

CREATE CHANGE

2021: In Review Rural Clinical School



Director of Rural Clinical School Associate Professor Riitta Partanen



In 2021, The University of Queensland Rural Clinical School (UQRCS) launched a five-year Strategic Plan to help guide our work and achieve our vision of providing world class medical education and research for better rural health outcomes.

Throughout the year we provided year-long medical education for 164 Year 3 and Year 4 medical students based in our four regional communities - Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Hervey Bay and Toowoomba. Our students experienced the 'Rural Advantage' with a regional and rural contextualised curriculum, complimented by a comprehensive and innovative clinical skills and simulation program. The feedback from our students has been positive and is reflected in the high proportion of Year 3 students who will return to the UQRCS for Year 4 in 2022. Many of our 2021 graduates are also now working in Queensland regional hospitals for their internship.

Tremendous progress has been made in developing the Central Queensland – Wide Bay Regional Medical Pathway and Darling Downs - South West Medical Pathway. This end-to-end training will enable students to undertake their undergraduate degree with a regional university; the 4-year UQ Doctor of Medicine program in the regions; and complete a significant proportion, if not all, of their specialties in vocational training in these regions. We know the longer medical students live and learn in regional and rural areas. the more likely they are to work in these areas. We know that if they are from a rural background, it further increases the likelihood. These bold evidence based, and innovative initiatives ensure we are contributing to the solutions needed to address regional, rural and remote medical workforce shortages.

I am grateful to my UQRCS team and our external partners who are committed to supporting and teaching our students, and being part of the village that nurtures them to become the best doctors they can be, whilst sharing their love for working and living in regional, rural and remote Queensland.

Head of Research Associate Professor Srinivas Kondalsamy Chennakesavan



Our community engaged and socially accountable research has made a great impact in our regions, as well as globally. We have contributed a significant body of evidence based research that addresses health inequalities in regional, rural and remote communities with 54 original research papers published in this area over the past 12 months.

One of the major highlights was a series of papers published in the Medical Journal of Australia which looked at building a physician workforce in rural areas. This project was done in partnership with the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, and illuminated the role of training environment, identity, supervision, accreditation and other support required to ensure a long-term and sustainable workforce.

The Central Queensland – Wide Bay Regional Medical Pathway and Darling Downs – South West Medical Pathway present opportunities for further evidence based research in rural medical education. In 2021, the UQRCS Research Group assessed existing evidence of 'homegrown' workforce models and developed evaluation frameworks to assess these Pathways moving forward.

I would like to thank all our partners and stakeholders who worked with us. Without these strong collaborations, our Research Group would not be able to achieve the outcomes that we do.

Head of Mayne Academy of Rural and Remote Medicine

Professor Bruce Chater



The Mayne Academy of Rural and Remote Medicine is responsible for educating our medical students about the true meaning of rural and remote medicine. We would like to thank our Rural Generalist and General Practitioner preceptors and their staff at our rural sites, including hospitals, general practices, multipurpose health

services and Aboriginal medical services for their generosity in teaching and supporting our students in the Year 1 TROHPIQ Rural Elective Experience Scholarship program (TREES) and the Year 3 Rural and Remote Medicine (RRM) block. Across 51 sites, our dedicated preceptors have supervised over 9,100 days of student rural experiences. These students have also produced 271 rural health projects, each of which has made, in a small way, an impact on those rural communities, and left them with a deeper understanding of these regions.

The Year 2 selective (Introduction to RRM) has also

been a great opportunity for students to get a further taste of rural, with 60 students taking this course in Semester 2, 2021.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we work; leading us to be flexible in program delivery, host an online Introductory Week and delay the start of one of our placement blocks. Thankfully, our experience last year has left us well prepared for 2022, and our office staff and academics have pivoted beautifully. We can see that our Rural and Remote Medicine opportunities change students' views of 'rural' and that preparation and immersion are vital to the experience. A big thanks to our regional sites for helping with Introductory Week and special mention to our rural sites - Emerald, Theodore, Roma, Goondiwindi, Kingaroy, and Laidley, who also stepped up and gave our students an authentic rural experience.

