practitioner".

The opening began with the Traditional Owners doing a welcome to Country Ceremony, Traditional Owners from Laynhapuy, Millingimbi, Yirrkala and Elcho Island had flown in to attend the ceremony. Local Community Groups and Business Groups attended the opening with about 60 people attending the ceremony.
ALICE SPRINGS' report starts with a round of congratulations this issue.

Firstly to Anne Cawley on the birth of baby Neve, second to 3rd year student Jeremy Wells, who recently became engaged – wedding date set for end of the year, thirdly to 4th year student Jacinta Spry on her recent award of AMA NT Medical Student for 2008, and finally to Dr Tors Clothier (Paediatrician at ASH) for his award for teaching from Flinders University- Burns/Alpers award for excellence in clinical teaching.

Our current 3rd year students, Jeremy Wells and Emily Carroll’s time in Alice is drawing to an end, and they are planning their relocation to the warmer Top End. We are also looking forward to welcoming their replacements, Ben Gladwin and Julie Seymour, for their 5 month placements here.

All the long term students have completed their Aboriginal Cultural Awareness programme (ACAP) stage one, and will be shortly attending an overnight cultural trip. Tara Kurrajong and Jacinta Spry have enrolled for a Pitinjara language course.

We have finalised the agreement with Western Aranda Health Aboriginal Corporation (WAHAC) and Dr Frances Poliniak to establish twice semester overnight visits to the communities and clinics for the 3rd year students.

Finally work is progressing at the Centre for Remote Health building, including the new offices and space for the RCS.

Jez & Nicky in Alice Springs are engaged—this wonderful moment came about in April—the relationship & love was cemented whilst exploring together in Central Australia this January as they drove to Alice Springs. They are looking to commemorate their engagement by buying a special piece of Aboriginal artwork, and are enjoying looking around the galleries of Alice Springs and Darwin together.
GRADUATIONS & AWARDS

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR ALLIED HEALTH GRADUATES, WELL DONE!

The Territory can be proud of five of its young people who recently graduated as speech pathologists. Erin Coonan, Megan Crowe, Alexandra Hogan and Lucy Waugh all graduated from the Flinders University Bachelor of Speech Pathology while Clare Kelly graduated from the University of Sydney. Clare and Megan have taken speech pathology positions with the Children’s Development Team in Alice Springs, bringing a much needed boost to the services available for children in that region. Lucy is working in rural South Australia and Erin and Alex are in Adelaide-based positions.

Katherine residents can also be excited because Courtney Cramp, a local resident who has recently completed her study in Nutrition & Dietetics at Flinders University has commenced work at Katherine West Health Board. It is always good news when young local residents take up professional training and then return to work in their region.

All six of the graduates undertook placements in the Northern Territory during 2007 which gave them a first-hand look at the experiences to expect as a professional here. Certainly one of the major aims of the NTCS allied health program is to prepare health professionals for practice in rural and remote Australia. All of the graduates from the Flinders University programs were Northern Territory quota students. The quota is a Flinders University strategy to encourage and support the students from pre-admission to graduation with the aim that more NT residents will undertake allied health training and then return to work.

If you would like to know more about the benefits of enrolling as a quota student in an allied health program please contact us.

Three locals returning to work is great for the Territory. Offer your congratulations to our new graduates if you come across them in your travels.

JACINTA SPRY WINS NT AMA MEDICAL AWARD—CONGRATULATIONS!

Barbara Bauert recently presented Jacinta Spry with the NT AMA Medical Student Award for 2008. Jacinta gave an inspiring presentation based on her experience of the Yr 4 Rural Package offered by the NTRCS in Nhulunbuy and Alice Springs in 2008. Her speech provided valuable, motivational information to current NT Yr 3 students who maybe considering this package in 2009.
GENERAL INFORMATION

PUBLICATION IN MEDICAL JOURNAL AUSTRALIA

"Causes of Death at Alice Springs Hospital"

In the most recent edition of the MJA, Lloyd Einsiedel and Liselle Fernandes have published their study of causes of death at Alice Springs Hospital. Their paper shows enormous differences in the patterns of infectious disease in the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations of Central Australia. Lloyd and Liselle are following this finding up with more research aimed at tracking down the mechanisms that underlie this disparity. This project was part of research funded by the Commonwealth Government for the NT Rural Clinical School program. (see Lloyd J Einsiedel, Liselle A Fernandes and Richard J Woodman. Racial disparities in infection-related mortality at Alice Springs Hospital, Central Australia, 2000–2005. MJA 2008; 188 (10): 568-571).

ACCELERATE YOUR RESEARCH WORKSHOP

The program aims to assist participants to improve as researchers through effective planning, design and implementation of their personal research program and gain critical reflection on their progress. The program will provide a participatory environment to support working with peers, key individuals and groups across the university. The program started on May 16th and will conclude with a graduation ceremony in November.

THE NEW DATABASE

We are currently trialling the new database and adding new data everyday, so please be willing to participate when required so we can get the database up and running efficiently. This will become a valuable tool and benefit all of us. Thanks!

THE NT TEACHING & LEARNING CONFERENCE

NTCS is working with NTGPE and have collaborated a conference. The dates are set for the 19th to the 21st of September 2008. The Friday & Saturday are full days with the Sunday just a half day. So mark these dates in your diary and more information will be posted closer to the date.

We welcome the following new staff to the Northern Territory Clinical School:

- Karla Karpenko - Administration Support
- Eliza Gill - PA to Clinical Dean (temporary)
Maliya Putri Loveard was born on Wednesday 30th of April at 4:29am, weighing 3.29kg and measuring 51cm.

Mum and Dad doing well - congratulations from the NTCS/NTRCS.

Dr Ann Cawley & Neve - lovely name - for a moment Clancy had named Neve "Vegemite". Congratulations Anne from all the staff at NTCS/NTRCS.

Velda Mazoudier's precious addition "The Boot " signed by Sir Elton John - Congratulations.