



Hotsheet

The Alberta Rural Physician Action Plan

January 2006 Issue

Included in this issue:

1. RPAP Round Table Planned
2. New RHA Support for Teaching Functions
3. 2006 RPAP Award Campaign

Hinton Skills Day

A rural clinical skills weekend was held at the Black Cat Guest Ranch near Hinton on 26 and 27 November 2005. Fifty students from the U of A attended, half from first year and half from second year.

Students spent Saturday with Dr. Caffaro learning how to suture pigs' feet and start IVs. Other activities over the weekend included a water polo match and sleigh rides.



Round Table Discussions Planned

RPAP will hold Round Table discussions in early 2006 to gather stakeholder input on its future role and focus. The Round Table was one recommendation flowing from RPAP's recently completed comprehensive external evaluation.

The evaluation showed that, "although the RPAP has not changed the historical pattern of specialists being concentrated in regional centres and family

practitioners being located in rural communities outside of regional centres, it has made a substantial contribution to the recruitment and retention of physicians...This has occurred, in large measure, because the RPAP initiatives have been designed to address the major factors related to rural physician recruitment and retention.”

Many RPAP stakeholders were interviewed by RPM Planning Associates for the evaluation. “Some of the key stakeholders believe it is time for RPAP to become more heavily involved in direct physician recruitment activities in order to increase the supply of physicians in small/remote communities.” As well, “some believe that RPAP needs to change. They are of the opinion that changes in the health care delivery system, a greater emphasis on rural development as well as changing roles of physicians and other health care professionals require RPAP to consider thinking about how it should be positioned in the longer term – looking beyond its current accomplishments and thinking about how it can support the objectives of other key stakeholders in meeting the health needs of rural Albertans.”

To that end, it was recommended that RPAP convene a Round Table to make suggestions related to its future direction and how it can support the objectives of key stakeholders in meeting the health needs of rural Albertans. Organizations both inside and outside the medical profession will be involved with a focus on establishing priorities for rural medicine.

Four policy questions related to RPAP’s future role have been identified by the RPAP Board for Round Table discussions. These are:

- Should the RPAP have a more direct recruitment role?
- Should efforts be focused primarily on smaller rural communities?
- Should there be a focus on learners more likely to go into rural medicine?
- What specific, tangible retention ideas could provide a rural differentiation?

Round Table discussions in early 2006 will gather stakeholder input from several sources. Details are currently being finalized. More information may be obtained by contacting David Kay, Executive Director, at 1-866-423-9911 or E-mail: David.Kay@rpap.ab.ca

New RHA Support for Teaching Functions

To support the RPAP's/Faculties of Medicine's extensive array of rural/regional undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, the second of four planned Regional Site Academic Support Assistants has been hired.

Tanya Cox of Grande Prairie joins Karen LaDuke in Medicine Hat in this important role. Both positions are 50:50 RPAP-RHA funded positions on the RHA payrolls. They relieve the RHA burden for rural medical education support and they leverage the RPAP funding to increase RHA medical staff support as well.

The RPAP is hoping to place staff in each of Red Deer and Lethbridge over the coming months through similar RPAP-RHA funding arrangements.

Are You Interested in Recruiting a Medical Student?

In October 2005, the RPAP Board awarded its first two Rural Medical Student Bursaries.

The **Rural Medical School Award** provides \$5,000 for each year of medical studies to assist with the student's tuition, accommodation, living and/or travel expenses. The Award is available to students in any year of their medical degree.

Under the **Rural Medical Student Bursary** recipients receive reimbursement for the full cost of university tuition and fees (~\$13,000-16,000) for each year during their medical studies. The Bursary is available to students in the first year of a medical degree. Once accepted, the student will receive the award until medical school graduation contingent upon meeting the program requirements which includes a five (5) year return-in-service (RiSA) requirement to live and work in a rural Alberta community.

The inaugural **Bursary** recipients are both from the UofA and will soon be contacting RHAs for a RiSA. If you are interested in recruiting these two medical students, please contact David Kay, Executive Director, at 1-866-423-9911 or E-mail: David.Kay@rpap.ab.ca

Medical Students Volunteer with School Outreach Program

U of C and U of A medical students are volunteering to help with RPAP's School Outreach program. Following an orientation session, medical students work with one of RPAP's two Rural Physician Consultants at *Lunch and Learn* and Career Days at rural schools to encourage rural high school students to consider a medical career. Younger students respond well to the medical students who are closer to their age and who have direct experience in gaining access to medical school.

RPAP Incorporation

Implementation arrangements for The Alberta Rural Physician Action Plan's (RPAP) recent incorporation as a not-for-profit corporation under Part 9 of the *Companies Act (Alberta)* have been completed. A board of directors representing the Members of the company (Health Boards of Alberta, the CPSA and the AMA) has been formed, and all the other requirements of incorporation have been established. The new company assumes all the objectives of the previous RPAP, continues to be funded by AHW, and will grant funds to the universities and the AMA to undertake some of the RPAP's initiatives.

2006 RPAP Awards

Rural Alberta residents and rural communities will soon be encouraged to nominate physicians in their communities for two RPAP Awards. The annual Award nomination campaign gets underway in late February.

The **RPAP Award of Distinction** recognizes the contributions of all rural physicians, especially those 'unsung heroes' who provide Alberta rural communities with outstanding medical services and who also make huge contributions to medical practice and their communities. This award is for physicians who have practised more than 12 years in rural Alberta.

RPAP's Early Careerist Award honours physicians who, early in their careers, have already shown promise as future icons. This award is for family physicians who have practised from five to twelve years.

Communities that recognize and honour the achievements of these physicians are more likely to have physicians who remain in rural practice. 2006 Award nominations must be received by 5:00 p.m., Friday, 31 March 2006.

Cabin Fever 2006

Cabin Fever 2006 – the RPAP/U of C's Rural Medicine Faculty Development Workshop will run 9-12 February 2006 at the Delta Lodge at Kananaskis. The program is designed to provide rural physicians with opportunities to increase their preceptor skill sets.

More information may be obtained through the RPAP web site www.rpap.ab.ca

More information on these items or the RPAP in general may be obtained by contacting David Kay, Executive Director, at 1-866-423-9911 or E-mail: David.Kay@rpap.ab.ca, or through the RPAP web site www.rpap.ab.ca