The next few years will see major changes to the medical curriculum with an emphasis on community, generalism and our rural pathway. We look forward to the students enjoying the opportunities this will bring.

RCS Fast Facts



*The Modified Monash Model (MMM) is a geographical classification that categorises different areas in Australia into seven remoteness categories. MM1 is a major city and MM7 is very remote.

Looking back at 2021

In 2021, The University of Queensland Rural Clinical School (UQRCS) continued to work to foster a skilled and dynamic medical workforce to meet the needs of regional, rural and remote Queensland. It was another year of challenge, resilience, innovation and growth.

During 2021, we were pleased to have finalised the UQRCS Strategic Plan. This five year plan guides the direction of our core business to deliver high-quality medical education and research in regional, rural and remote Queensland and address rural medical workforce shortages.

The UQRCS Strategic Plan is designed to enhance the Rural Clinical School's work in its local communities, with a specific focus on regional, rural and remote populations, and aligns with the <u>Faculty of Medicine's Strategic Intent</u> Plan (2019 – 2021), the UQ Strategic Plan (2018 – 2021) and UQ Reconciliation Action Plan (2019 – 2022).

It was a momentous year for regional and rural medical education, with the Central Queensland - Wide Bay Regional Medical Pathway set to commence in 2022, and the announcement of a new Medical Pathway for the Darling Downs - South West regions.

These Pathways are game changers aimed at securing long-term, locally trained workforces and sustainable improved health outcomes for Queensland's regional, rural and remote communities. They will give students



Executives from Darling Downs Health, South West Hospital and Health Service, The University of Queensland and the University of Southern Queensland signing a Memorandum of Understanding to establish the Darling Downs - South West Medical Pathway.

from regional areas the opportunity to study and train in regional and rural areas, and ultimately stay and practice medicine in these areas.

We collaborated with CQUniversity, and the Central Queensland and Wide Bay Hospital and Health Services to prepare for the first provisional entry cohort of 40 students. These students commence their undergraduate degree with CQUniversity in 2022, before moving to UQRCS in 2025. The first graduate entry cohort will commence in 2023 with 60 graduate entry places available.

We signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Darling Downs Health, South West Hospital and Health Service and the University of Southern Queensland to train 120 doctors annually in these regions by 2026.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a transformation in the way we work. Fortunately, most of our students were able to carry out uninterrupted studies and placements, however we adapted and redesigned our traditional education model to deliver engaging online learning opportunities and events. Our adaptability led to an increased interest in, and number of applications to join, UQRCS.

We celebrate our 2021 achievements and accomplishments and look forward to further growth and enthusiasm in 2022.



Queensland Governor, Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young PSM, met with senior representatives from Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service, Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service, CQUniversity and The University of Queensland to discuss the roll out of the Central Queensland - Wide Bay Regional Medical Pathway.



91 Year 1 Observership placements (40 with RCS, 51 with TREES/TIME)



92 Year 3 students on year-long RCS placements



72 Year 4 students on year-long RCS placements



271 Rural and Remote Medicine student placements



253 high school students participating in work experience programs



93% of 2021 Year 3 students returning for Year 4 in 2022



54 Peer-reviewed research papers published by the Research Group



101 clinicians participating UQRTH facilitated clinical supervision training

Our community champion Russell Cooper

Mr Russell Cooper is the definition of a community champion. He is the thread that makes up the fabric of our community, and the Rockhampton Regional Clinical Unit is fortunate to have him as a trusted advisor.



Mr Russell Cooper (right) receiving the Outstanding Contribution to the Rural Clinical School honours from Associate Professor Sunday Pam at the Rockhampton Regional Clinical Unit Teaching Awards.

Russell, a practicing optometrist who has operated his Rockhampton business for over 30 years, joined UQ's medicine program before the Regional Clinical Unit was formed.

Operating out of the Rockhampton Mater Hospital, he began teaching 3rd and 4th year UQ medical students from around 2010.

