

A GUIDE FOR FIRST YEAR MEDICAL STUDENTS

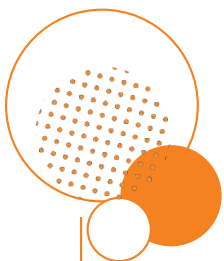
the  
*Starting Medicine*  
guide

- 2020 -

AN OFFICIAL



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# 20



## Welcome to Medicine!

Congratulations on making it into medicine and choosing to embark on what will undoubtedly be an unforgettable experience. It is a journey of a lifetime, making new friends, learning the intricacies of the human body and exploring your future!

However, just as much as it can be exciting, starting a new degree with new people in a new environment can be daunting. As a result, our team at AMSA have put together this guide to help you kick start your medical degree!

Enclosed within are tips to help you balance university with work and life, tips for medical student parents, tips on what resources or books to buy and how to best utilise your time to study.

My biggest piece of advice would be to simply relax, have fun and throw yourself into the opportunities that this year will afford you! Your time at medical school will be some of the best years of your life, so embrace it. And remember, throughout your medical degree, the Australian Medical Students' Association is here to help. If you want to make an impact on a national scale, AMSA has a platform to support your diverse and unique interest.

Sincerely,



Daniel Zou  
AMSA President 2020

For more information on the Australian Medical Students' Association, read our [2020 Orange Guide](#).

# WELCOME

FROM THE 2020 AMSA PRESIDENT

# ACADEMIC RESOURCES

Starting medical school from an academic standpoint is scary. With seemingly endless medical databases, journals and libraries, it can be hard to know where to start. However, as you start to sift the diamonds from the rough when you start your degree, searching for information becomes easier and easier.

Your first year of medical school is the perfect time for you to get familiar with popular and niche resources and see exactly what works for you. Do you prefer reading or watching information? Do you need those extra questions and quizzes to ensure that you are as confident as you can be in that semester final? These are all questions you can start answering now through trial and error. Trust that you will adapt as your course goes on and you find your study groove. To help you along, AMSA has compiled a short list of resources that may provide a good starting point for you.

## **Books**

Textbooks are a very traditional resource for academic information and can be a fantastic way to gain a foundational understanding of course content. It is, generally speaking, not necessary to purchase textbooks before you have started medical school unless you have been specifically told to by your university. Textbooks can be an expensive investment, and you may find that you often find cheaper alternatives once you start university (such as borrowing them from your university library or obtaining them from older year groups). That said, here are some textbooks that many students use in their foundational (and even later) years.

### **Talley and O'Connor's Clinical Examination**

Comprehensive explanation of clinical examination and medicine. An excellent Australian resource for the entirety of medical training.

### **Tortora's Principles of Anatomy & Physiology**

A basic but easy-to-read textbook that is perfect for understanding pre-clinical year anatomy and physiology foundations.

### **Guyton and Hall's Textbook of Medical Physiology**

A more comprehensive textbook for medical physiology that also has an accompanying question booklet.

### **Netter's Anatomy Flashcards**

A great starting resource for first years to learn and retain basic anatomy.

## **Databases and Guidelines**

Being enrolled at medical school often entitles you to free access to many online medical academic websites that otherwise require expensive subscriptions. Keep an eye on your university Medical Databases for these gems!

### **eTG (Electronic Therapeutic Guidelines)**

An Australian independent resource that provides up to date treatment recommendations and comprehensive background information on a variety of medical conditions.

### **UpToDate**

An American website that provides summarised articles on various medical conditions and topics using up to date evidence based medicine. Note that some treatment recommendations vary between the US and Australia.

### **BMJ (British Medical Journal)**

A British website that provides fantastic summaries of medical conditions with background information, diagnostic guidelines, and management.

## **YouTube Channels**

YouTube videos are a fantastic inexpensive way to learn medical knowledge, and are often a great starting point when starting to research a particular topic.

### **Osmosis**

Osmosis' free YouTube videos provide comprehensive 10-15 animated summaries on certain conditions and diseases and is a great clinical resource for visual learners.

### **Khan Academy**

Khan Academy's 10-20 minute YouTube videos provide lecture style content that explains in detail certain conditions and bio-medical concepts.

### **Armando Hasudungan**

Armando is an Australian doctor who makes educational videos explaining certain medical conditions and concepts by drawing on a large piece of paper - fantastic for piecing together medical information for visual learners.



### **Apps and third party websites**

There are a number of study apps and third party websites available. Some of these can be quite expensive, however many of them offer free trials, so make the most of those! Here are some examples that some medical students use:

#### **Kenhub**

An anatomy focused resource website that delves into extraordinary detail. Their website allows free access to their anatomy atlas and articles, and paid membership allows access to videos and quizzes.

#### **AMBOSS**

A digital learning platform for medical students for all year groups. The program is a useful compendium for many physiological and pathologies. AMBOSS also has a unique question bank, useful for solidifying knowledge during pre exam preparations.

There are many free apps which assist study such as Anki and Quizlet. These are flashcard apps that allow you to review your own notes (an excellent tool to help you retain knowledge).

### **AMSA Resources**

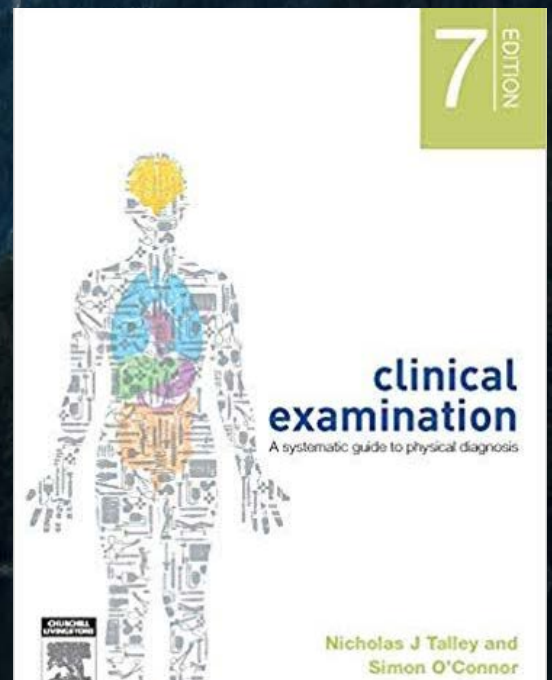
AMSA also creates medical resources for all medical students, and often has discounts for third party medical resources for AMSA members only.

#### **AMSA Med Ed:** <https://amsamoodle.org.au/>

Provides a variety of resources including a newly released National Question Bank, Fact Sheets on common Australian medical conditions and academic modules. These are fantastic resources to enrich university course learning.

#### **AMSA Academy:** <https://amsamoodle.org.au/>

Provides education on important Australian health issues that are not often covered comprehensively by the university curricula e.g. LGBTQI+ Health, and Refugee health.



# HOW TO STUDY

You've studied so hard to get into this degree. Now that you're here, it's time to prepare to study medicine! Whilst there are many methods others will claim is the right way to study medicine, the best way to study is the way that best suits you and gives you the best outcome. The following are tips that have worked fantastically for some and that you can try too!

## **Test your knowledge!**

One thing to keep in mind is that the easiest way to pass medicine is to study to past exams. It can be difficult for the more inquisitive medical students to avoid falling into medical rabbit holes and end up reciting the proteins and enzymes only a PhD student needs to know. Though this makes you a passionate medical student, to save time and sanity, it is often more useful to cover your course learning objectives first, and even better: gauge exam questions before studying for exams.

- » Your faculty may provide you with a few practice questions, or you might even get hold of a past paper. Knowing how your exam questions are formatted gives you an idea of what you need to study and to what depth you need to study it.
- » Start viewing testing as a part of learning, not just the looming finish line you get to once you've finished learning. Testing and retesting your knowledge is a more effective way to recall information for the long-term, rather than simply studying it over and over again [1].
- » Doing questions before you study is a hard thing to do, as you will most certainly do poorly the first time and us medical students are terrified of failure. However, the direction these questions will give you is invaluable.

Should you need extra questions to practice on, head over to AMSA's National Question Bank through AMSA's MedEd Moodle (<https://amsamoodle.org.au/>)

## **Understanding is power**

Take the time to understand what you are studying by actively engaging with the content, as this will increase long term retention of information significantly [1].

## **Find a study group**

Find a group of like minded learners as yourself (this may take some trial and error) and study together. Make a chat group so you can ask each other questions when you don't understand something.

## **Attend PASS sessions**

Most universities offer PASS (Peer Assisted Study Sessions) or a similar tutorial program. Attending these sessions gives you a chance to ask questions, identify problem areas and understand information in a new way.

## **Ask questions**

Your lecturers and tutors are there to teach you and help you understand content. Approach lecturers after lectures, or email them if you have questions, and more often than not they will be happy to enrich your understanding!

## **Docendo Discimus - by teaching, we learn**

Take the effort to teach something to someone else, without notes. This has proven to be an extremely effective method to teach yourself, and your results will be better because of it [3].

## **Relate information to the bigger picture**

Understand why you are learning this in your course. Why does it matter? Apply whatever medical knowledge you learn to a case study patient to create mental links which will additionally help you retain information.

