

Chapter 2.3.4

ENHANCING THE INTEGRATION OF MEDICAL STUDENTS INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES

Lisa McFayden

Far West New South Wales Medicare Local, Australia

W Ian Cameron

New South Wales Rural Doctors Network, Australia

If a student or early career doctor has a rural placement they enjoy, and where they enjoy learning, they are more likely to return to that town or at least pursue a rural career. This chapter offers helpful information derived from a pamphlet developed by the New South Wales Rural Doctors Network for communities and practices to enhance the experience of the students' and young doctors' rural placements – with a view to making rural work an attractive long-term career choice.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Make it easy

<i>Meet and greet</i>	
Go and say hi	Let them know that you're pleased that they've come to your practice and that you're there to help.
	Find out what they're interested in and offer to help with introduction and invitations.
	Have a welcome dinner or barbecue. Include their family.
<i>Orientation</i>	
Physical - where is everything	Take them around the town and show them where everything is. Give them a map.
Resources – who to contact for what	Prepare a folder or booklet with names and contact details of relevant people and organisations and how they can help. Keep it up to date.
Services – what's available when	Shops, restaurants, library, cinema, garbage collections, etc. – tell them what's available and when they operate. Include this information in a resource folder.
Transport	Provide information about any local transport - including

	taxis.
Accommodation	
Suitability	Ensure the accommodation provided is appropriate and includes cooking facilities, separate study areas and telephone and internet services.
Maintenance	Make sure the house is properly maintained.
	Make sure the house is appropriately furnished and equipped.
Preparation	Notify them in advance what they will need to bring with them: bedding, linen and cooking or household equipment.
	Ensure someone has checked the house and equipment prior to their arrival.
	Arrange for someone to meet them on their arrival at the house and show them where everything is.
	Put some milk in the fridge and breakfast for the next morning.
Trouble shooting	Let them know who they can contact if they have any problems with their accommodation.

The basics

Telephone	Ensure the house has a working telephone. Let them know who to contact if the phone isn't working.
Internet	Medical students and junior medical officers (JMOs) need reliable internet access. Let them know what's available and who to contact if they have a problem.
Coffee	Let them know where they can get good coffee. This is just as important as internet access!

Practice management

Plan for their placement	Prepare an activity roster incorporating time with visiting specialists.
	Provide opportunity to participate in the full range of clinical activities.
	Try to accommodate any special clinical areas.

Family	
Partners	Help their partner find work if they want it.
	Include their partners in social activities.
	Introduce their partners to people with similar interests.
Children	Help them find suitable child care, schools, pre-schools and play groups. Help them arrange visits/make contact with relevant people.
Co-ordination	
Co-ordinate your support	Limit the number of people knocking on their door. Don't overwhelm them.
	You don't have to do it all. Work with community groups, the hospital and training providers etc to provide this support.

Make it fun

Introductions

Provide contact details of any relevant groups and clubs. Have someone from the groups or clubs they're interested in contact them and invite them to their next game, activity or night out.

Sports groups

Soccer	Rugby	Football
Netball	Hockey	Tennis
Dance/ballet	Cycling	Running
Rowing/kayaking	Bush walking	Horse riding
Yoga/gym		

Social groups

Church groups	Youth groups
Amateur theatre	Music groups
Opportunities to meet other young professionals	

Invitations

Include them in local events
 'Batchelor & Spinster' balls
 Shows and festivals
 Presentations/awards nights

Interesting medicine

Incorporate special interest areas, especially indigenous health

Make it educational

Consider a timetable

Make sure they know when to turn up and where

Make sure the university curriculum is clear and followed

Find out their areas of interest and tailor a programme to suit

Discuss their learning goals and try to meet them

Involve them in as much medicine as possible

This article is a chapter from the **WONCA Rural Medical Education Guidebook**.
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WONCA Working Party on Rural Practice
World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA)
12A-05 Chartered Square Building
152 North Sathon Road
Silom, Bangrak
Bangkok 10500
THAILAND



manager@wonca.net

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