As well as being an advisor, Russell has worked as Deputy Chair of our Community Advisory Group and an official for the Multiple Mini Interviews (a selection process for future students), and continues to facilitate and enrich student experiences in our region.

In 2022, he will help establish an extra-curricular activities portfolio to introduce future students to the community and identify events of possible interest.

The jewel in the crown is Russell's ability to connect community and school. When we have issues with accommodation, we call Russell, when we need to find an event space in the region, we call Russell, when we need to find a netball group for students, we call Russell.

Being the Area Governor for Rotary has also placed him in a good position to connect students to the community.

In 2021, he received the Outstanding Contribution to the Rural Clinical School honours at the recent Rockhampton Regional Clinical Unit Teaching Awards.

When asked why he continues to support us each year, Russell answered "because the students never fail to inspire me."

"They are amazing in their abilities and teaching them makes me examine how I do things; learning is a two-way street." We connect with our communities at every stage of the rural health learning continuum from kindergarten right up to consultants and specialist doctors working in our footprint.

This is how we did it in 2021



Year 3 Rural and Remote students in Bundaberg for Introductory Week.



Hervey Bay RCU Teaching Awards.



High school students attending Aspire2Health at Toowoomba RCU.



Toowoomba RCU students visit the RACQ LifeFlight Rescue Base..



Professor Bruce Chater celebrates 40 years of service with Queensland Health in Theodore.



Rockhampton RCU First Year Observership students learn to suture



Toowoomba RCU students participating in SILVER-Q.









Delivering rural

Sustaining rural doctors



The Rural Clinical School plays a key role in helping our communities see that a career in medicine is possible, irrespective of their location. We are here to generate interest and sow the seeds from an early age, as well as help mature-age students achieve their dreams of becoming doctors.

In 2021, our medical students and staff visited kindergartens and primary schools to deliver the Teddy Bear Hospital program. Through interactive activities and games, young children are introduced to the world of medicine and learn important messages about dental hygiene, diet, exercise and how to be SunSmart.

We thank the principals, teachers and guidance officers who enabled us to engage with their students.

We gave high school students the opportunity to understand more about studying medicine, the preparation work required to apply, and a taste of what it's like to work in medicine through our work experience programs and events.

We also connected with mature-aged students through our community partners at other universities, tertiary education facilities, hospitals and health services, local community advisory groups and Indigenous advisory groups, to distribute medical program information and event invitations to those considering a career change.

Some events offered this year across our footprint:

- A Taste of Medicine
- Dr4aDay
- Study Medicine @ UQ and Open Afternoons
- Student Work Experience Program (SWEP)
- Aspire2Health
- Teddy Bear Hospital
- UCAT Advice Night



The Broom family visit the Bundaberg RCU Teddy Bear Hospital at NAIDOC celebrations.



Hervey Bay RCU and RTH Wide Bay attend local Careers Expo.

A year in photos...



Bundaberg RCU Year 4 graduates



First Year Observership student Tristan Puhakka in Theodore.



High School students attend Dr4aDay at Hervey Bay RCU.



Toowoomba RCU medical students volunteering as patients at the RACQ LifeFlight Rescue Base training day



Year 1 Orientation Week at St Lucia



RRM students attend Introductory Week in Emerald



Rockhampton RCU Teaching Awards



Hervey Bay RCU medical students participant in emergency training.



Dr Priya Martin with the Barbara Fifield Brandt Award



RRM students attend Introductory Week in Roma.



High school students attend Hervey Bay RCU Open Day



Welcome reception hosted at Toowoomba RCU.



Aspire2Health activities at Toowoomba RCU.

A year in photos cont.







Junior doctors and Interns attend RTH Central Queensland social mixer.









High school students attend Aspire2Health at Toowoomba RCU.



Indigenous Culture Awareness Day hosted by RTH Central Queensland in Rockhampton.



Rockhampton RCU medical students, staff and academics helping out at Beef Australia.