## **Repeat, repeat, repeat.**

- » Sometimes, medicine can just be gruelling memorisation. From the order of the cranial nerves to the anatomy of the femoral triangle, some things just need to be remembered, and repeating what you learn is one vital way to achieve that.
- » Spaced repetition is a method by which you learn something, leave some time, then come back and repeat it.
- » The best proven method to do this is to repeat what you've learnt a short period after learning it (e.g. one day after) then maybe a week after then again a couple of weeks later. This is expanding retrieval practice and is very effective at helping you recall information that is at risk of being forgotten [1].
- » Apps that can help with this are Anki, which allows you to repeat flashcards on weaker topics at more frequent intervals whilst still testing your stronger knowledge, and Quizlet which is a flashcard website.

## **References:**

1. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4031794/>
2. <https://gpsn.org.au/advice/study-tips-for-medical-students/>
3. <https://digest.bps.org.uk/2018/05/04/learning-by-teaching-others-is-extremely-effective-a-new-study-tested-a-key-reason-why/>





# *Tips for beating procrastination*

- » If it takes less than two minutes to do, just do it now and get it over and done with - chant this to yourself!
- » If you're having trouble motivating yourself to start doing something, "trial" it for 20 minutes with the option of quitting after that 20 minutes. You'll usually find that after that amount of time your mind is already geared into work mode.
- » If you're feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work you have to do, think of taking on those tasks one at a time and it becomes much more manageable.



# WHAT TO EXPECT FROM CLINICAL PLACEMENT

Going on clinical placement for the first time can be very exciting and scary. As a first year student, you will spend most of your time on campus in a lecture-, tutorial- or lab-based setting, depending on your university. Most medical degrees can be thought to be divided into "pre-clinical" and "clinical" such that the latter years of your degree will primarily be based in a hospital or another clinical setting with much teaching taking place on the wards. However, before you reach that point, you will spend a few years learning the basics and the science behind it all.

So don't stress too much about the clinical placement stuff, you've got plenty of time to work it out!

In your first year, you'll probably spend a short period of time at the hospital, so it's good to know the basics, but remember, you're only in first year! People know that you have a lot to learn and the focus will be to get a basic understanding of how the system works, and to practise patient interaction to develop history taking and examination skills.

Here are the facts about what to expect and what to keep in mind for clinical placement.

## **Before your first placement**

- » Eat a good breakfast!
- » Try to find an older student to ask about parking if you want to drive - some hospitals don't have many parking spots available around them.
- » Give yourself plenty of time to get to the hospital and make your way to the correct ward.
- » If you are struggling to find a particular ward, the main entrance of the hospital will have an information desk. Once you get there, introduce yourself to the nurse in charge and see if anyone will give you a quick tour, and then find the team or doctor you are assigned to.

## **What do I wear?**

- » Clothes for clinical placement should look professional, such as business style attire - think chinos and a collared shirt or blouse, or a nice dress.
- » Wear comfortable enclosed shoes you're happy to walk around all day in.

- » Wearing a tie is unnecessary and unhygienic, and it is recommended that your sleeves are above your elbow to maintain hygiene standards.
- » Hospitals are a fairly constant cool temperature, so make sure to have a cardigan or jumper in case you get cold.
- » If you're unsure, it's often helpful to dress more conservatively on your first day and then gauge what others are wearing to determine the style of clothes.

## **What do I need?**

Check if your clinical school has a common room you can access. It can be useful to leave your lunch and any study material there if you are at the hospital for a full day, rather than carrying it around. It is easier to just take a small bag or utilise pockets to get around on the ward.

These things are by no means necessary so don't freak out and spend too much money yet, but you can consider bringing these with you (especially in a few years when you're on the ward often):

- » Phone
- » Stethoscope
- » Penlight torch
- » Study notes or handbook
- » Small notebook and black pens
- » Some change for a coffee or two (and a keepcup)!

## **What should I do on clinical placement?**

Remember, this is your first year! You will not be getting overly hands-on experience yet and you will not be expected to know everything.

- » Take every learning opportunity you can
- » Ask questions
- » Focus on learning how the doctors around you conduct themselves and take note of the skills you want to emulate in the future
- » Meet patients and learn from them!

On a more practical note, there may be various forms you need signed off at the hospital, and it's a hassle if you lose them! The moment you get a form signed off, take a photo of it on your phone, or use an app that converts it into a pdf. Remember that the hospital isn't necessarily a safe place and to look after your belongings, not leaving them on the wards or in theatre.

## **Who's Who?**

There are a lot of people involved in keeping a hospital functioning, and many different roles within the teams you'll work in. This is a basic guide:

- » **Intern:** Post-Graduate Year (PGY) 1
- » **RMO/HMO:** Resident Medical Officer or Hospital Medical Officer, PGY 2
- » **JMO:** Junior medical officer, can be an intern or resident
- » **SRMO/Unaccredited Registrar:** Senior resident medical officer, PGY3+
- » **Registrar:** On a specialty training program
- » **Advanced Trainee:** Almost finished training program
- » **Fellow:** Completed specialty training program

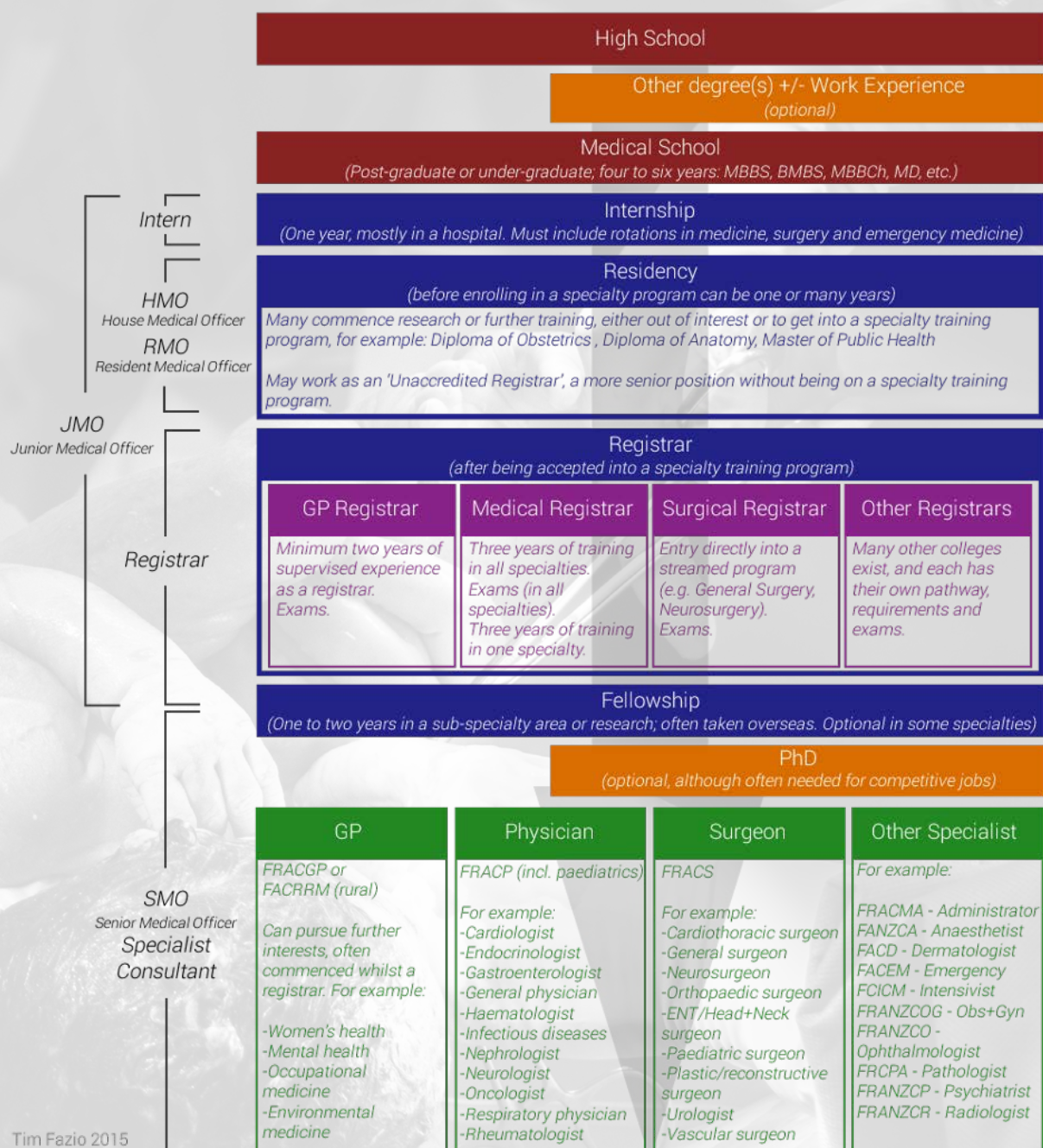


- » **Consultant:** Completed specialty training and has extensive experience; one of the bosses for that department
- » **NUM:** Nursing Unit Manager/Nurse in Charge (boss of the nurses on that ward)

To get a better idea of how they all fit together as doctors, and also what you're in for if you follow a clinical career path, check out the great diagram below!

Finally, enjoy yourself! Med School is a wonderful experience, many people will tell you it's some of the best years of your life and they aren't wrong. Clinical placements can sound scary, but are very exciting when you meet people and see cases that bring all of the textbooks to life. Patients are incredible resources to learn from and anyone from the intern through to consultant can help you on your way.

Good luck!



Source: Dr Tim Fazio, AMA VIC member, Doctor in training  
<https://ama.com.au/careers/becoming-a-doctor>

# WHAT HAPPENS AFTER MEDICAL SCHOOL?

Studying medicine opens the door to a huge variety of careers! Most medical graduates go on to specialise and practise clinical medicine, whilst others pursue careers in research, medical administration, public health policy, teaching or some combination of all of the above!

