



## SHARP Newsletter 2008

### National conferences

In 2008, SHARP members represented the club, the NRHSN and the University of Wollongong at numerous national conferences around the country with a focus on rural and remote health.

Conferences are excellent opportunities for students to contribute to discussions by peak health organisations about what we are looking for when we go rural, and share with them what the NRHSN is all about!

SHARP members who attended conferences in 2008 include:



- Agatha Williams – *Council of Remote Area Nurses Australia (CRANA) 26th National Conference (11-14 September)*
- Amanda Francis – *Royal College of Nursing Australia (RCNA) Annual Conference (25-27 September)*

If you are interested in attending or presenting at a conference, take a look at the NRHSN website under “Conferences of National Significance”. You can also read some of the reports from our members.

### SHARP events

#### **SHARP ‘Med Camp’ Workshop (9 February)**

SHARP participated in the Medical Student’s ‘Med Camp’ with a CrocFest demonstration of plastering and face-painting. SHARP members talked about the benefits of being involved with the club including the great opportunities for personal and professional development.

## O-week (18-20 February)

SHARP was busy again this year during O-week, introducing new health students to the club and the NRHSN. SHARP's O-week involvement started with a presentation to all 1st year students studying a health degree and this was followed by a faculty BBQ run by SHARP members. The week saw us increase our membership, and we were able to get to know the first years. It was also our first opportunity to display our latest club shirts!

## Welcome to Country (6 March)

SHARP hosted representatives from RAHMS (the UNSW rural health club) at the Wollongong International House 'Welcome to Country'. SHARP, RAHMS, and International students were treated to a number of dance performances by the 'Little Nargums' and were introduced to some native snakes by staff from Symbio Wildlife Gardens. The event was a great opportunity for International Students to experience Indigenous culture, and SHARP members were grateful for the opportunity to be involved with the 'I House' Welcome.



## NURHC08 (April 1-6)

SHARP delegates (Naomi Piyaratna, Michael O'Halloran, Timra Bowerman, Simon Reid, Emma Harvey, Brent Venning, Amy Thorby-Lister, Daniel Carayannis, Tom Antonio, Teena Downton, Teesha Downton, Rachel Jenkins and Kay Kent) headed to Tassie not knowing exactly what to expect (or what was expected of them!) during the week away but they definitely go straight into the NURHC experience from Day1!



The keynote speakers, student presentations, skills sessions and workshops were fantastic and gave the students from SHARP plenty of positive impressions about a future in rural and remote health. The social events provided plenty of networking opportunities with students from the other rural health clubs. On the last day of the conference, delegates contributed ideas to an open discussion on what health and medical students believe will make it easier to go rural.

Our thanks go to the NRHSN Executive, the Conference Co-conveners (and everyone who helped out in some way) for all their hard work before, during and after the conference! Special thanks also to Timra Bowerman who represented SHARP on the NURHC08 Social Committee.



## SHARP Bush Dance (11 April)

SHARP held its annual Bush Dance at the Master Builders Club. With plenty of enthusiasm, health staff and students dressed up in their best flanno and we managed to pull plenty of new members onto the dance floor for some line dancing with the backing

of the Wongawilli Bush Band. Initially, there was plenty of confusion for some, but by the end of the night we had all mastered the basics of bush dancing. Kay Kent managed to find some interesting prizes for the best dressed/best dancer etc and kept the crowd entertained when our boots needed a break.

### **National CLOSE THE GAP Day (22 April)**



SHARP also supported National 'Close the Gap' Day campaign by holding an awareness BBQ lunch to raise awareness of the life expectancy and infant mortality of Indigenous Australians.

After some heavy promotion, we were able to welcome a huge turn-out of students, staff and the local media to come support the campaign. While showing a 10-minute DVD from OXFAM on the Indigenous health crisis, we encouraged all attendees to pledge their support to help the plight of Indigenous Australians by adding their name to a petition for government action to achieve health equality within 25 years. This was a very successful event.

### **Annual Illawarra Police Charity Ball (25 July)**

SHARP members volunteered at the 23rd Annual Police Charity Ball held in the University Hall. The SHARP team dressed up for the evening and helped to sell numbered balloons on the night with funds raised going toward Haematology/Leukemia research and NSW Police Legacy.



### **Wide Horizons Launch (4 August)**

SHARP launched the new NRHSN DVD, *Wide Horizons-Health Students Get Out of Town*, in style, complete with free fairy floss, popcorn, and a BBQ! Students and staff gathered in the Faculty foyer to watch our special screening of the short documentary on a screen complete with trestles and curtains, with many taking a free copy of the DVD home with them. This event attracted local media coverage and several new members of SHARP. The DVD follows 3 health students as they each go on a rural placement, including UOW nursing student Rachel Jenkins.



### **Rockin Rural Road Trip to Griffith (22-24 August)**

SHARP students studying medicine participated in a weekend of visits to rural medical and primary health care centres including Narrandera District Hospital, Narrandera Medical Centre, Palm Avenue Surgery, Murrumbidgee Medical and Primary Care Centre, and Griffith Base Hospital. The trip provided students with insight into the daily life of health practitioners working in the bush.

### **RAW 2008 (3-6 October)**



A small bus load of SHARP students attended the 2nd Inaugural Rural Appreciation Weekend held on NRHSN Co-Chair, Shannon Nott's property in Dunedoo. There were over 130 delegates from 11 rural health clubs in attendance.