Hervey Bay RCU Welcome BBQ for new students



RRM students enjoying Laidley hospitality during Introductory Week.



TROHPIQ students TREES pre placement workshop held at Toowoomba RCL



High school students attend Open Day at Bundaberg RCU.

Growing awareness







Delivering rural doctors



Building intent and developing preparedness

The Faculty of Medicine's mission is to graduate well rounded doctors; and that's exactly what we do.

Every year, we give medical students opportunities to experience the rural advantage from Year 1 Orientation Week right up to their final year of medicine!

Our very own UQRCS Research Group was the first in Australia to demonstrate that medical students with a rural background studying in a regional, rural or remote area for a year were four times more likely to stay rural, and if they studied for two years, this number jumped to seven times more likely.

In 2021, Brisbane based students in Years 1 and 2 were introduced to the rural advantage at Orientation Week and our virtual Rural Ready Series. Year 1 students had the opportunity to undertake an optional First Year Observership at one of our four UQRCS Regional Clinical Units or sign up for TROHPIQ's TREES program. Year 2 students could choose to partake in the Rural and Remote Medicine (RRM) Selective.



Bundaberg RCU First Year Observership students in scrubs.

The long-term immersion commenced with 164 Year 3 and 4 students undertaking year-long placements at one of the four UQRCS Regional Clinical Units.

Despite the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, our staff and community worked hard to ensure Year 3 students could attend their compulsory 6-week RRM course.

Student run rural health club, TROHPIQ also offered multiple excursions to each region to help mix study with leisure!

The following list highlights some of the events, activities and experiences that were offered to medical students in 2021:

- •Year 1 and 2 Orientation Week
- Rural Ready Series
- First Year Observership
- Year 1 Rural Networking
- Year 2 RRM Selective
- Year 3 and 4 Introductory Week
- Regional Clinical Unit placements
- Year 3 RRM placements
- Simulated Integrated Learning in a Vertical Environment in Rural QLD (SILVER-Q)
- Rural Medicine conferences
- Personal Advisor Rural Network (PARN)



RRM students learn to plaster in Goondiwindi Introductory Week.





Building intent



Delivering rural doctors





Delivering rural doctors



UQRCS took up Silver Sponsorship at the Rural Doctors Association Queensland Annual Conference, hosted on the Gold Coast.

In 2021, the UQ Regional Training Hubs (RTHs) in Central Queensland, Wide Bay and Southern Queensland continued to nurture our medical students in career planning, navigating regional training and pathway opportunities via a suite of Generalist and Specialist resources. They also helped mentor, guide and encourage them in their quest to work rurally after graduation. In spite of the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, we extended our support and delivery of broad-ranging initiatives. In collaboration with health service and education stakeholders, we ensured our local medical workforce had access to a suite of educational opportunities and events. This included:

- Facilitating the development of medical training capacity to increase knowledge and skills transfer to 101 clinicians with clinical supervision training.
- Recruiting 47 clinicians to establish a Career Champion Program that gives new doctors the opportunity to connect with a Career Champion currently practicing in their specialty of interest; and receive information on College training programs.

- Hosting rural roadshows that engaged clinicians in our smaller rural communities to share developments in the Regional Medical Pathway, and collaborations with UQ Medical School.
- Facilitating education and training opportunities including Advanced Life Skills, Paediatrics, Cardiology and Sepsis Management Workshops.
- Running a successful Medical Career Pathways campaign that promoted the 18 specialties available within our footprint, resulting in 20,000 hits on our YouTube videos.
- Offering networking opportunities, such as welcome events, intern orientations and social mixer events; to immerse and grow doctors in our communities.

We look forward to attracting more doctors to regional hospital internships and collaborating with our partners to strengthen our medical workforce and support the Central Queensland – Wide Bay Regional Medical Pathway and Darling Downs – South West Medical Pathway into the future.