The following is a rough guide of a pathway after medicine and your options:

## **1. Internship/PGY1**

Once you graduate you'll receive provisional registration. If you want to fully qualify to practise clinically, you need to enter the workforce as an intern/PGY1 (Post-Graduate Year 1) and complete a mandatory 47 weeks full-time to receive general medical registration from the Medical Board Australia (MBA).

## **2. PGY2/Resident/HMO**

Most people then go on to complete a PGY 2 year before applying for vocational training (AKA admission to a specialist college). This involves spending more time gaining clinical experience and taking on more responsibility in areas of interest. Some people spend two or three years as an HMO.

## **3. Registrar or CMO**

The next step involves choosing whether or not to specialise (vocational training), which is required to obtain a fellowship and allows you to practise medicine independently. The alternative is to not specialise and become a non-vocational Career Medical Officer (CMO) instead.



The Royal  
Australian &  
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College of  
Psychiatrists



RACGP

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

## **Medical Specialties**

There are over 64 medical specialties to choose from in Australia, all of which involve between 3 and 6 years of training and fall under one of the specialist colleges:

- Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM) [www.acem.org.au](http://www.acem.org.au)
- Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD) [www.dermcoll.asn.au](http://www.dermcoll.asn.au)
- Australasian College of Sports Physicians (ACSP) [www.acsp.org.au](http://www.acsp.org.au)
- Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) [www.anzca.edu.au](http://www.anzca.edu.au)
- Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) [www.acrrm.org.au](http://www.acrrm.org.au)
- College of Intensive Care Medicine of Australia and New Zealand (CICM) [www.cicm.org.au](http://www.cicm.org.au)
- Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons (RACDS) [www.racds.org](http://www.racds.org)
- Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators (RACMA) [www.racma.edu.au](http://www.racma.edu.au)
- Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) [www.racp.edu.au](http://www.racp.edu.au)
- Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) [www.surgeons.org](http://www.surgeons.org)
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) [www.ranzcog.edu.au](http://www.ranzcog.edu.au)
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO) [www.ranzco.edu.au](http://www.ranzco.edu.au)
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) [www.ranzcp.org](http://www.ranzcp.org)
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) [www.racgp.org.au](http://www.racgp.org.au)
- Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA) [www.rcpa.edu.au](http://www.rcpa.edu.au)
- The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists (RANZCR) [www.ranzcr.edu.au](http://www.ranzcr.edu.au)

For more information, see:

<https://ama.com.au/careers/becoming-a-doctor#five>  
<https://ama.com.au/careers/doctors-training-and-career-advancement>  
<https://ama.com.au/careers/pathways/select>  
<https://www.myhealthcareer.com.au/medical-career>  
<http://www.otheroptionsfordoctors.com/>





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## 2020 Bonded Medical Program Changes

From January 1st 2020, all students who apply to the Bonded Medical Program will fall under a new scheme. Any student who is part of the Bonded Medical Program already (prior to 2020) will be given the option to also become a part of the new scheme.

Students under the 2020 program will be expected to complete 3 years of service post-med school graduation in 'regional, rural and remote areas', within a space of 18 years. The 3 years do not have to be continuous, and 18 months can be completed before fellowship, and 18 months after fellowship is attained. When the service will be required will differ between graduates, but the Department of Health states that there will be 'a range of options'. Requirements can be completed on a full or part time basis. Participants will be required to be part of a 'statutory scheme' instead of the old system of an individual contract.

The new statute specifies that once entered into, if the participant wishes to breach the terms of the agreement and not fulfil their obligation to do 3 years of rural/remote work, the participant will be required to pay the costs of their degree (Commonwealth Supported Places in medical school are heavily subsidised). If the participant has a medical reason for being unable to complete their 3 years of service within the 18 year period, they can apply to have an extension of the 18 year period however will still be required to do the full 3 years of service. If the participant wishes to breach their agreement after having completed a portion of their 3 years of work, they will have to pay back a portion of their degree on a pro rata basis (e.g. if the participant completes two out of their three years of required work, they will have to pay one third of the cost of their medical degree).

## Source:

<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/reformed-bonded-programs>  
<https://jade.io/article/668576>

University is a huge milestone in our lives. It's the best opportunity to meet people from all walks of life, form lifelong friendships and discover new hobbies! Despite being one of the longer degrees, these few years of med school can fly by. Here are a few tips on how to maximise your time at uni.

## **1. Get Involved!**

One of the greatest things about university is the amount of freedom and diversity of choices you have in pursuing your interests.

### **Join your local MedSoc:**

Getting involved in your MedSoc can be a highly rewarding experience. It's a great way to meet people in other years outside of labs and tutorials (and notes from older years are invaluable!). There are also heaps of opportunities to learn new skills, like project management, or indulge in your talents by performing in MedRevue. Many MedSocs also run wellbeing initiatives or charity drives, which are fantastic ways to engage with your local community.

### **Become an AMSA member:**

AMSA is the national representative body for medical students across Australia. We connect all medical schools to form a unified voice. Flick over to page 30 and read more about how and why! Look out for our 2020 Orange Guide which will give you the lowdown on all things AMSA.

### **Sign up for Sports and University societies:**

Whilst life in medical school is fun, it's also a good idea to give yourself a break from medicine from time to time. Signing up for sports and societies is a great way to meet people outside of medicine and discover new hobbies. Many universities have a huge number of societies for basically any interest you can think of - food, gaming, scuba diving, you name it!

## **2. Maintaining a work/uni/life balance**

Whether you've just come from high school or another degree, studying medicine can be a huge change from the amount of freedom you have in your education, and the amount of self-directed learning that is involved. The workload thrown at you in

Medicine is notoriously heavy and it can be very easy to find yourself swamped with work and burning out. Maintaining a good work-life balance is paramount for your wellbeing.

### **Learn to prioritise:**

We are all guilty of procrastinating, especially when our favourite TV shows are back from hiatus. However, it's important to remember that some things do actually need to get done. Prioritising your tasks is a good way to clearly set out what needs to be done, and gives you a rough idea of how much time you should dedicate to those tasks.

### **Develop a routine:**

Getting into a habit of doing things will make life easier in the long run. Things that initially feel like an effort, like going to the gym, eventually become a staple part of your day. It's also crucial to maintain a regular sleeping pattern to keep yourself energised, happy and on time for class.

Read about sleep hygiene here: <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/sleep-hygiene>.

### **Set personal goals as well as academic:**

If you have a hobby or another form of outlet, set goals for those as well e.g. cook dinner for family once a week. It's a nice little reminder that you have a life outside of Medicine.





### ***Forgive, and take care of yourself:***

The most important thing to remember is to look after your own wellbeing. It's so easy to become overwhelmed, especially in the first few months of university. During this time, try not to beat yourself up if you aren't meeting academic or personal goals and remember that starting medicine is a huge task in itself. Furthermore, everyone adapts in different ways and at a different pace! Be aware of your own signs of burnout, and remember that it's okay to take the time to take a step back, find something you enjoy, and then come back and adjust accordingly.

### ***How universities and colleges can help YOU!***

Everyone raves about the experiences you are going to have at university and how you can contribute to the university you will attend and something about joining alumni etcetera. But sometimes we forget that universities need students just as much as students need them! It's important to remember that as a student you have the right to have expectations of your experience, and if you don't think they are being met you are well within your rights to discuss that with your Med Soc representatives, AMSA representatives and staff and faculty in your medical school. Often there are intriguing opportunities for research available under some lecturers, be that in the science faculty or the medical faculty. If you are interested in those opportunities, speak up (and attend your lectures). If you have some previous

teaching experience or relevant qualifications, you may be able to assist in some teaching and marking at your university as well. All of this can set you up for some great upskilling and networking.



Your journey through medical school is ultimately about getting that M.D., but that doesn't mean you can't immerse yourself in a number of experiences along the way. Most residential colleges have leadership programs that are superb for setting you up as a great applicant for scholarships, employment and are also great for networking. It's a great way to challenge yourself, build some friendships outside of medicine but also to gain an extra support system whilst you are studying, especially if you are away from home. If you are living at a residential college, they have some great inbuilt support networks, particularly for new and struggling students. If you find yourself at a college do see what is available to help with whatever situation you are in and make sure you put a hand up and ask for help.



# MEDICAL SCHOOL FINANCES

Some students are fortunate enough to have gotten on the bitcoin train early or have an unlimited line of credit with their parents on the completely unsubstantiated promise that "I'll pay you back when I get onto the Neurosurgery program." For those of you still unsure what cryptocurrency is or less skilled in the art of deception, you will need to think about your finances carefully for the duration of the long and arduous course that is Medicine. We've collated relevant information as well as some handy financial tips to aid your journey through the mi goreng and single-ply toilet paper life called student living.

## **Working whilst studying**

Whether you are considering earning money to make ends meet or to buy that unnecessarily expensive cardiology registrar standard stethoscope, trying to work whilst in medical school can seem like a bit of a juggle. The ability to work either casual or part-time during your medical degree will entirely depend on your individual circumstances. Many students do manage to hold down jobs in addition to managing their coursework, but the majority of programs are five days-a-week commitments with variable and unpredictable hours, so keep that in mind when applying for jobs.

Your ability to work in conjunction with study will greatly depend on your individual circumstances and previous experience, as well as how necessary it is to maintain your lifestyle. For instance, a recent school leaver may require more time to digest the course content in the first few years as compared with a student with a completed medical science degree. Courses also generally require more time commitment towards the end of the degree with commencement of clinical placements.

