

Australian Rural Exchange 2016

Vania Tan – 5th year Rural Medical Immersion Program (RMIP) Medical Student – Marlborough

In our third quarter of 5th year, during the first two weeks of July 2016, I was given the opportunity to be part of a medical student exchange between the Rural Medical Immersion Program (RMIP) at Otago and Monash University School of Rural Health, East Gippsland.

While a Monash student came to New Zealand to experience medicine in my region, Blenheim, I was incredibly fortunate to spend two weeks in Lakes Entrance and Bairnsdale in Victoria. After arriving in Melbourne on Sunday and spending some time shopping in the city, I made the drive out to Lakes with the Monash med students.

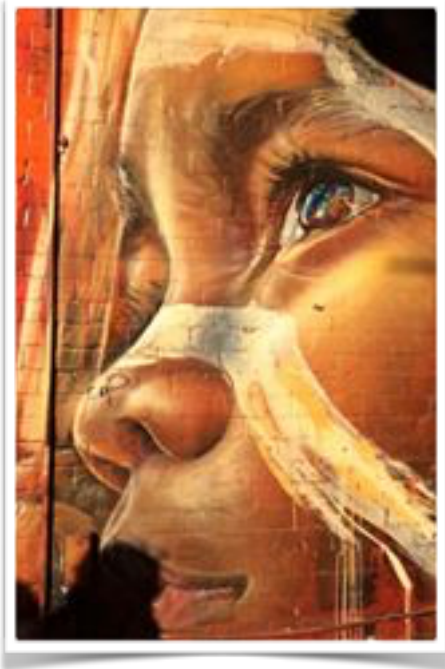
Lakes Entrance, with a population of 5000, is a regional location 4 hours drive from Melbourne and a popular seaside vacation spot during the summer. Bairnsdale, population 13000, has the closest hospital. Bairnsdale Hospital is home to the Monash University East Gippsland School of Rural Health. Eight students are based here during the year with four attached to GP practises around Bairnsdale and the others at GPs in Lakes Entrance.



While I stayed in Lakes Entrance where our GP clinic was, we would travel 40 minutes to Bairnsdale on Mondays and Fridays for tutorials that were given by different GPs and specialists to the 8 students based at the East Gippsland School.

I learnt a great deal through working with the regional and indigenous Australian patient population and rural GPs while I was here, and I gained a sense of the challenges facing rural and indigenous health and some of the initiatives set up to address these in East Gippsland.

Over the two weeks, I spent time at Gippsland Lakes Community Health, the GP clinic my exchange partner was attached to for the year. The medical centre was very well equipped and provided a comprehensive range of services. There were also a lot of resources put into improving the health of indigenous populations and I heard about lots of events and projects aimed to improve uptake of health services. I got to spend time in the triage bay, do consultations, sit in on an asthma clinic and assist with excising and suturing skin lesions on lesion removal day.



Experiencing medical practise in a regional Australian GP was a valuable addition to my ongoing medical education. I got a sense of the challenges they faced and what worked well to meet their rural populations' needs, like having a health centre with a range of services from doctors to physiotherapists and dentists, where people could have all their medical needs seen to.

I spent a day at the Aboriginal health centre and we helped out for a day at a health check clinic for NAIDOC (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee) week.

Over the weekend we did the beautiful Entrance walk and got to see some seals where the Gippsland Lakes entered the ocean. During the second week, I spent time in the emergency department and in theatre at Bairnsdale Hospital.

Experiencing medical practise in the context of rural Australia also gave me more insight into the effect of good clinical relationships in medicine. I got a sense for how valuable health professionals' interactions were in engaging rural and indigenous communities and promoting better outcomes and health equality for these groups. There were obviously a range of views and approaches to indigenous health but I saw the difference it made when a doctor was able to establish a positive relationship and engage these patients.



My two weeks in East Gippsland have been immensely rewarding. I have had the



privilege of being taught by an inspiring group of doctors and patients. I know this experience has broadened my knowledge and skills to be a better clinician for our rural population in the future, so I am very grateful to the Pat Farry Trust and everyone at Monash, East Gippsland for making this experience possible.