Building intent



Delivering rural doctors





Creating a sustainable workforce

The UQRCS Research Group achieved numerous successes in 2021 that support our vision to embed research, education and innovation in local health services through collaborative partnerships. Here are some of the Group's achievements from 2021:

- Provided evidence to support rural practice through enhancements of training, supervision, accreditation, incentives and organisations involved in building a rural physician workforce.
- Demonstrated that career intent certainty amongst doctors is delayed in cohorts choosing general practice and rural practice over other options.
- Explored the barriers of pre-registrar (junior) doctors getting into specialty training programs to inform tailored support and re-design of speciality entry systems.
- Determined that many specialty colleges have no rural-focused selection criteria in selecting doctors for specialist training.
- Provided recommendations for sustaining rural health research.

Research Group members were also recognised for their impactful research through the following awards:

- 1. Our co-designed suicide intervention training program for Indigenous Australians (I-ASIST), developed in partnership with Living Works Australia, was recognised with a national LiFE Impact Award. These awards are presented annually by Suicide Prevention Australia to organisations across the country.
- 2. Our collaborative work, contributed by Dr Priva Martin, which investigated the impact of the Rural Interprofessional Education and Supervision (RIPES) model to facilitate collaborative learning, won the international Barbara Fifield Brandt Award. Interprofessional Research Global provides two awards every two years to projects from around the world that are judged to be the best in their field for interprofessional education and collaborative practice.
- 3. Dr Belinda O'Sullivan and Associate Professor Matthew McGrail were awarded Best General Practice Research Article in the Australian Journal of General Practice by The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGPs) Foundation.



Dr Belinda O'Sullivan



Matthew McGrail

Community

Our communities are the reason we are here. We are the greatest advocates for rural health outcomes and could not operate without the support of our communities. We build and strengthen our partnerships and connections to ensure that we deliver the best health outcomes for all.

Through our connections with primary and high schools, local hospitals, health and GP services, we aim to spread our reach far and wide.

In 2021, Community Advisory Groups and our Indigenous Advisory Groups helped us keep a pulse on what was happening in our communities. They are key to the establishment of strong community connections and support for students and junior doctors learning or working in our footprints, helping them to gain a sense of belonging and connection to place.

We attended career expos and advice nights, and instigated community dinners in some rural and remote locations to share insights into how we are contributing to building a stronger medical workforce for the future.

The following are examples of projects our staff and students participated in:

- Provided free health checks at the 2021 Beef Australia Expo in Rockhampton. RDAQ invited qualified staff and students to undertake the checks, which resulted in sending three people to hospital.
- The Toowoomba Regional Clinical Unit partnered with the Toowoomba Golf Club to provide Basic Life Support (BLS) and defibrillation training to patrons and community members.
- The Hervey Bay Regional Clinical Unit and Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre simplified teaching basic first aid skills to local youth by designing a Virtual Reality (VR) First Aid course that teaches basic skills required for handling emergency situations.
- Sponsored regional, rural and remote medical events including the RDAQ Annual Conference held on the Gold Coast and the Red Ant Roundup at Kingaroy.



Staff and students at Beef Australia in Rockhampton.



Bundaberg RCU medical students attend Parkrun.



Indigenous Culture Awareness Day in Rockhampton.

Finding home in regional Queensland Dr Luke McIntosh

When asked how he knew he was headed in the right direction in life, Dr Luke McIntosh said it's a combination of the little things that make you believe you are on track.

"My dad came to visit me recently and decided to go down to the pub for a drink.

"He came home and told me he'd met one of my patients, and that they were so grateful I was able to save their eyesight after a workplace accident.

"It's a bunch of little stories like that, that make me feel glad I became a GP," he said.

Dr Luke McIntosh is one of two rural GPs based in Mundubbera.

His passion to serve and help the community is strong; despite not having any connection to the town before his medical training.

Luke grew up in Geelong, Victoria and would often travel to Torquay to visit his grandparents.

"I think visiting the smaller coastal towns instilled a sense of community and enjoyment in me from a young age, so that's probably what triggered my sense of belonging in regional areas," he said.

Despite not knowing what career path to choose, seeing his mum navigate her way through a breast cancer diagnosis led Luke to develop a strong desire to help others and appreciate the value of good quality GP care.