In general, the best work for medical students are jobs that are predominately evening- or weekend-based with flexible time commitments and allow you to revise or learn new content relevant to the degree. Working through university provides you with



student-gear jobs that generally provide more flexibility, and sometimes allow you to revise and consolidate your learning content (e.g. tutors, medical typists, research assistants, hospital technical assistants and Red Cross blood collectors). Evening jobs away from university hours can generally be found through hospitality.

## **Scholarships and Grants**

You are fortunate enough to be entering a degree that, by virtue of the nature of industry, is generally well supported at a university level and comparatively well-funded. This means that there are a host of scholarships available to students at all levels of the degree, some of which require little more than a written application and sometimes go unallocated. Better yet, many of these scholarships are linked with rural or overseas placements meaning you can acquire a host of clinical experience and travel opportunities in addition to funding.

Check your State-funded grants, University website scholarships page as well as the following:

### ***AMA Indigenous Peoples' Medical Scholarship***

- » Value: \$10,000 lump sum
- » Eligibility: Must identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island, and have been completed at least their first year of medical studies
- » Applications close late January
- » <https://ama.com.au/advocacy/indigenous-peoples-medical-scholarship>

### ***Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Scholarship for Rural and Regional Australians***

- » Value: \$5,000 per year
- » Eligibility: Australians living in rural or regional Australia attending university for the first time, studying full time
- » Applications close late January
- » <https://www.bendigobank.com.au/public/community/scholarships/bendigo-bank-scholarships>



### **Centrelink Relocation Scholarship**

- » Value: \$4,626 for your first year, and payments ranging from \$1,156-\$2314 yearly after that depending on circumstances
- » Eligibility: Those moving from rural to metro OR metro to rural, for study; AND who receive Youth Allowance/ABStudy
- » Apply whenever you become eligible.
- » <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/relocation-scholarship>

### **John Flynn Placement Program**

- » Undertake fully funded block placements of 8 weeks in total in a rural or remote area where you will be mentored by an experienced rural doctor in that community.
- » Eligibility: You will need to be able to undertake placements over 3-4 years of your degree (usually over semester break)
- » Applications: TBC
- » <https://www.jfpp.com.au/>

### **Australian Defence Force Education Funding**

- » In exchange for your commitment to serve in the Navy, Army or Air Force after your graduation, have your university fees fully paid for and earn a salary whilst you complete your degree.
- » Eligibility: May apply at any point in your degree
- » <https://www.defencejobs.gov.au/students-and-education/defence-university-sponsorship/>

### **Centrelink – Youth Allowance, Austudy and Rent Assistance**

Many students are reliant on government benefit payments to meet the demands of daily living and rental expenses. In order to qualify for these payments, you must meet specific criteria in addition to passing the income and assets assessment.

#### **Youth Allowance**

To access youth allowance as a student, you need to be studying full time and aged 18 to 24. If you're under 22 years of age you will also be required to prove your independence through evidence of full time work, relationship status, having a dependent child, or inability to live at home due to extreme circumstances.

If you're considered dependent (under 21 and not independent as described above) you can still qualify for youth allowance if your parent's assets and income test is below the threshold.

\*You may stay on Youth Allowance after you turn 25 years of age until you finish your course.

#### **Austudy**

Austudy is the equivalent of Youth Allowance for older students over 25 years of age. Additionally, you'll need to come under the income and assets test limits in order to prove your requirements for the benefit payments.

\*You can only get Austudy for a set amount of time (allowable time). If you're a full time student you must make satisfactory progress in your course to keep your payment.

#### **Rent Assistance**

Rent assistance is paid in addition to Youth Allowance or Austudy for those students not living at home with regular rental payments. To find out more about your eligibility or to make a claim, head to [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au).

#### **Handy tips and tricks for your wallet (and your health)**

##### **Quit Smoking**

Entry into a medical program is a good a time as any to kick the habit. Not only are the health benefits enormous but your wallet will thank you too with the average smoker spending \$3,212 a year on cigarettes.

##### **Walk or Ride**

Cardiovascular fitness is the single greatest predictor of ALL-CAUSE mortality across the developed world. Why not get in shape, reduce emissions and save a few dollars by walking, running or riding to university or your placement.

##### **Textbooks**

Consider your learning style and work out whether purchasing the brand new \$150 textbooks each semester is really a good investment. There are hundreds of interactive online learning tools available for free and many Universities and MedSocs will have content databases where you can access digital or online copies of textbooks for FREE. If you are someone that works well with textbooks then consider a second-hand copy. Humans have been studying the body and medicine for centuries so nothing in the updated 8th edition of that shiny anatomy textbook is really going to make or break your exam results.

##### **Budget - Resources**

The Barefoot Investor is a fantastically recommended money guide book that is very easy to follow, can help you manage high expenses with low income, and help you kickstart your financial planning.

A number of apps are also available online with ready-made budgets and direct syncing with your online accounts. Try one of these for free:

1. **Mint**
2. **Level money**
3. **Penny**

# MOVING OUT OF HOME

Whether you've just gotten an offer to study medicine hundreds of kilometres away or you're planning to move to be just a bit closer to your new university, moving out of your family's home for the first time is a huge change. There are a lot of things to consider when thinking about moving out of home, so here's a list of things that will hopefully help you out!

## **Choosing where to live: On campus vs off-campus living**

- » On campus living is a fantastic stepping stone if you are moving out of home for the first time.
- » You will not need to worry about things such as internet connection, water, power and gas bills, which you would if you were renting your own property.
- » On campus living can be very social. Living in close proximity to many students and friends can be very fun and help immensely with homesickness.
- » On campus living tends to be more expensive comparatively to living off campus.
- » Living off campus means more independence! This means more control over the way you live (no curfew!) but also means separate bills to add to rent, and maintenance to make sure you keep your rental bond.
- » The independence of choosing who you get to live with avoids the problem of living on college where university students are known to be disruptive at night, especially before a big exam!

## **Physically moving your things:**

If you are moving to a university far away, you may have particularly unique concerns surrounding how to move your entire life across the country or overseas.

- » If you are choosing to study at a university interstate and are thinking of living on campus, be sure to research living options as soon as you can! Residential colleges tend to fill up fast, and some can even fill up before interstate offers come out.
- » If you have the luxury of leaving items back home (e.g. if moving out of your parents' home), resist the temptation to move everything in your life all at once. On your first trip to your new residence, you only need to bring enough to tie you over till the first university break.

- » Remember that heavy or bulky items that are troublesome and expensive to transport can be bought at your local Kmart or Big W once you arrive.
- » Once you go back home for your first holidays, you can get a better sense of what you have missed from home.
- » Items that are consumable (such as deodorant, pads, food etc.) can be bought later, once you arrive! If you have that extra space, consider using it for things that could make your new place feel a little more like home.
- » Buy check-in luggage for any extras, if you are planning on flying to university. It is much cheaper than posting it (which is priced per kg)
- » Try to have a list of big events of the year (check your local MedSoc calendar!) so you know what dress code items to bring from home before you come back again. This way you do not need to rush to find the perfect cocktail dress, suit or tux last minute.

## **Moving house hacks:**

Not only useful for those who are moving away for university, but useful for moving away for placements that can take you all over your state or the country! Here are some tips when moving house from seasoned experts:

- » Plastic tubs are your friend! Buy these from Kmart or Bunnings, they are great to pack heaps into, sturdy for the trip and easy to pile on top of each other during car tetris. They can also be stored on top of cupboards or under beds. Perfect for extra bedding or swapping winter and summer wardrobes.







- » Garbage bags! While I do recommend a good clean out of your life before a move, these have a different purpose. Get the black ones with a yellow tie. Keep all your hanging clothes together by placing 5-8 items together with the garage bag, using the yellow tie to secure the clothes hangers together. It keeps your clothes protected during the move and when you get to your new home you just hang everything back up - simple!
- » Easy Off Bam Oven Cleaner is a winner - often at the end of the lease there is certain cleaning required. This is the product used for professional oven cleaning, and buying this at the supermarket yourself will save you some cash!
- » Pack delicate items in your clothing suitcase rather than their own box. This saves you having to buy heaps of bubble wrap and protects them during the move.
- » Label all your boxes! This is time consuming at first but a massive lifesaver when you arrive tired and all you want is a knife to slice some cheese.
- » Utilise old blankets and towels as protectors of TVs and mirrors during the road trip to your new place.

### **Tips for living with other people (college or share-house):**

- » Keep shared spaces clean. Do your dishes promptly and don't leave shoes and clothes strewn around the living room.
- » Open communication is key. Have a polite conversation with housemate about issues rather than stewing about them and disliking being at home.
- » Have a cleaning roster. This makes you accountable for a section of the house and means it's always nice coming home to a clean bathroom or kitchen.
- » Choose your housemates carefully. Living with your best friend isn't always for the best. Choose people who are considerate and tidy and if possible, come recommended from a previous household.

### **Keeping yourself alive and fed:**

- » Find simple meals you enjoy such as spaghetti and stir fries. While I do recommend being adventurous in the kitchen every now and then, have some simple meals you can do without a recipe quickly for when you are tired.
- » Cook in bulk and freeze meals. I cannot recommend doing this enough a month out from exams so you have plenty of food when you're exhausted and stressed.
- » Winter soups are great! They are filling, cheap and can be made in bulk. Add some toast or another snack and your uni lunches are sorted.
- » If you like it, always have tuna. It makes a great source of protein to quickly add to a salad or easy on top of toast to be a simple dinner.
- » Same goes for eggs (if you're not vegan), there is nothing wrong with breakfast for dinner after a long day.

