

RURAL COACH

AND THE RECENT PSA 2016 ASC IN ALBANY, WA

PSA 2016 ASC | EDUCATION OF YOURSELF, JUNIOR DOCTORS & STUDENTS

I'm not sure what was the greater achievement by the organizing team in the end, managing to arrange a hundred odd surgeons, Trainees and students plus invited guests to travel to a tiny coastal town in rural Western Australia, or managing to put on three glorious days of sunshine in the midst of a record cold, long and rainy winter. Regardless the team from GSA of Sally and Sarah did this brilliantly and the 52nd Provincial Surgeons of Australia Annual Scientific Conference was held.

The PSA meeting started in Shepparton, Victoria in 1965 and has only visited Western Australia four times prior to 2016. Just getting to a PSA is a challenge for a rural surgeon as it involves organising a locum and lists, a flight or long drive to a major centre, another across or down the country, and finally an infrequent flight or drive to a small peripheral town. Starting from Geelong, getting to Tokyo takes the same time as getting to Albany WAⁱ. Yet somehow we drew them down and put on a social and academic program targeting rural education, but also playing the most important role of the PSA which is to bring rural surgeons, Trainees and students together to advocate and plan for the future.

Given the oversupply and underemployment of surgeons in some metropolitan areas, and an ongoing and worsening deficit of well-trained surgeons in the regions it is no surprise that we are being forced to re-examine the model and rhetoric behind city centric surgical education and training. With this in mind the theme of 'Education of Yourself, Junior Doctors and Students' was devised and executed in order to demonstrate how world class education can be supported and delivered in the bush.

Topics ranging from understanding and enhancing adult learning, support for higher degrees, up-skilling courses and local models for surgical education excellence were delivered intertwined with original research presentations from all levels of presenter, including rural based, comparative cancer outcomes research as well as poster presentations on rare conditions being dealt with in small centres. Included with these presentations was a healthy dose of the PSA motto and some excellent heckling.ⁱⁱ

Our most travelled guest was certainly Lauren Smithson, a General Surgeon from Newfoundland in Canada which is only 33 flying hours away and almost the antipodes of Albany.ⁱⁱⁱ Lauren founded the Society for Young Rural Surgeons (SYRUS)^{iv} and gave presentations on the society, on working in remote Canada as a young surgeon, the challenges of medical education in North America and generally gave a well thought through and refreshing point of view to our conference.

The immediate past and current College Presidents both gave views as to the present and future of rural medical education and answered questions on behalf of our RACS. We were also host to Rebecca Irwin, Chair of the National Rural Health Student Network who presented on the doings and involvement of that group as well as Prof Ikau Kevau from PNG who made the long trip to a PSA.^v

In addition to the academic program there was a 'Kugel' type Hernia Repair Workshop held at Albany Health Campus prior

to the conference and a Laparoscopic Suturing Workshop for Trainees held during presentations which were both subscribed to capacity.

Local medical education experts gave views on the evolution of medical education and the setup and running processes of the CTEC facility and courses in Perth and robust argument as to why the bush is the best place to educate doctors.^{vi} The only major glitch we experienced occurred when a local Professor managed to book an optimistic flight from Perth that didn't exist. With some impressive work by the IT support he was still able to give his presentation via Facetime with such a good response that perhaps we will be giving more lectures from our living rooms to conferences in the future.

Much was said of the Rural Clinical School which has been running in Albany for 10 years now and it was worth noting that of the 40 odd students and doctors present a high number of these had been through a year of rural medical education prior to graduation.^{vii}

Other social events took in the Boston Brewery for a tour and extensive tasting session and the Princess Royal Sailing Club for the formal PSA dinner and informal PSA dancing. Several local wineries brought produce to the lunch hall and some tasting notes were made whilst trialling new surgical instruments provided by our sponsors.

Tom Bowles and I would again like to thank our families for support, the organizing team, invited speakers, sponsors, all guests and companions and the town of Albany for helping arrange the conference. I certainly feel that for many a lasting impression was made regarding how optimistic the future looks for rural based medical education and the provision of rural surgery.

Laurence Webber
PSA 2016 ASC CO-CONVENOR



REFERENCES

- i - www.rome2rio.com/s/Geelong/Tokyo
- ii - 'Verissimum Non Taurum'
- iii - www.antipodesmap.com
- iv - www.youngruralsurgeons.com
- v - www.nrhsn.org.au
- vi - www.ctec.uwa.edu.au
- vii - www.rcs.uwa.edu.au

RURAL COACH

THE PSA 2016 ASC EXPERIENCE

THE APPEAL EDUCATION...

Having never been to the South Coast of Western Australia, my anticipation for attending this year's PSA was palpable. My interest was further heightened when the theme of 'Education of Yourself, Junior Doctors & Students' was revealed - teaching of students and junior doctors is one of my great passions and I relish any opportunity to improve my approach to the education of others.

