

Media release
13 October 2023

Seven junior doctors the latest to benefit from Rural Medicine Bursary

Seven junior doctors from across Australia are the latest recipients of an important national bursary offered by MDA National and the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) to attend next week's Rural Medicine Australia (RMA23) conference or undertake other rural medical placements or projects.

The **MDA National and RDAA #DestinationRural Bursary** is offered to up to seven junior doctors annually, with each receiving \$1500 to undertake a rural clinical placement, attend a rural health conference, or attend a skills workshop in a rural town.

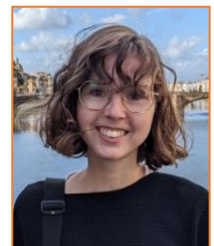
Five of the latest Bursary recipients are using their funding specifically to attend RMA23, which will be held in Hobart next week (18-21 October).

The recipients attending RMA23 are:

Dr Anne-Marie Aubin – Anne-Marie is a PGY2 doctor at Manning Base Hospital in Taree. She actively sought to complete her medical training in a rural location, and plans to follow Rural Dermatology as her medical career path. She also hopes to further contribute to advocacy, research and innovation in Dermatology, with a focus on prevalent skin conditions affecting rural and Indigenous populations. Outside Medicine, Anne-Marie volunteers for the Old Bar Coast Care group and Old Bar Tennis Club, and enjoys hiking, tennis and kitesurfing.



Dr Jasmine Elliott – raised in the remote town of Nhulunbuy (NT) and the regional city of Gladstone (Queensland), Jasmine is now a PGY1 doctor at Bendigo Health in Victoria (with rotations to Echuca Regional Health). She is passionate about rural mental healthcare and is actively involved in the youth mental health space. She is due to commence Psychiatry Training in 2024 at Bendigo Health, and hopes to complete advanced training in Child and Adolescent Mental Health. Jasmine is also interested in increasing rural/regional Psychiatry research and the associated evidence base. Outside Medicine, Jasmine enjoys hiking and baking.



Dr Erica Musgrove – Erica is a PGY2 doctor currently working in Victoria. Born and raised in Mildura, north-west Victoria, she suspected during medical school that Rural Medicine might be her calling. This was confirmed after she negotiated a move into the medical school's Extended Rural Cohort and spent 2020 in Echuca, learning from a wonderful group of Rural Generalists there. Since graduating, Erica has returned to her hometown of Mildura twice on rotation to work, including for her Paediatrics rotation this year. Next year, Erica is moving to Alice Springs with her partner, where she will be commencing her Rural Generalist training with the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM). Outside Medicine, her interests include hiking, cooking, spending time with her beloved rescue greyhound "Boy", and enjoying a nice glass of wine with friends.



Dr Bianca Strugnell – Bianca is a PGY2 doctor at Royal Darwin Hospital with medical interests in Rural Emergency Care, Palliative Care, public health and the social determinants of health. Although hailing from inner-city Melbourne, clinical placements in rural and remote Western Australia cemented her desire to help rural and remote communities to achieve better health outcomes and health equity. She plans to become a Rural Generalist doctor with specialist skills in Palliative Care and Population Health to ensure individuals can receive dignifying treatment on country. Outside Medicine, Bianca enjoys the outdoors (camping, hiking, playing sports and gardening), as well as reading and spoiling her dogs, Celeste and Scout.



Dr Sarah Woodford – Raised in north-west NSW, Sarah is a PGY3 doctor in the Hunter New England Local Health District (based in Tamworth), and has commenced Rural Generalist training through the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP). Sarah loves the breadth and continuity of care that comes with General Practice, and also has a strong interest in Paediatrics. Outside Medicine, she enjoys running, cooking, reading and spending time with her husband Ryan and Jack Russell, Benji. She is also a Christian and spends lots of time reading the Bible for herself or at church, or helping to teach it at her local youth group.



Two other recipients are using their Bursaries to fund other clinical placements or projects. They are:

Dr Janie Smith – Janie is a PGY2 doctor currently working at Mildura Base Hospital in Victoria as a locum. In 2024, she will move back to Western Australia to work for the WA Country Health Service in Albany, and will commence training with the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) in an Advanced Skill in Remote Medicine. She plans to pursue a career as a Rural Generalist doctor with a specific focus on Remote and Retrieval Medicine. She is also interested in Wilderness and Expedition Medicine, and is hoping to gain more experience in this field to be able to participate in expeditions around the world (as an expedition doctor) in the future. Outside Medicine, Janie loves hiking and camping, and also spends a lot of her free time baking and reading. Janie used her Bursary to attend a Rural and Remote Retrieval Weekend, hosted in Karijini by Rural Health West, earlier this year.



Dr Victor Soong – Victor is a PGY1 doctor at Goulburn Valley Health in Shepparton, Victoria, with an interest in Ophthalmology. He plans to undertake further training to become an Ophthalmologist servicing rural and remote communities. Victor is also passionate about rural health on a global scale. Earlier this year, he travelled to Arusha in Tanzania to work as an international volunteer conducting vision assessments for school students, and has also travelled to Valencia City, Philippines, to engage in health promotion activities and provide medical assistance to the local German Doctors Hospital. Outside Medicine, Victor enjoys running, listening to music and reading (especially about human psychology and communication styles). He used part of his Bursary to fund his attendance at an ophthalmology conference in Melbourne earlier this year, and plans to use the remainder to subsidise both an ophthalmological microsurgical skills course in 2024 and an overseas volunteer trip.



RDAA President, Dr Megan Belot, said: “We warmly congratulate each of these young doctors on being selected as our latest Bursary recipients, and we commend their dedication to pursuing a career in Rural and Remote Medicine. We also thank MDA National enormously for their continued support of the Rural Doctors Association, our members and future rural doctors. It is crucial that we continue to build interest and awareness in Rural Medicine as a fulfilling career path, and MDA National is helping us achieve this by enabling more young doctors to experience it first-hand.”

MDA National President, Dr Michael Gannon, said: “In building the rural medical workforce, it is incredibly important that we provide as many opportunities as possible for junior doctors to spend time undertaking a clinical placement or skills training in a rural location, or even simply attending a rural health conference like RMA23 where they can talk with rural health professionals from across Australia. MDA National is very pleased to be able to support this important Bursary, and hopefully help build the future rural medical workforce.”

Established in 2019, RDAA's wider #DestinationRural campaign aims to highlight to junior doctors the opportunities that Rural Medicine offers for their training pathway and medical career. The wider campaign is supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. Numerous initiatives have been implemented through #DestinationRural to help junior doctors to build networks and find the rural or remote community that aligns with their clinical training pathway, career aspirations and individual lifestyle factors (eg. whether they have a partner, a young family or even a particular interest such as in the arts or sport). Through #DestinationRural, RDAA and state Rural Doctors Association representatives have met with hundreds of early career doctors to promote the amazing opportunities that are available in Rural and Remote Medicine.

Each of the doctors listed are available for interview. Photos are also available.

Find more information about MDA National at www.mdanational.com.au.

Media contact: Patrick Daley on 0408 004 890