### **Making new friends**

- » Realise that most people are in the same boat. Often people have moved from home as well so are keen to start making their med family. Just smile through those nerves and it will all work out.
- » Attend events and volunteer for fun opportunities. This is a great way to get to know most of your cohort and find like minded people. Med schools will often have a Global Health group, GP interest group and Rural Health club for you to get involved in and make new friends.
- » Med Camp! This is a great way to bond with your new cohort and meet some from the higher years who you can ask all your burning questions to.
- » If you're feeling homesick, utilise technology! Have a Skype coffee with your parents or Face-time with your dog. Do something to help you get through the next day and know it gets easier with time.



# RURAL STUDENTS

A very big congratulations to all new rural students from far and wide! The prospect of starting med school may be equal parts daunting and exciting. Here at AMSA Rural Health, we are thrilled to welcome you to the next cohort of future doctors and have put together some tips and tricks that we would have liked to know before we began. So whether you're from Port Macquarie or Port Hedland, Hamilton or Humpty Doo, hopefully this will help ease the transition for you.

## **#1: Making new friends**

You may be off to a new city and university where you know very few people, or no one at all, let alone anyone else in your course. However, it's likely the majority of your cohort are in the same boat. So, although you might feel a bit shy, saying "Hi!" to the person next to you in a lecture could be the beginning of a wonderful new friendship. Your new friends could be the colleagues you call on or refer to in years to come. Another great way to meet people is through activities and social events organised by your university MedSoc.

## **#2: Don't just focus on medicine**

Whilst the expected study time during medical school can seem gruelling, it's super important to maintain some work-life balance. Making time to do something you love (other than medicine) is incredibly beneficial. Whilst O-week is in full swing, go check out what other non-medicine clubs and societies are on offer. Getting involved in activities outside of medicine is another great way to meet new people and an even better way maintain your sanity.

## **Tip #3: Easing the financial burden**

Moving away from home and paying rent and bills can be costly. There are a number of scholarships available for all students and some specifically for medical students from a rural background. This includes the Centrelink Relocation scholarship, and the Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Foundation scholarship. Your student union should have a financial advisory service to point you towards other resources, and can assist with applications, however see our Med Student Finances article on page 17 to see more on this.

## **Tip #4: Living in the city/commuting**

If you're fresh from the country, you may find

there's a lot more hustle and bustle, and everyone's in a hurry. Remember that you don't have to keep up with everyone else's pace - there is so much to do you can't possibly experience everything in your first year, but pushing yourself a little outside of your comfort zone to try new things is something you won't regret. You'll have the opportunity to meet people from a huge variety of backgrounds and try an amazing variety of food. For ideas on what's trending on the food scene, check out your city's Broadsheet. If home isn't too far away and you're still commuting, it can feel isolating. There may not be time to fully embrace social events when it's still two hours home and the trains stop early! Try to stay in touch with any fellow students in the same boat - you may be able to carpool, and you'll have a sympathetic ear as well as a potential study buddy.

## **Tip #5 The rural advantage**

Your clinical years may seem a way off yet, but being of rural background can help, particularly if you're part of your rural clinical school. Your experiences will give you a foot in both camps and help you relate to more of your patients.

## **Tip #6: Maintaining your rural ties**

Many of you will be entering medical school with the view to returning to the country once you've qualified as a doctor. Another great way to meet your like-minded rural colleagues is to get involved with your Rural Health Club. You can also get involved with AMSA Rural Health through social media and attendance at the annual Rural Health Summit, to be held in Armidale in 2020.



# METRO GUIDE TO RURAL

Congratulations to all the new metro students across Australia! Here at AMSA Rural Health, we already have an article for all the rural students going to metro for the first time (see page 20), but there are still heaps of you from metro going into a rural med school or placement for the first time. And that's why we've collated a list of tips and tricks you should know before embarking on what is sure to be the adventure of a lifetime.

## **Tip #1: Making new friends**

The most important part about any med school is having a good group of friends. And that's at least 10x more important when you've moved out into the country. Now the cities and towns are pretty nice! Some of them are going to be bigger, others smaller, and all pretty much either have a local Woolies or Coles. However, you're definitely not going to have the same hustle and bustle you get in the city. And that's why making friends is super important, because they will be your life for the year, or two, or four. In 2018, I lived in a small town called Churchill, Victoria (pop. 4,568 – 2016 census), and the cohort of students with me unanimously agreed that they loved being at Churchill for the people. That's not to say that Churchill is a bad town, it's quite beautiful (and more on that later), it's just the people definitely made getting through rural medicine so much easier!

## **Tip #2: Don't just focus on medicine**

Living in a rural town can be very isolating, especially when your entire life is back in the city. So that's why it is 100% therapeutic to pick up something outside of med to keep you sane. Medicine is tough, and everyone has the capacity to get through it, but your mental health is so important, which is why it's vital to remember to do the things you love! Whether that's joining the local footy or rugby team, bringing a musical instrument from home, writing, drawing, exercising, socialising, exploring, whatever – remember to find time to do it! If you're at a rural university hit up the local clubs and societies to see what peaks your interest. If you're at a rural hospital on placement see what local activities, sports, or groups you can join. And one more time so the message is crystal clear; YOUR MENTAL HEALTH IS IMPORTANT!

## **Tip #3: Easing the financial burden**

Moving into the country! While living in rural Australia is inherently cheaper than living in

the cities, paying rent and bills still isn't easy. And for that reason, there are scholarships and bursaries that you should consider looking into to ease the financial burden! Whether you're moving out to your new university or onto placement, have a look on your university website to see whether there are any relocation or placement scholarships available. Centrelink can also assist by way of their Youth Allowance and other available scholarships. Most importantly, your student union should have a financial advisory service to point you towards other resources and assist with applications. See our Med Student Finances article on page 17 for more details.

## **Tip #4: Transport and carpooling**

So this is a big one, getting around! When in rural Australia, everything is naturally pretty spread out between towns but pretty close within towns. Also keep in mind that public transport in rural Australia can take a while, or in some cases may be non-existent. So for efficiency, driving is the way to go. But today's handy tip is to get onto carpooling! If you're on placement, try and organise a roster system to save up on fuel, as well as reduce your carbon footprint! Because why should five medical students drive to one hospital/uni in five cars when they can just do it in the one. It's fantastic for the environment, and your wallet! Also for the international students or the younger folks who may not have a car or a license, they may be reliant on you for getting to and fro!

## **Tip #5: Explore the region!**

Ah finally! While rural Australia lacks the upbeat tempo of the cities, there's still heaps to do. If your town has a local information centre, hit it up and try to see what the local sites are. Your affiliated university may also have a list of activities and places that are nearby that are a must see. These sites can be bushwalks, waterfalls, lakes, rivers, mountains, hills, trails, beaches, you name it. So to make the most of your time out in the country check them out! Australia is a beautiful country, and people from around the world come to see what we take for granted. Explore your country's backyard and make it your own, after all you will be at the prime location for it!

## **Tip #6: Maintain your support networks**

Medicine is daunting on its own, and if you're a city slicker moving out into the country it's equal parts exciting and frightening. Throughout the year you're going to have your highs and lows, which is why it's vital to have a strong support network you can rely on. Some of you may be lucky enough to make the commute back home for a weekend where you can catch up with friends and family. Others however won't have that luxury and sadly will feel isolated. That's why it's so important to look after one another when you and your cohort are out together living the rural life. So regardless whether you're on placement or studying at uni, try keep in touch with your fellow students who are in the same boat. It's a great way to bond but really it provides you with a sense of place and belonging.



Depending on who or what you read, there are a number of different definitions of what makes a mature aged student. The most common definition you'll probably come across is an individual who is or older than 21 years of age, but this changes depending on who you ask. Likewise, a mature age student may also be referred to as a non-traditional entrant, non-school leaver or a graduate entry student.

Australia currently has 21 medical schools, of which 11 are graduate entry. Food for thought: this equates to approximately 52% of Australia's medical schools having mature students. Two studies in Ireland found that graduate students with a "scientific background at time of entry ... confers no significant advantage in final year clinical assessments"<sup>[1]</sup> and that any advantage they may have had when starting the degree "diminishes as the course progresses."<sup>[2]</sup> That's not to say the first year isn't difficult, there is a steep learning curve. Most mature students come into medicine with varying life experiences, but are also faced with the adjustment back into full-time study, having a family or a mortgage.

So how do people manage? **Balance.** Find a way that allows you to enjoy and embrace your family whilst managing your studies. Medicine and self-directed learning go hand in hand, so embrace a schedule that works for you and your circumstances.

## Things to remember:

1. Not everyone has come into medicine wanting to be a doctor since they were little. Life aspirations can change. If you come from a background of arts, law or agriculture, for example, but have decided medicine is for you; that's ok. If you have wanted to be a doctor for as long as you can remember, but maybe didn't get the marks; that's ok too. Everyone has a different story but we all graduate as doctors in the end regardless of the progression to get there.
2. Medicine is all about balance. Find what works for you and don't be afraid to change it up if your circumstances change. The advantage of previous study allows you to have a greater understanding of what works for you, so that you don't have to spend time trying to figure it out.
3. There may be times where you feel like a fraud or imposter due to the assumption that age correlates to knowledge and experience. It's ok not to know. Just like there are really no dumb questions, not knowing is an opportunity to find out what you don't know so you can learn. Isn't that why you go to medical school in the first place?

