Media Release
Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Friday, 31 March 2017

Medical students go ‘rural’ to learn about health in Tasmania’s regions

More than 120 medical students from the University of Tasmania will be placed in rural communities next week, for an immersive program preparing them to become doctors.

Facilitated annually, Rural Week (3 – 7 April) allows medical students in their second year to experience living and working rurally, while learning how local health care services are accessed and delivered differently.

Through supervised clinical exposure with GPs and visits to hospitals, aged care providers, health hubs and local pharmacies, the students will gain an understanding of rural health conditions and also the health needs and priorities in rural communities.

They will also meet with the emergency services and council representatives to explore models and measures promoting healthy living, while participating in a number of industry tours to observe occupational health and safety practices.

Dr Lizzi Shires, Director of the Rural Clinical School, said the annual program was a crucial part of the University’s Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery curriculum.

“Rural Week has been designed to provide second-year medical students with an experiential learning opportunity where they are immersed in communities. Students will be able to talk to residents about their health and explore the services available in rural areas,” Dr Shires said.

“This forms an important part of their course as it teaches them about rural health care and ensures that they understand how to deliver appropriate care to rural patients who present at city clinics and hospitals.

“We hope the Rural Week experience will encourage these students to return to study in a rural area later on in the course, and will allow them to see all the advantages of living and working in rural areas.”
Departing Hobart on Monday, 3 April, the 124 medical students will be divided into groups of four to 17 and placed across 19 rural communities.

Throughout the week they will be equipped with questionnaires guiding them as they engage with health professionals and residents to learn about prevailing health issues.

Professor Ben Canny, Head of the University’s School of Medicine, said prior to Rural Week students were assessed on research essays detailing information drawn from existing medical resources about their designated communities.

“Rural Week is critical to the education and training of our medical students, and important in helping shape their future careers,” Professor Canny said.

“The students gain an initial awareness of health issues in these rural communities through information they gather for their essays. This knowledge is then broadened during their placements so that afterwards they can have a better understanding of rural health care, services and social determinants of health within the community.

“Rural Week would not be possible without the assistance of many community organisations, and we must thank the rural healthcare providers, professionals, local councils, industry and community members for their generous support.”

Upon completion of their placements, the students will share their experiences during formal presentations in each community.

**MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES:**

**NORTH**

**Monday, 3 April**

Royal Flying Doctor Service base tour, Western Junction (hangar is located next to Launceston Airport)

2.30pm

Students will meet with Royal Flying Doctor Service staff who coordinate local patient transfers while experiencing a retrieval operation on board the flight simulator.

**Tuesday, 4 April**

Farm tour at RobinGlen property, 460 Sledge Track West Scottsdale

12.30pm – 3.30pm

Students will learn about the agricultural industry and its need for a different delivery of regional GP services. The students will also be tested on their scientific knowledge during learning activities about occupational health and safety practices.

* Media will require closed-in shoes, no heels are allowed.*
Thursday, 6 April

Meals on Wheels delivery to a local resident, 51 Lewis Street, Longford
12pm – 12.15pm
Students will join volunteers from the local Meals on Wheels program. They will also gain an understanding of the important impact the service has for community members.

Friday, 7 April
Lease 65 Oyster Farm tour, 434 Binalong Bay Rd, St Helens
9am – 11am
Students will embark on an oyster farm experience as they learn about safe farming practices in aquaculture.

Northern media contact: Zoe Page 0437 277 640

NORTH-WEST:

Monday, 3 April

Community Welcome, Burnie Council Chambers, 80 Wilson Street, Burnie
3.30pm – 4.30pm
Students on placement in Burnie will be officially welcomed by the local council and community representatives.

Tuesday, 4 April

Hospital hygiene activity, Mersey Community Hospital, Latrobe
2.30pm – 4pm
Students will dress in gowns, masks and gloves as they observe and discuss hygiene practices within the hospital.

Wednesday, 5 April

Hilltop Fresh Produce visit, Community House, 24 Wiseman Street, Burnie
3pm
Students will tour the Hilltop Fresh Produce facilities while learning how the project fosters healthy outcomes for local communities.

Thursday, 6 April

Apple orchard industry tour, Pilgrams Road, Spreyton (look for green shed on left located approx. 100 metres after road entrance and house)
3.30pm – 4.30pm
Students will learn about occupational health and safety practices as they tour a local apple orchard.
*Media will require closed-in shoes, no heels are allowed.

North-West media contact: Dr Lizzi Shires 0487 173 709

SOUTH

Tuesday, 4 April

Scott Brothers Farm industry visit, 322 Scotts Road, Cairns Bay
1.30pm – 3pm
Students will gain insight into the operations of a local apple orchard while hearing about health conditions specific to the industry and observing work safety measures.
* Media will require closed-in shoes, no heels are allowed.

Wednesday, 5 April

Milton Vineyard visit, 14635 Tasman Hwy, Swansea
11.30am – 1pm
Students will review occupational health and safety procedures which apply to the production of cool climate wine during a visit to the Freycinet Coast of Tasmania.
* Media will require closed-in shoes, no heels are allowed.

Southern media contact: Dr Kristen Fitzgerald 0417 356 441

Information released by:
University of Tasmania, Communications and Media Office
Phone: 61 3 6430 4966 or 0428 197 878
Email: Shantelle.Rodman@utas.edu.au