The happy campers experienced a weekend packed with plenty of fun activities and great events to see what living in rural Australia is all about. Activities included an Indigenous cultural workshop, sheepdog and sheep

shearing demonstrations, a snake exhibition and some special guest speakers talking about working as health professionals in the bush. SHARP members met students from several other health clubs and joined with MIRAGE and MARHS to take out the RAW08 championship! You can read some of the students' reports on the SHARP website.

### **Hills Hoist Series With WUHOW (22 September & 10 November)**

SHARP teamed up with Wollongong University Health Over Wealth (WUHOW) to present a series of seminars at the Graduate School of Medicine with a focus on taking health knowledge and practise into the developing world as well as in our local communities. On 22 September, attendees were inspired by the stories shared by Louise Lawler who is now a lecturer with the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Sydney. Louise trained as a nurse and worked with Care Australia in many third world countries before returning to Australia where she has since helped run and develop programs which have a focus on providing support and education to young Indigenous Australians. In the second seminar of the series, Dr Helen Rienits came and spoke of her time in Nepal where she actively worked to help the local professionals on the ground during her elective term, and then in Bhutan where she worked as a district medical officer. Dr Rienitis is currently a GP at the Gerringong Family Medical Practice and is part of our GSM Clinical Skills Team.



### **Mental Health Week (6-10 October)**

SHARP showed its support for Anxiety and Depression Awareness Month and World Mental Health Day by holding a free BBQ and a stall with information about mental health from Beyond Blue. Sharyn from URAC also ran a free meditation class for the students and we showed a Mental Health DVD in the background. Thank you to SHARP members who volunteered during the week.

## **Red Week 08 With WUHOW (13-16 October)**

SHARP members joined the Party Against AIDS during Red Week 08 which was an initiative of WUHOW to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and raise funds for The Bobby Goldsmith Foundation. Activities included a Red V BBQ, a Red Party and a special HIV/AIDS Symposium with guest speakers Dr Cassy Workman (HIV Specialist, Sydney) and Dr Vipul Chowdhary (Medecins Sans Frontieres). SHARP and WUHOW members encouraged students and staff at UOW to wear red to show their support during the week.

## **SHARP at the Brewery (20 October)**

SHARP reached an incredible 500 members in October so to celebrate and to showcase what was a busy and successful year for the club, we hosted SHARP at the Brewery at the Wollongong Five Islands Brewery. Students and staff came along to hear Amanda Francis, one of our members, speak about her experiences with SHARP and Shannon Nott, 2008 Co-Chair of the NRHSN came to speak about the NRHSN and join our party.

## **Indigenous Festival Involvement and Rural High School visits**

SHARP maintained a good national representation at many of the Indigenous festivals through the year which are aimed to inspire primary and high school aged students to believe in themselves and their identity, and celebrate the Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal cultures. SHARP was also represented in the NRHSN's Rural High School Visit Program designed to encourage rural high school students to consider University study and a career in health.



### **Rural High School Visit (May)**

Simon Reid from SHARP joined other students from the NRHSN promoting health careers to rural school students.

### **Wakakirri, Wujal Wujal (August)**

Amanda Francis represented SHARP at the Wakakirri Festival for the Bloomfield River Region, near Cooktown, QLD.

### **'Vibe Alive' Indigenous Festival, Coonamble (22-24 August)**

6 members from SHARP joined students from RHUUWS (UWS rural health club), MIRAGE (USyd rural health club) and RAHMS (UNSW rural health club) to represent the NRHSN at the Coonamble *Vibe Alive* Festival. The NRHSN was allocated two pods at the Festival – a careers stall as part of the 'Full on Future' Careers Expo, and a stand in the 'Feel the Vibe' section. SHARP members helped to promote healthy lifestyles and health careers

among the school children attending the Festival by facilitating discussions on healthy foods and the organs of the body with the help of Gutsy Gus and several short interactive activities. On both days during the lunch hour, NRHSN members were also busy running the plastering and face-painting activities which proved very popular among the crowd.



### **'Deadly Days' Festival, Coffs Harbour/Taree (22-24 August)**

Kay Kent and 3 members from SHARP represented the NRHSN at the Deadly Days Festivals in Coffs Harbour and Taree. Members promoted health careers and healthy lifestyles with a range of interactive expos with the kids who attended. The Deadly Days Festivals aim to encourage students to be "Strong, Smart and Deadly" through fun and participative workshops involving health, music, story-telling, education, sport and culture.

### **'Vibe Alive' Indigenous Festival, Rockhampton (17-19 November)**

4 members from SHARP will be attending 'Vibe Alive' in Rockie, along with other NRHSN representatives from RUSTICA (UTAS rural health club).

### **What to listen out for in 2009**

SHARP is already planning a number of exciting events for our 2009 Calendar. Look out for more O-week events, the Annual SHARP Bush Dance to be held in March, Rural High School Visits, the Illawarra Police Charity Ball and plenty more social activities!

SHARP members will also have the opportunity to apply to represent the club at the 11th National University Rural Health Conference (NURHC) in July hosted by our friends at RHINO, the rural health club of James Cook University.

By Teena Downton and Naomi Piyaratna