1. Byrne, A., Arnett, R., Farrell, T. and Sreenan, S. (2014). Comparison of performance in a four year graduate entry medical programme and a traditional five/six year programme. *BMC Medical Education*, 14(1).

2. Sulong, S., McGrath, D., Finucane, P., Horgan, M., O'Flynn, S. and O'Tuathaigh, C. (2014). Studying medicine – a cross-sectional questionnaire-based analysis of the motivational factors which influence graduate and undergraduate entrants in Ireland. *JRSM Open*, 5(4), p.204253331351015.

## ANDREW'S

## Story

The year was 2005, John Howard was the PM, *Wedding Crashers* was a box office hit and James Blunt was a household name. Meanwhile, Year 12 preparing for my HSC and contemplating my future. I had my sights set on studying Medicine but as it would turn out my UAI (now ATAR) fell short of the cut-off. Disappointed and unenthused, I studied Health Science PDHPE for 2 years before joining the ranks of Fire & Rescue NSW. However, it wasn't until before my desire to study Medicine was reignited. While it was what I wanted to do, the application process was simple.

I conducted research on admission to various universities due consideration of my circumstances. I was 28, married with my wife and I both working full-time, we had a number of commitments and responsibilities that made relocating the purpose of studying virtually impossible. Fortunately, I was lucky enough to secure a place in a medical program not far from home and I was able to manage the challenging adjustment to study. However, as the course progressed, I found my ability to cope changed.

Previously, I would spend my free time doing things I enjoyed, exercising, catching up with friends and walking my dog. Things that were all taken for granted. Now, not only was my free time now taken over by study commitments, time that was previously allocated for housework and personal care, things like mowing lawns, getting haircuts, visiting a doctor, would all be things of the past. A real issue is that coming into Medicine with too many commitments (which is often the case for mature-aged students) can be very taxing. As time progresses, these commitments can quickly affect your health and wellbeing as well as your performance in the course.

Indeed, class attendance is crucial with 100% being expected year-round, not only for meeting course requirements but also for the benefit of your learning. As a mature-aged student with different responsibilities that arise can affect university attendance, like the birth of our first baby in August last year. For you may not be expecting children any time soon, remember that Medicine is a long journey and additional questions like as when to have children and when to get married are all considerations.

On a positive note, the diverse life experiences that come with being a mature-aged student are invaluable in medical school. Student-patient interactions are fluid, particularly when dealing with stressful situations or patients who are very unwell. Patients tend to gravitate towards the mature-aged student making requests to conduct a physical exam or to have a consultation easier. Overall, applying for Medicine as a mature-aged student requires careful consideration of vastly different circumstances compared to that of a high school leaver.

- Andrew, UNSW Medicine



# MEDICAL STUDENT PARENTS

With the increasing average age of medical students in Australia, and the advent of post-graduate medical training programs, many medical students are entering medical school with varied commitments including work and children.

You may already have several children and be starting your medical degree, or you may be commencing the year of medicine and expecting your first child? Either way, trying to balance your role as a parent and a medical student, can be a daunting proposition and challenging at times. However, with good support it is achievable; plenty of us are doing it. Here are some initial pointers to help you on your journey...

**Tip 1:** Understand studying Medicine will mean time away from your family. One major concern for most medical student parents is that of attendance at lectures, tutorials and other mandatory activities particularly those that fall out of normal work or school hours. While many universities have flexible access to lectures with online recordings or video-conferencing facilities, medicine is traditionally taught by face to face attendance, and thus many pillars of tradition do not readily use these services. This means both a considerable time away from your children, and a challenging balancing act of meeting your timetable with that of your child's day care or school. A successful approach is to treat medical study like a fulltime job, by nominating a start and finish time five days per week, ie. 8am – 5pm Mon- Fri, and arrange your life and children around this. Many parents find this also offers their children stability and consistency.

**Tip 2:** Understand studying Medicine can be unpredictable. As with many university courses, last minute changes to the timetable present a frustrating challenge for many students, let alone parents. Shifts that threaten the very often precise and strategic family regime. Many medical parents recommend that when last minute cancellations happen, try and make the most out of the lost time, by always having study resources on you or accessible, so you can make the most out of every minute of all allocated medicine time.

**Tip 3:** If there are other parents in your cohort- find them. If there aren't any, hopefully you can find others that can understand your commitments and be supportive. It is important to understand early that you need to be realistic with what your study schedule will be like, compared to your pre-child life, and compared to your peers. This is ok. You will work differently, in a way which will suit you and your family.

**Tip 4:** Understand studying Medicine will mean making difficult choices regarding mothering, particularly breastfeeding. Most health services and universities have policies in place that encourage and protect time for breastfeeding mothers, this is your right, seek out and utilise this information accordingly. Talk to your admin staff at your university, clinical school or hospital to find a space you feel comfortable to breastfeed or to express if you need and choose to. If you are having difficulties with support for breastfeeding your university should have an equity contact officer, alternatively you may like to seek guidance from the Australian Breastfeeding Association.

**Tip 5:** Studying Medicine will also highlight that, time for birthing, parenting and all that surrounds it, is also incredibly important. Pregnancy exposure to anatomy wet labs, parental leave, breastfeeding and expressing, university childcare and leave for sick children, are all pertinent issues for med student parents. The most pressing advice that our existing cohort can offer is to speak up, ask for advice, and understand reasonable entitlements for students who are studying medicine. Be organised, try and stick to a routine and don't hesitate to ask family or friends for assistance, particularly around exam time. Ensure to allocate family time, and separate time out for your children and partner and protect that time, it will be your scaffolding to becoming a well-rounded Doctor. Remember, your family will always be more important than studying Medicine and being a parent will add more to your journey of becoming a Doctor than any book or lecture could ever possibly achieve.

Have fun.

**We invite you to find us on the Med Student Parents (MSP) Facebook Page.**

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

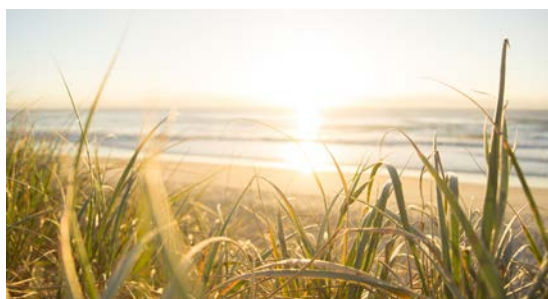
G'day mate, and welcome to 'Straya! By now you've probably realised that not all of us ride kangaroos to uni (you need a permit) and the odds of being eaten by our native wildlife aren't really that high, but here's just a few tips to help you get accustomed to Aussie life. Australia's culture is incredibly diverse, so you're sure to find people with similar interests and fun things to do. We're so stoked to have you here, and can't wait to show you what Australia has to offer. If you're looking for more information, [studyinaustralia.gov.au](http://studyinaustralia.gov.au) and [studiesinaustralia.com](http://studiesinaustralia.com) are pretty good places to start, and always feel free to ask your local peers!

## **Tip #1: Making friends**

A large proportion of your cohort will be from all across Australia (and the world). Most haven't met anyone else in the cohort before, and they're as keen as you are to make a friend! It may look like everyone else seems more confident than you, but behind the façade everyone is nervous about meeting new people. So don't be afraid, and any time you see someone you haven't met just say hi, introduce yourself, and find out things about them like where they're from. And who knows – you may have just met your next best friend! Friends are fantastic for having fun, providing support when you need it, and group study.

## **Tip #2: Get involved!**

O-Week can be a little daunting, especially at some of the larger universities, but it's the perfect opportunity to explore some of the best things your uni has to offer. Don't be afraid to venture beyond the academics – join societies and social sports teams, go to events (especially those run by the Australian Medical Students' Association and your medical society, they're designed just for you!), and you'll meet some amazing people with similar interests to you. If you look outside of university you can also find plenty of social groups in sporting and hobbyist clubs. It's important to venture beyond your comfort zone, and you'll find new and exciting things you never thought you'd like. Getting involved is also the easiest way to make lifelong friends you can't believe you'd ever lived without.



## **Tip #3: Explore your new home and its history**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the First Australians, and are recognised as the traditional owners of the land. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have inhabited Australia for thousands of years, and whilst now only comprising of 3% of Australia's population, continue to retain a deep and profound connection to country.

Australia is a fascinating country, with tourist attractions just about everywhere. TripAdvisor is a great way to get started, with [tripadvisor.com.au/restaurants](http://tripadvisor.com.au/restaurants) providing reviews on local places to eat, and [tripadvisor.com.au/attractions](http://tripadvisor.com.au/attractions) helping you explore some things to do. [Theurbanlist.com](http://Theurbanlist.com) is also a good place to discover new places and activities in your respective cities.

## **Tip #4: Learn about Aussie Food and Lingo**

Much of this you will learn over time, but if you want a head start classic Australian foods to try include lamingtons, Anzac biscuits, pavlova, Tim Tams, meat pies, and vegemite on damper if you're game. Learning some of Aussie slang would also be helpful.

## **Tip #5: Prepare for travel**

Australia is a pretty big place. Nearly eight billion square kilometres big. Even if you can already drive, reapplying for a licence, buying a car, organising registration and insurance, and paying for fuel, and sometimes tolls, parking and repairs can all be very costly and time-consuming, especially if you won't be in Australia during your breaks. If you do want to drive, renting for short periods may be a better option, but different states have different laws about transferring licences, so it's best to check out the relevant websites. For holiday getaways or trips to your clinical placement, carpooling with a local friend is also an option (they'll appreciate the company!).

