Media release
Sunday 22 October 2017

High achieving GP Registrar named Rural Registrar of the Year

Dr Michelle Hannan, a high achieving rural GP Registrar who is currently working as a doctor with the Royal Flying Doctor Service in Mount Isa, Queensland, has received the ACRRM and RDAA Rural Registrar of the Year Award for 2017.

Dr Hannan is one of two rural GP Registrars to receive the Award this year, alongside another inspiring rural GP Registrar, Dr Teena Downton from Cowra, NSW (see separate release).

The Award was presented at a gala dinner for the Rural Medicine Australia 2017 conference, held in Melbourne on Friday night.

Dr Hannan was raised in the rural Queensland town of Goondiwindi and went on to study Medical Science and Medicine at the University of New South Wales, and a Diploma of Child Health at Westmead Children’s Hospital and the University of Sydney.

She is now a Fellow of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) with Advanced Skills Training in Emergency Medicine.

Michelle is a Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, is actively engaged with the Women on Boards program, and is a Clinical Lecturer at the University of Tasmania. She is also a current Master of Public Health candidate at James Cook University.

In amongst all this, she has also found time to study viticulture and winemaking at the University of Melbourne.

She previously owned and operated a ten acre vineyard in the Coal River Valley in Tasmania, growing pinot noir, riesling and chardonnay grapes.

ACRRM President, Professor Ruth Stewart, said: “Michelle is an inspiration to her colleagues and very much deserves to be recognised for her service to rural medicine. “She is a highly committed and dedicated Fellow of ACRRM, who has made a significant contribution to the College’s work whilst being a busy GP Registrar.

“She has a strong drive to improve the standing of Rural Generalist Medicine nationally, and her commitment to clinical and educational excellence shines through, both in her own work and through her involvement in a significant number of rural medical committees and interest groups.

“She has been a devoted member of numerous ACRRM committees over many years. She is also an ongoing advocate for her peers and junior doctors who might be considering careers in primary care, offering advice and freely sharing her own experiences on the ACRRM training program, on being a Rural Generalist trainee, and providing informal mentorship and support for these doctors.

“Michelle has been continuously involved in medical workforce advocacy since her time as a medical student and throughout her time as a junior doctor at Wagga Wagga in NSW. Her commitment to rural health shines through in all she has done.

“We warmly congratulate Michelle on receiving this prestigious Award."

Outgoing President of the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA), Dr Ewen McPhee, said: “Michelle has been a strong and dedicated participant in our work to improve access to healthcare for rural and remote Australians, including by delivering the next generation of doctors with advanced skills to our country communities.
“She has been an active Board Member of the Rural Doctors Association of Tasmania, and is a dynamic member of RDAA’s Female Doctors Group. Earlier this year she was an invited speaker at RDAA’s Annual Breakfast for Federal Politicians at Parliament House in Canberra, where she spoke about the strong contribution that Rural Generalist doctors can make in country communities.

“She has also served with dedication on the Steering Committees for this year’s Tasmanian Rural Health Conference and Rural Medicine Australia conference.

“With the aim of having a well rounded experience as a Rural Generalist doctor, Michelle has made a significant personal commitment to her medical training and career. Earlier this year, she moved from Tasmania to the mainland to work with the Royal Flying Doctor Service in Broken Hill and Mount Isa to achieve this additional experience.

“Michelle is a high achieving rural GP Registrar who is very deserving of this Award.”

Dr Hannan paid tribute to the rural doctors and others who had helped her during her years as a medical student, junior doctor and now rural GP Registrar.

“I’ve had lots of support and many great mentors since starting down the path to rural medicine, and I’ve benefitted from some wonderful clinical placements along the way” she said.

“Once I decided upon rural entry to Medicine, I did as much time as possible at the Rural Clinical School in Wagga Wagga, and I also had a fantastic extended Rural General Practice term in Tumut, NSW, in my fifth year of Medicine. I was able to remain in Wagga for my internship and residency through the Rural Preferential Recruitment process, which was new at that stage.

“I also greatly enjoyed and benefitted from my time at Royal Hobart Hospital, at Calvary Healthcare hospitals in both Wagga and Hobart, and at a number of general practice placements I undertook in Hobart.

“Working with the Royal Flying Doctor Service has given me another new perspective on rural and remote medicine — and why it makes for such an incredibly interesting medical career. The distances we are covering in getting to patients in need are immense, and the many remote communities we service are always very grateful for our help.

“Rural practice is so rewarding because of the people you work with — the patients and the team. No two days are ever the same. There’s always something interesting walking in the door or calling for the plane.

“The challenges often come down to logistics and large distances, and getting the help you need for your patients.

“And of course, many rural patients don’t want to go to the city. They also don’t want to bother you if they think it’s ‘not serious’ so they will put things off as long as possible and often get sicker in the meantime.

“I remember last Christmas getting called out to a remote community for a man who I knew must be really sick — his daughter had brought him from out of town, as he didn’t want his Christmas pudding…a good indicator of ill health!

“He had been sick for a few weeks but hadn’t thought it was that serious. We diagnosed that he had severe acute renal failure and ended up flying him down to Adelaide that evening for immediate dialysis.

“The people of rural and remote Australia are truly inspirational, and many of the rural doctors and other health professionals I have had great luck in learning from, and spending time with, on my journey through rural medicine are equally as inspirational. I couldn’t think of a better career path.

“I’m really surprised and humbled by this Award — and it’s great to receive it alongside Dr Teena Downton, who’s been doing some amazing things in the rural health space.”

A high resolution photo of Dr Hannan is available by contacting Patrick Daley.

Available for interview:
Dr Michelle Hannan (via Patrick Daley)
ACRRM President, Professor Ruth Stewart (via Rachelle Forbes)
Outgoing RDAA President, Dr Ewen McPhee (via Patrick Daley and Ineke Kuiper)

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