My conference experience began with the trans-continental flight from Sydney to Perth and then a wonderful (but very straight!) drive down the Albany Highway to our beautiful destination some 400 kilometres south. For someone who has only heard of the beauty surrounding of this first Western Australian colonial settlement, to behold the landscape in person is something else quite entirely. With the township set close to the waters of Shoal Bay, the view from the east captures the old-world charm of Albany itself, pans to the rocky shore visible in the distance, and then opens onto the bay and into the Southern Ocean - the breath taking and the sublime captured in a single photograph!

The scientific program began with a keynote addresses focussing on both the way we teach, and the why we teach. The exposé into the reasons why the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons needs its Fellows to continue their medical education gave a pathway to the future for where I would like to head with my own education of Trainees once I gain my FRACS.

It was interesting to hear the views from international guest speaker - Dr Lauren Smithson, about the way that rural surgery differs in provincial Canada (we don't often encounter snow mobile accidents whilst on-call in Australia!). She spoke of inaugurating the Society for Young Rural Surgeons (SYRUS), a network based out of Canada whose sole aim is to connect young surgeons and provide education, aid and support for those in rural areas. Reflecting on this program, I hope to engage with the Australian chapter as I head into practice in the near future, utilising it as a sounding board for those particularly difficult times when rural surgery can seem a very lonely place.

A key component of any PSA is the social program - an opportunity to regale stories of the 'country' whilst resuming old friendships and embarking upon new ones. To have the opportunity to discuss careers and all manner of things in such picturesque surroundings as a fully-functioning brewery, an old convict gaol, and a Royal Yacht club meant that the conversation flowed, as if it was 'lubricated', meaning the end of the night always seemed to arrive somewhat prematurely.

I thoroughly recommend attendance at this conference for all surgeons, not only those embarking upon a career in a rural community. Albany was a particularly gracious host and I thank all of those involved for allowing me the opportunity to enjoy a little of her wonder. I look forward to putting into practise some of the many new educational techniques I learnt whilst in attendance.

Dr Andrew Gray - SET4
RURAL COACH RECIPIENT

SURGICAL TRAINING DEMYSTIFIED

From the very presentation of the flyer for the PSA 2016 ASC in Albany, it was clear that this was not to be missed. The motif of the deep blue left-hander, trying to barrel, not only guaranteed my attendance and enthusiasm, but it also proved appropriate for the style of the meeting that was to ensue: welcoming.

Having only recently entered the surgical community as a SET Trainee, it hadn't been immediately obvious to me where I might fit in the next post-fellowship phase. While confident it was the right move to pursue a vocation which uniquely combines the cerebral with the practical, the absence of a visible path ahead was starting to make the introduction to surgical training seem harder than it ought to. The PSA ASC resonated as a stark contrast to this feeling.

Tim Winton often writes of the orientation of a West Australian to its coastline; certainly getting to Albany had the sensation of a homecoming. Then there was the meeting. Sharing conference proceedings and a few nights socialising with a group as capable as they are friendly, my first PSA felt like sheer privilege. Collegial, inspiring and above all, welcoming. Over just a few days, the diverse and rewarding practice that the delegates of provincial surgery have established became a visible and viable future.

The rather daunting process of training in general surgery just got a whole lot easier.

Verissimum Non Taurum.

Dr Xavier Harvey - SET2
RURAL COACH RECIPIENT



RURAL COACH

THE PSA 2016 ASC EXPERIENCE

RURAL SURGERY AS A CAREER...

The 2016 PSA ASC held in Albany, Western Australia was three days of education, networking and, of course, lots of fun! A busy scientific program focusing on education in the rural setting was the backbone to the conference whilst the social program allowed plenty of time for networking and experiencing the best Albany has to offer.

The Scientific Program, themed 'Education of yourself, junior doctors and students', covered a wide range of topics related to surgical education in rural centres. National guest speakers with a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences each offered their different perspectives on the benefits, and challenges of medical training in rural setting. International guest speaker, Dr Lauren Smithson from Newfoundland, Canada, was able to offer us a different perspective on rural surgical training from a different continent.

Overall, the program highlighted the many benefits of rural surgical training including increased operative experience for Trainees, a varied case mix of patients and a powerful sense of community. Perceived downsides to rural surgical training, such as limited access to formal education programs and peer interaction were also raised and solutions, largely with the use of online education and peer networking, offered. We all left the conclusion of the scientific program enthusiastic about rural surgical education.

With 120 delegates from each remote corner of Australia, there were many stories to be told and experiences to be compared. From a Trainee's perspective, the event allowed the opportunity gain informal mentorship from many surgeons who had already completed what we would like to achieve. It also allowed opportunities to connect with other Trainees that were undertaking a similar journey in their surgical training.

Overall, the 2016 PSA was a fantastic event that highlighted the benefits of rural surgical training whilst allowing the opportunity to connect with those working in every corner of Australia. All of us walked away optimistic and enthusiastic about the future of rural Australian surgical practice. I would encourage Trainees with any interest in rural surgical practice to attend a PSA ASC.

I would like to thank the Rural Coach and GSA for the grant to attend the PSA and I definitely hope to back again next year!

Dr Henry Drysdale - SET2
RURAL COACH RECIPIENT



PSA 2016 ASC PHOTOS TAKEN BY JOHN ALOYSIUS & PAM HENDERSON