Otherwise, public transport is easier in the capital cities, more economical (costing cents to dollars for each trip), environmentally-friendly, and you can catch up on your favourite TV shows while in transit. Google Maps is your friend, giving you the best routes from A to B, and it's completely free! Each state has its own transport system and a card to use, which is the easiest way to travel around. In some cities only cards are accepted, whilst in some rural areas you can only use paper tickets available at a local newsagent, convenience store or train station.





State	Transport Card	Concession Rates?
Australian Capital Territory	<a href="#">MyWay Card</a>	Yes!
New South Wales	<a href="#">Opal Card</a>	No, unless on certain scholarships.
Queensland	<a href="#">Go Card</a>	Yes!
South Australia	<a href="#">Metro Card</a>	Yes!
Victoria	<a href="#">Myki</a>	Undergrad only.
Tasmania	<a href="#">Greencard</a>	Yes!
Western Australia	<a href="#">SmartRider</a>	Yes!

#### **Tip #6: Earn money (and experience!)**

If you're looking for a little more cash on the side, getting a job can be both rewarding and help you pick up a few new skills (especially that Aussie slang!). With your visa, you can work up to 40 hours per fortnight during semester and as much as you want during breaks. Before starting work, you'll need an Australian Tax File Number, and when applying for a job you'll often have to submit a résumé (find templates online), and sometimes have to fill out an online form or attend an interview. Check if your university offers a job search, or you can search online through websites such as [jobsearch.gov.au](http://jobsearch.gov.au), [seek.com.au](http://seek.com.au), or [careerone.com.au](http://careerone.com.au). You can find part-time work in many industries, such as tutoring, retail (stores and supermarkets), hospitality (waiting or hotels), babysitting, or whatever interests you!

Do note that if you're self-employed (e.g. working freelance jobs), you might need to apply for an Australian Business Number (ABN). You can check out <https://abr.gov.au/For-Business-Super-funds--Charities/Applying-for-an-ABN/ABN-entitlement/> to find out more about whether you are eligible or whether you need to apply for an ABN.



#### **Tip #7: Your number one priority is your health**

Australia's healthcare is rated amongst the highest in the world, and yet it can still be intimidating to seek for medical service in a foreign country. Despite this, do not hesitate to see a doctor when you need help! Learn about the coverage of your Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) and make full use of it!

As well as visiting the doctor when things come up, remember to take care of your health through preventative measures as well.

- » When visiting the beach or doing some other outside activity, wear sunscreen, a hat, and sunnies
- » Try to maintain a balanced diet, and avoid the temptation of living off takeaway.
- » While time can often be short as a medical student, exercise is important for maintaining nearly everywhere system in your body – join a sports team, gym, or just run around the local park. Try to avoid having more than 2 alcoholic drinks per day, and 4 on an occasion.
- » If you don't feel you're coping, speak out. Tell your friends, look into some online resources ([headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au) is a great place to start), and if your university offers counselling services don't be afraid to book in. It's important to jump onto any problems before they start impacting your studies and living. And importantly, look out for your friends' health too!

#### **Tip #8: Keep an eye on the Internship situation**

Your internship is your first-year practising as a doctor after med school. Internship spots available for international students can vary greatly from year to year depending on the cohort of medical students graduating. Keep your options broad and consider applying for internships interstate, overseas, and back home! There are attempts to fix the problem, with an additional 100 internship positions promised by the Federal Government which would increase to 115 from 2020 onwards. The Federal Government has also increased the federally-funded internship positions to 115 from 2020. It is also important to keep updated with changes in the working visa requirements. In 2018, the old 457 visa has been replaced with the new 482 visa. Keep updated through channels like AMSA's website and the ISN Facebook group.

#### **Tip #9: Know the important details**

In an emergency, call **000** (police, fire & ambulance) University security services – know their phone number, and note any emergency phones on campus Australian hotline for international students concerned about their welfare: **1300 363 079**

# MAINTAINING YOUR WELLBEING

By Therese Forbes, Registered Psychologist  
Originally published in the *Keeping Your Grass Greener* guide (<http://mentalhealth.amsa.org.au/keeping-your-grass-greener/>).

Finding a balance between maintaining your own wellbeing and meeting the demands of studies can be a juggling act. Undoubtedly there will be times when you may need to work harder for a short time to meet deadlines and the stress response provides extra energy to do so. This is a healthy process. However, if your stress response is constantly on overdrive, you will lose the ability to set realistic goals, prioritise and establish essential boundaries.

Avoiding this is about putting boundaries and structures in place that allow you to sustain yourself over time. Maintaining your wellbeing usually includes elements of the following:

## **1.1 Personal and professional health**

### ***Set realistic goals***

There is no surer path to burnout than either unclear goals or those that are too high.

### ***Manage your time***

Invest time and energy selectively and strategically in ways that further your goals.

### ***Exercise***

Burn off that stress producing 'physical energy' pent up in the body. Use exercise to put a buffer between your studies and personal life.

## **1.2 Physical wellbeing**

### ***Rest and relaxation***

The mind and body are one. If you can calm your body your mind will follow and vice versa, therefore relieving symptoms. Laughter, pleasurable activities or ten deep breaths are some suggestions.

### ***Meditation or mindfulness***

Bringing yourself into the present moment – tuning in to the sounds and the environment around you is a really helpful way to bring yourself to a state of calmness.

### ***Maintain non-work aspects of your life***

Work out what the really important aspects to your life are and make time for them.

## **1.3 Mental wellbeing**

Access professional support if things get a bit too hard. Contact your university counselling services or make an appointment with your GP.

## **1.4 Social wellbeing**

### ***Establish and maintain friendships***

Having a good social network around you is probably the best investment you can make towards your long term wellbeing.

### ***Some extra notes on maintaining friendships***

It is natural for some friendships to lapse as you leave school and go your separate ways, but it is important to prioritise staying in touch with those two or three close friends who mean the most to you. This can look like setting up regular meetings (e.g. catching up for dinner once a month, doing hobbies together i.e. watching or playing sport, dragging them along to med events), calling them on your commute to university or hospital, keeping up your Snap streak, or even getting old-fashioned and sending a letter with updates from your life and questions about their's.

In terms of meeting people outside of med, hobbies and interests are key. Universities are full of different clubs and societies, so if you like running, or orchestra, or tea or chocolate, there is likely a society for that! If you make an effort to be involved in these groups, you will get to meet people from different courses and in this way expand your social circle beyond med. Outside of university, churches, local community groups, part time jobs and other activities can help you make friends with people beyond your university, which can also be a breath of fresh air.

### **Extra Tips:**

- » Pour into your relationships- whether it is finding time to see your med school friends outside of med and talk about non-med things, or having a meal with your family or old school friends, strong relationships will get you through the hard times in med like nothing else. You will go through many ups and downs as a student, and after graduation. To have good friends, you have to be a good friend, and this means that you have to be present in the lives of those you care for. Sometimes meeting up in person is not possible, but there is always the phone, social media, email, etc.
- » Keep an interest in hobbies and skills other than med. If you like music, keep practising your instrument or get involved in ensembles. If dancing or sport is your passion, continue taking part. You can't do everything, and it is crucial to also spend time just doing nothing! Choose a few things outside of med and commit to keeping up your involvement, to make yourself into a well-rounded doctor.
- » Making the most of your time can be achieved with careful planning. Whether your personal timetable is digital or on paper, start with putting in all your classes and other compulsory events, then allocate adequate time to study, and finally consider how to make the most of your free



time left over. Also remember not to skimp on sleep! Poor sleep will undo the work of hours of study, wear out your body and leave you exhausted in your free time. Everyone's sleep requirement is different, but as a general rule, aim for 8-9 hours per night, with waking and sleeping times being kept as consistent as possible.

### ***Some notes on practising your religion whilst studying at medical school***

Most medical schools are understanding and supportive of the religious beliefs of their students. If required, prayers can be performed in hospital in dedicated prayer rooms often located in or near wards. However, it may be more challenging to negotiate a time to pray if you are, say, observing a surgery in an operating theatre. Therefore, it is highly recommended to speak with the organiser of your class in order to notify them of your needs should you require special arrangements.

### **Perfectionism: A medical student's strength and weakness**

Medical students are infamous for being Type A, perfectionistic, neurotic personalities. Being per-

fectionistic can be a good thing in some cases - it can help drive a person to work hard and look for areas to improve. But being an obsessional, unhealthy perfectionist can mean that no amount of external signs of success (such as getting into med school!) can feel like enough. Although by no means exhaustive, the table below showcases some common features of the healthy, and the unhealthy perfectionist.

Whilst it is quite normal to experience perfectionist thoughts on occasion, it is not okay for these thoughts to consume you or control how you feel about yourself and your experience in medical school. Help is available from a number of sources, including your university counselling services and external organisations such as Headspace and Beyond Blue. In addition, the AMSA Mental Health website has some useful information: <http://mentalhealth.amsa.org.au/>. You will be a better doctor, and more importantly a much more fulfilled and satisfied person if you find the courage to do something about it now.

