

## **RURAL HERO EXAMPLE:**

### **Dr Peter Snow**

WONCA Member Organisation: Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners

Name: Peter Snow

Year of Birth: 1935

Year of Death: 2006

Place of Work: Tapanui, New Zealand

#### **Brief Biography:**

Peter attended Auckland Grammar School and went on to study Medicine at Otago.

#### **Why they have been nominated “rural hero”:**

In 1984 Peter was presented with a number of patients with a prolonged exertional flu-like illness, but presenting no diagnosable condition. While some people thought they were no different from commonly found “Tired All The Time” cases, Dr Snow was convinced that they were indeed sick and proceeded to investigate. Many were sheep farmers who previously had a perfect record of health. Observing a similarity between the symptoms of stock suffering from selenium deficiency and these patients, he was the first doctor in New Zealand to identify the disease which turned out to be an outbreak of myalgic encephalomyelitis, now classed as chronic fatigue syndrome.

Due to, often disparaging, publicity surrounding these discoveries and a study into them by Peter and colleagues the illness came to be known in New Zealand as “Tapanui flu” after the town of the same name in West Otago. He was an excellent care provider, decision maker and communicator who also became concerned at the number of farmers injured in farm accidents, particularly those involving motorcycles, and made recommendations for improving farm safety.

He was a community leader who campaigned against the closure of his local hospital at which he was on call 24 hrs a day 7 days a week.

Dr Snow’s highly enquiring mind led him to study many topics within the medical field and beyond and included the unusual rock formation at The Paukerau Landslip . His theory was of an Asteroid Impact on the Moon in 1766 that resulted in siliceous ejecta that fell to the earth forming many unusual geological structures such as the “moonstones” that are found in the West Otago district and beyond. This interest also led him to study prehistory of the South Maori and later serving as executive member of a Maori health board.

#### **Publications: (APA reference style)**

Epidemic neuromyasthenia and chronic fatigue syndrome in West Otago New Zealand, a 10 year follow up. Levine, Paul H. ; Snow, Peter G. ; Ranum, Bernard A. ; Paul, Charlotte ; Holmes, Michael J. Archives of Internal Medicine, April 14, 1997, Vol.157(7), p.750(5)

The Tapanui region of New Zealand: Site of a Tunguska around 800 years ago? Snow, Peter ; Steel, Duncan Anglo-Australian Services of Botswana, Lunar and Planetary Inst., Asteroids, Comets, Meteors 1991; p 569-572

On supplementing the selenium intake of New Zealanders. 2. Prolonged metabolic experiments with daily supplements of selenomethionine, selenite and fish. Robinson, M F ; Rea, H M ; Friend, G M ; Stewart, R D ; Snow, P C ; Thomson, C D The British journal of nutrition, 1978, Vol.39(3), pp.589-600

Pictures: (maximum 1MB in size)

Dr Peter Snow



Tapanui Hospital where Peter worked

