

# The WONCA Rural Medical Education Guidebook

## PREFACE

We are very excited to launch the *WONCA Rural Medical Education Guidebook* at the 12<sup>th</sup> WONCA World Rural Health Conference, Gramado, Brazil.

The roots for the Guidebook go back to 1992 when a very important meeting was held on the sidelines of the WONCA Global Family Doctor conference in Vancouver, Canada. At this meeting an interested group of rural practitioners saw the need for WONCA to develop a specific focus on rural doctors. As a result, the WONCA Working Party on Rural Practice (WWPRP) was formed. The group set about producing a visionary roadmap for rural medical education in the form of a seminal document, the WONCA policy on *Training for Rural Practice 1995*. This was followed four years later by further recommendations made in a companion document, the WONCA policy on *Rural Health and Rural Practice 1999*, which was revised in 2001.

The first international rural health conference was organised in China by the WWPRP in 1996 – with subsequent events being held in South Africa (1997), Malaysia (1999), Canada (2000), Australia (2002), Spain (2003), USA (2006), Nigeria (2008), Greece (2009), the Philippines (2011), Canada (2012) and Brazil (2014). These gatherings bring together rural medical doctors, nurses and other health care providers, along with educators and community leaders who share their passion, experiences and ideas to develop rural health, rural medical education and rural communities.

The initial educational focus has been accompanied by an emerging realisation that rural medical education (RME) is not only good education for medical students and graduate learners but is a prerequisite for addressing the rural workforce shortages, as it exposes young health professionals to the rich and diverse experiences that rural practice offers.

### ***Why this Guidebook?***

Despite the increasing literature and growing evidence for RME, our colleagues around the world expressed the need for a how-to book of practical strategies and ideas for training health care workers for rural practice.

In response to this, over 70 health care professionals who have expertise in some aspect of rural medical education and practice were approached to write a chapter based on their knowledge and practical experience in their own countries. Initial drafts were presented in 2009 at a workshop at the Crete WONCA Rural Health Conference and were further discussed and developed in 2011 by an editorial group who met in Bellagio, Italy, supported by The Rockefeller Foundation.



**The Rural Medical Education Guidebook editorial group meeting  
in Bellagio, Italy. May 2011**

### ***Putting it all together***

The editorial team who met in Bellagio created an overarching structure for the Guidebook and commissioned rural educators and practitioners from a range of countries to write chapters (and gladly accepted offers of others). The editors have been working actively with the authors on the Guidebook since 2011, resulting in this final collection of chapters as seen in the contents page below.

In editing these wide range of manuscripts, we endeavoured to develop coherence across the chapters through a common standard and similar format, while not imposing a uniform writing style. Rather, we wanted authors to be able to retain the freedom to express their concepts in their own 'voice' so that readers could hear both their challenges and the efforts required, often in contexts of considerable resistance. While the experience presented is necessarily largely medical in nature, it also includes a range of insights about education and social processes that are intrinsic both to learning generally and to rural and remote contexts in particular.

## ***Overview of contents***

This open source Guidebook has been published on the web in order to be easily downloadable and accessible around the world. The chapters have been arranged into five themes with sub-themes, as follows:

1. OVERVIEW: FRAMING AND RESOURCING OF RURAL MEDICAL EDUCATION AND PRACTICE
  - 1.1 Theory, values and social accountability
  - 1.2 Resourcing rural health: funding and human resources
  - 1.3 Gender and cultural considerations in rural practice
2. MEDICAL EDUCATION IN RURAL SETTINGS
  - 2.1 Rural medical schools and colleges
  - 2.2 Teaching, learning and assessment in rural medical education
  - 2.3 Personal support and social considerations in rural health practice
  - 2.4 Clinical research in rural settings
3. PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR RURAL MEDICAL EDUCATORS
  - 3.1 Professional support and development for rural medical educators
  - 3.2 Technical support for rural medical educators
4. UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION
  - 4.1 Overview of undergraduate rural medical education
  - 4.2 Undergraduate student recruitment and selection
  - 4.3 Undergraduate curriculum and models of delivery
5. POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION
  - 5.1 Postgraduate training and professional development
  - 5.2 Advanced clinical skills training

The Guidebook aims to be a useful resource amongst rural colleagues - to cross-fertilise experiences and build a stronger and more vibrant community of rural health care practitioners and medical educators.

## What next?

There are necessarily gaps and emphases in this collection that suggest that other chapters could be added. In addition there will be innovations and new experiences in the future that this Guidebook would be well placed to publicise.

So, if you see a gap that you feel you could fill, please do let us know. We are keen to see the Guidebook grow as a resource of ideas and practical tips that can inspire all of us to be the most helpful to our rural communities around the world.



Assoc Professor Alan Bruce Chater (Australia)  
*Editor-in-chief*

And on behalf of the editors:

- Jim Rourke (Canada)
- Roger Strasser (Canada)
- Ian Couper (South Africa)
- Steve Reid (South Africa)

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