Luke was accepted into UQ's medical program in 2013, but deferred his study for one year to stay in Victoria and be with his family as his mum progressed into palliative care.

"Witnessing her journey and seeing how she was cared for by multiple specialists really drove me to be an advocate for people in that end-of-life stage," he said.

Luke completed his final two years at the Bundaberg Regional Clinical Unit before accepting an Internship with Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service in Bundaberg.

"I felt comfortable in Bundaberg; I knew the staff and educators in the region, bought a house, built a close group of friends and became an umpire in the local AFL competition," he said.

While there, Luke was instrumental in helping organise additional support and training for medical students as part of his tenure as President of the Junior Medical Association Bundaberg, and these programs still run five years later.

He took an interest in rural generalism, mental health and end-of-life care, which proved to be vital skills when he took up a GP role in Mundubbera in 2020.

"Working in a regional setting, I found people need someone to help them through their journey, whether it's a mental health challenge, cancer or end-of-life care.

"You can see how much the patient and their family really appreciate it when you can provide local care, take their pain away and manage their suffering," he said.

In 2022, Luke wants to reach out to Mundubbera youth with preventive health education and distil the myth that visiting a doctor when you're ill is a scary experience.

Luke also hopes to get back on the squash court more often and ensure that everyone knows that AFL is the superior football league.



Dr Luke McIntosh.

Our passionate workforce Associate Professor Srinivas Kondalsamy Chennakesavan

If you Google Associate Professor Srinivas Kondalsamy Chennakesavan you will find an endless stream of links to scholarly articles written by The University of Queensland Rural Clinical School's Head of Research, but what you may not pick up on is his dedication to and love of research.

After working in the medical field for more than 25 years, Associate Professor Kondalsamy Chennakesavan continues to be driven by his desire to uncover new findings through research.

In 2002, he joined UQ and worked at two research centres (The Centre for Chronic Disease and Queensland Centre for Gynaecological Cancer) before becoming Head of Research at UQRCS in 2013.

"I'm passionate and excited about my work because I don't know what I'm going to find or deal with when I start my day.

"At UQRCS, I am most proud of our research into the maldistribution of the medical workforce in rural and regional areas.

"For the first time, we have robust evidence to say that those who study and train in a regional, rural or remote setting are more likely to return and work in a rural area. "Our research evidence contributes to major policy decisions at Government level and is cited by agencies such as the World Health Organisation and the World Bank.

"The overall impact of our work is substantial and has attracted awards at local, national and international levels," he said.

Associate Professor Kondalsamy Chennakesavan is also grateful to regional, rural and remote Queensland communities for their engagement in UQ-led research over the years.

"We are now well connected within our communities and are able to undertake socially accountable research, based on the outcomes of local health needs analysis.

"Our projects align to communities' current issues and our research findings offer results that can instigate real impact and change," he said.

Looking to the future, Associate Professor Kondalsamy Chennakesavan is focused on securing sustainable funding for rural health research. This will ensure the health status of our regional, rural and remote communities is represented at an international level, whilst nurturing others to build capacity and potential career pathways in rural health research.



Associate Professor Srinivas Kondalsamy Chennakesavan (far right) with colleagues Dr Bushra Nasir, Jacky Cribb and Professor Maree Toombs..

Thank you to the following partners for working closely with the Rural Clinical School in 2021

The Australian Government Department of Health Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service *CQUniversity* Darling Downs Health **General Practice Training Queensland** Health Workforce Queensland James Cook University and James Cook University General Practice Training Medical Advisory and Prevocational Accreditation Unit (MAPAU) Office of Rural and Remote Health (ORRH) Primary Health Networks (Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast, Darling Downs, West Moreton) **Professional Colleges** South West Hospital and Health Service TROHPIQ - Towards Rural and Outback Health Professionals in Queensland University of Southern Queensland Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service

Acknowledgement of Country

The University of Queensland Rural Clinical School acknowledges and pays respect to the past, present and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Rural Clinical School

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