Lifeline: **13 11 14**

Suicide Call Back Service: **1300 659 467**

Beyond Blue: **1300 224 636**

Headspace: **1800 650 890**

Healthy Perfectionist	Unhealthy Perfectionist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Takes pride in what they have achieved</li> <li>- When things don't go as planned, reflects meaningfully on why things may not have worked out, and acknowledges any non-preventative factors e.g. sickness during study period etc.</li> <li>- Doesn't set a narrow definition for what 'success' looks like, but has a range of acceptable outcomes e.g. 'I would like to aim to get above 65%' and will adjust expectations according to circumstances e.g. 'Given I have been really sick, for this exam I am aiming for a pass'</li> <li>- Does not derive self-esteem and sense of accomplishment from one area of life, but has a variety of areas that give sense of accomplishment e.g. 'I am not just good at academics, but I am also great at making my friends laugh, and photography'</li> <li>- Doesn't ruminate on past mistakes, and generally thinks positively about the future</li> <li>- Divides time wisely between work, relationships and relaxing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Instead of pride, mainly feels relief that they haven't failed</li> <li>- When things don't go as planned, thinks negative and abusive thoughts about self e.g. 'It happened because you're lazy and stupid' and has a 'no excuses' mentality towards unfortunate events</li> <li>- Sets very narrow, very rigid goal and will not deviate from it regardless of circumstances e.g. 'I must get above 95% or I will have failed myself'</li> <li>- Derives all self-esteem and sense of accomplishment from only one or two areas of life e.g. 'If I don't do well academically, I am not good at anything'</li> <li>- Frets excessively about past mistakes and worries about the likelihood of future ones</li> <li>- Priorities work over everything, and struggles to find time to relax and connect with friends and family</li> </ul>



# REASONS TO HAVE YOUR OWN GP

*Dr Kym Jenkins Medical Director and Senior Clinician, Victorian Doctors' Health Program  
Dr Stewart Morrison Board Member, Victorian Doctors' Health Program  
Adapted from original article in Keeping Your Grass Greener guide*

None of us in the medical profession should ever be our own doctor - we all need and deserve good, independent and objective medical advice.

The General Practitioner is the best person to provide this. A good GP will get to know you as a person and be able to take a holistic approach to your health needs, however few or many they may be. It's not only important to have your own GP, it is also important to have a GP with whom you feel comfortable enough to share some of your innermost thoughts and anxieties. Sometimes this means moving on from the family GP that you've grown up with. Choosing your GP can be a very personal decision. It's good to consider the following points when finding a match that's good for you:

## **Finding a doctor who's comfortable treating other medical professionals**

- » Treats you like a patient, not a colleague
- » Explains things to you as if you have no knowledge

## **Finding a new GP when moving regionally or interstate**

- » Personal recommendations are good
- » University health services - if available on campus
- » Otherwise enquire through the University clinical school for a list of local GPs, with expertise with student related issues.

## **Finding a GP that fits your financial situation**

- » Ask about bulk-billing
  - If cost is a factor, it will make you more likely to seek help when needed.
- » Discuss any concerns about costs with your doctor
  - Many will reduce or make sure there are no out of pocket expenses for medical students.
  - You may also be eligible for a particular healthcare pathway which can help cover the costs of referrals, consultations, and medication.

## **Know that the confidentiality of your GP consultations is a given**

- » Nothing you say or do should be disclosed to a third party unless a) you want it to be or b) the doctor is obliged to report under mandatory reporting laws which are set out on the AHPRA website.
- » Feeling stressed, depressed or having a mental illness are certainly not in themselves grounds for mandatory reporting.



*By Dr Hieu Pham, Consultant Psychiatrist  
Originally published in the Keeping Your Grass Greener guide*

## **1.1 Don't take the medical course too seriously**

Take your patients seriously, take your reading seriously, take notes from your tutors seriously, be curious about medicine but don't focus too much on becoming a doctor. It's easy to wish your life away thinking about what you want to become. If you spend too much time worrying about the future and you can forget to enjoy the journey.

## **1.2 Spend every dollar you earn while in training**

Spend it to do other things; travel, read, learn to draw, play sport, drink wine with friends, eat out, go to the theatre.

## **1.3 Challenge everything**

- Your religious beliefs – be an atheist, read the Bible, the Quran, Tao Tee Ching, Buddha's teachings.
- Your political beliefs – love Tony Abbott for a day.
- Your career – Challenge yours, your parents' and others'.
- Your sports team – be a Collingwood supporter for a day.
- Other's social expectations or you – both your parents, and others.
- Your own identity.

## **1.4 To de-stress, live happily for today**

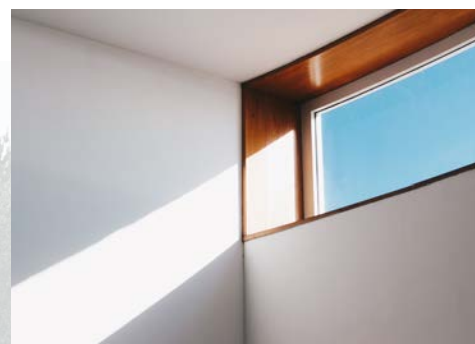
Enjoy today. If you can't live for today happily, you can't plan to live happily in the future. An unhappy person cannot provide happiness to others just as peace cannot be maintained by violence. Time is the biggest cause of stress. Time is precious. Allow time, never double book yourself. Prioritise your values, not your time.

## **1.5 A poem in conclusion:**

For death is certain, But the timing of death is not.  
So the question is: What is one to do?

## *Things that actually matter*

- » Passing (at least) all your barrier exams!
- » Knowing anatomy!
- » Having a good 'bedside manner'- if patients don't like you, you will struggle in clinical exams and in your job
- » Learning how you best learn (you will be studying throughout your whole career, so try to figure out now the best methods you use to understand and memorise information)
- » Having a life outside of med. You will be lonely if all you have to fill your time is med, and boring if med is all you can talk about. Uni is the perfect time to try new things and pick up that new language you've always wanted to learn, or practise a new skill. You will be more able to relate to your patients and form connections with them if you are a normal person, rather than a med robot.





## What is AMSA?

AMSA is a vibrant student-run organisation that represents, informs and connects all of Australia's 17,000 medical students. Hundreds of medical student volunteers work together to run our professional-standard events, advocacy, projects and publications. We are a community, and there is a place here for all students. Have a think of what you might be interested in and contact us at any time. We're excited to see where Medicine and AMSA can take you!

## What do we do?

### **Advocacy**

As the peak representative body for Australian medical students, AMSA has a strong voice in advocacy on many levels. We regularly meet with governmental bodies and stakeholders in medical education, utilise media, and publish articles in medical journals and AMA publications to support and effect change for Australian medical students.

Our policies are developed by students like you, reviewed at your university's ThinkTank, where your thoughts are collated and presented at National Council. Thanks to Australian medical students like you, last year AMSA had multiple advocacy successes including improving and reforming bonded medical student contracts, and significant reforms in the treatment of medical student mental health across Australian universities!

### **Events**

AMSA events are renowned for their unique blend of educational talks, social nights and skills development - they provide experiences and skills that will last you beyond your medical degree!

#### » **National Leadership Development Seminar (NLDS)**

NLDS, AMSA's premier academic event, will be held in Canberra in mid-May in 2020, where 90 keen future-leaders of our medical student cohort are chosen to attend to upskill on leadership, advocacy and political engagement

#### » **National Convention - June 29 to July 5**

This year this famed, largest student-run conference in the southern hemisphere will be held in Melbourne from June 29 to July 5. The week-long event flawlessly blends together inspiring academics and lively socials to ensure it will be one of the most memorable weeks of your medical degree.

#### » **Global Health Conference (GHC) - August 21-25**

Focusing on innovation and equity in global health,

learn what you can do to make a positive difference in the world, at this 5-day long conference held from the 21st to 25th August on the Gold Coast. This event boasts over 700 delegates and tackles the current global issues we face.

#### » **Rural Health Summit**

The Rural Health Summit in Armidale will draw our 2020 event calendar to a close. Scheduled for September, it focuses on all things rural, with uniquely engaging speakers, workshops and networking opportunities.

## **Projects and Committees**

AMSA has four committees - Global Health, Rural Health and International Students' Network, which do amazing work in their specific interest areas; and MedEd which is AMSA's research branch. Our projects span topics from LGBTIQ health, refugee health, climate change, and everything in between. We also have our annual blood drive Vampire Cup with the Red Cross; our Mental Health Campaign; Gender Equity, which runs our female mentoring program; and AMSA Academy, providing our educational resources.

## **Publications**

AMSA produces many publications throughout the year designed to educate, entertain and inspire. These publications range from guides such as this one, a peer-reviewed journal (Vector), magazines to amplify your voice (Panacea and Frontier), to newsletters and bulletins alike! Keep an eye out for the Internship & Residency Guide released early each year to give you the inside scoop on kickstarting your career. Sign up to our newsletter to our newsletter on our website to stay in the loop!

## What can I do now?

- Follow us at @youramsa on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.
- Become a member (<https://www.amsa.org.au/join>) to attend our world-renowned events, access our membership benefits and have voting rights at AMSA Councils.
- Look through the Orange Guide, see what you are interested in, and then become a part of it. We're your AMSA!





A photograph of three people sitting at a wooden desk in front of a large window. On the left, a woman with dark hair is looking down at a book. In the middle, a man with short brown hair is looking towards the right. On the right, another man with short brown hair is looking back towards the middle man, holding a pen. The desk is cluttered with books, papers, and a small plant. The window looks out onto a green landscape with trees and a brick building.

# Keep on striving

**Dr Russell Thompson**

2018 MDA National & RDAA Rural Health Bursary Winner,  
recent graduate

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