

Far reaching practice

FIAT MIST
Sydney Uni
Dec 2005

Darwin • Tiwi Islands • Jabiru • Katherine • Mataranka • Alice Springs • Broome • Lombadina • Beagle Bay • Casino

Dr Sue Taylor (Associate Dean, Rural) describes the experience of a lifetime for some lucky BPharm (Rural) students

TWO of the main objectives of the Bachelor of Pharmacy (Rural) of the University of Sydney are to make students aware of the pharmacy career opportunities available in rural and remote areas and to increase their understanding of Aboriginal health. Thanks to funding through the Rural and Remote Workforce Development Program (administered by the Pharmacy Guild) a group of 16 BPharm (Rural) students was able to observe and experience the practice of pharmacy in remote settings in July 2005. All students felt privileged to have had these opportunities and that their horizons had expanded with respect to future career possibilities.

One third year student completed a community pharmacy placement in Casino in NSW and also spent time at Tabulum, the local Aboriginal community. This student was attached to the URDH Lismore and had a chance to experience hospital pharmacy.

"The diversity and insight that this experience afforded me was a special opportunity that should be available to all students."—Cindy Edwards (third year student)

Three third year students undertook their community pharmacy placements in Darwin and one student did so in Broome. Three then spent time in two remote Aboriginal communities 200km north of Broome. There they helped the local nurses or Aboriginal Health Workers manage the ordering, storage and distribution of medications.

"The students were most cooperative and [there were] no problems at all. Perlon was fortunate to be with a great RN who got him quite involved in the clinic and community. The Beagle Bay RN was most positive about the contribution that Jen had made within the clinic dispensary."—Cathy Larkin (Pharmacy Preceptor)

"Everything went very well in Broome and Beagle Bay and we had a really good time. Cathy (Larkin) was great, and being in the clinic at Beagle Bay was a great experience."—Jenny Stoneman (third year student)

Both second and third year students travelled from Darwin by ferry to the Tiwi Islands where they were shown around by three local women who talked about the history of the island, the current health issues and pharmacy services. In Darwin itself they visited the training centre of Danila Dilba (the Darwin Aboriginal Medical Service), the Nightcliff Renal Clinic and the Royal Darwin Hospital.

"I really valued the opportunity to learn about Indigenous health issues first hand, rather than reading about them in a text book."—Shireen Davar (second year student)

While the third year students were in WA, the second years visited medical centres in Jabiru, Mataranka and Binjari as well as the hospital in Katherine. Staff at Sunrise Health Service and Katherine West Health Board explained the setting up of the health service arrangements to the group and were optimistic that the current partnerships could deliver measurable improvements in Aboriginal health.

"We thoroughly enjoyed our time spent in the Northern Territory and found the experience very helpful in enhancing our understanding of the issues surrounding Indigenous health in Australia as well as the challenges

facing rural and remote health practitioners in delivering quality health care." - Second year students

In September 2005, two students had the opportunity to travel to Alice Springs where they visited the Centre for Remote Health, spent time working in the pharmacy of Congress (Aboriginal Medical Service) dispensing prescriptions and counselling Aboriginal patients about their medications. They drove to the Hermansberg clinic 120km west of Alice Springs with Peter Hatswell who provides pharmaceutical services to most Aboriginal communities around Alice Springs. The two students were lucky enough to accompany him on a visit to Nyrippi where they helped check the stock and sat in on an in-service training session Peter gave to the clinic staff.

"I had a fantastic time and experienced some things I don't think I would otherwise have done. Before going to Alice I would never have thought of doing a placement there but now the idea of working there is something I will consider."—Fiona Taylor (second/third year student).

A big thank you

We would like to thank all the people who made the trips so successful and rewarding:

Pharmacists: Rollo Manning, Terry Batalis, Cathy Larkin, Fran Vaughan, Neil Johnstone, Peter Hatswell, Rod (Darwin), Graham (Katherine), Karen (Alice Springs)

Nurses and other Health Care Practitioners: Elaine at the Nightcliff Renal Clinic, Diane at Jabiru Medical Centre, Serena at Mataranka, Jill at Katherine West Health Board and Lesley at Sunrise

Last but not least: Teresita, Leonie and Jacinta of the Tiwi Stong Women's Group.



Second and third year Pharmacy students with Dr Sue Taylor on arrival at Darwin

From L-R. Back row: Alexandra Slack, Michelle Freimanis, Joe Rourke, Chris Rothe, Tara Prowse. Middle row: Sue Taylor, Gemma Williams, Lauren Pickering, Janelle Brown, Tamasin Burch, Shireen Davar, Jessica Nottle. Front row: Perlon Leung, Jenny Stoneman.