

Health Chat

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MACKAY HOSPITAL AND HEALTH SERVICE

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Life-saving machine treats 107 patients in one year p3

Meet our Roving Reporter for Moranbah Hospital p 5

Resilience on the Run program delivered to intern doctors p 6

Plus much more ...

Study shows highest rates of Q fever in Mackay HHS



Dr Apoorva Saboo was part of the research team.

A retrospective study has found Mackay Hospital and Health Service (HHS) to have some of the highest rates of Q fever notifications in Australia.

Q fever is an air-borne illness caused by virus *coxiella burnetti*. Those who contract the illness show normal symptoms for a viral illness however it can affect the valves of the heart and liver causing long-term effects of fatigue.

This study on Q fever was commenced by then-fifth year James Cook University medical students Pirathaban Sivabalan and Apoorva Saboo under the guidance of Dr Robert Norton and Dr James Yew.

The primary aim of the study was to investigate exposure risk factors, in particular the effect of wildlife and rainfall on the prevalence of Q fever.

Supported by Mackay Base Hospital and James Cook University, the two-year research project has led to findings relevant both locally in the Mackay region and rest of Australia, particularly in travel medicine and infectious diseases.

Researcher and now Surgical Principal House Officer at Mackay Base Hospital Dr Apoorva Saboo said Proserpine and the Whitsunday region in particular were identified as hotspots for the illness.

“We found that for every 100,000 persons 42 people had been diagnosed with Q fever in Proserpine and 14.8 in the Whitsunday region,” she said.

“That’s basically 26 times the national average in Proserpine and nine times the average in the Whitsunday region, it’s a significant difference.”

The secondary aims were to identify occupational, social and lifestyle factors that may increase the risk and to examine the geographical distribution of Q fever in the region.

Research lead and Director of Microbiology and Pathology at Townsville Hospital Dr Robert Norton said Q fever is an important infectious disease that has in the past been strongly associated with the abattoir and cattle industries.

“Over the last 10 years there has been an increased awareness that this may not be the only occupation to be at risk in our region,” Dr Norton said.

“Our study looked at over 60 cases of Q fever in and around Mackay HHS to determine what risk factors were involved.

“We found that exposure and direct contact with native mammals such as wallabies was a significant risk factor.

“We also found a direct association between rainfall and cases with majority of cases diagnosed in Summer and Autumn.”

With a high incidence of Q fever and being an integral area for wildlife in Queensland, the research team believes Mackay HHS is an ideal study location to further evaluate exposure risk factors for Q fever.

While their retrospective study has its limitations it has built a good foundation for further prospective studies.

The research findings were published in March by well-known international publishing firm Elsevier. MIRI sponsored the open access publishing fee.

Life-saving machine treats 107 patients in one year



Ross Martin with the ROTEM

The Rotational Thromboelastometry (ROTEM) machine has helped saved the lives of more than 107 patients since it was first introduced 12 months ago.

The ROTEM helps staff identify blood products that are needed for a patient bleeding uncontrollably. It does this within 10 minutes through rapidly testing blood samples to identify the cause of bleeding, the strength of blood clotting and abnormalities in the blood so targeted treatment can be given.

Intensive Care Unit (ICU) Staff Specialist Dr Anni Paasiltahti said

the machine was purchased for \$38,000 and is already showing financial savings of \$5,000 per month for the HHS.

“Since purchasing the ROTEM we have seen a noted drop in red cell and plasma usage despite an increase in transfusion activity,” she said.

“It has been used 169 times on 107 patients with some of the most common causes being severe trauma, post-partum haemorrhage and ulcer bleeding.

“As a result we’ve seen length of hospital stay reduced amongst patients who we have used the ROTEM as well as less acute problems and less transfusion reactions.”

Pathology Queensland scientist Ross Martin said that before the ROTEM Pathology Queensland would thaw a large quantity of different frozen blood products to use in an emergency.

“ROTEM guides the clinician

as to what product to use and approximately how much the patient needs of each product. This means more appropriate blood products are used.”

“That’s a significant saving when we have had patients who need up to 130 bags of blood product at a time,” he said.

Mr Martin said any technology that identifies the best use of donated blood products was welcome.

“Blood is a precious resource that is donated by the community. We look after it very carefully. The ROTEM will help preserve this resource,” he said.

“If we use less in traumas there will be more blood available for other patients such as those with burns or having chemotherapy.”

The Mackay Base Hospital was the first regional facility in Queensland to support the use of a ROTEM and our ICU remains the lead for educating, interpreting and guiding the treatment.

Mackay Base Hospital ED team farewell Carmel Aitken



Carmel Aitken has clocked off after 18 years working at Mackay Base Hospital’s Emergency Department.

Her familiar face has greeted countless numbers of people at triage, checking Medicare cards, health insurance and contact details.

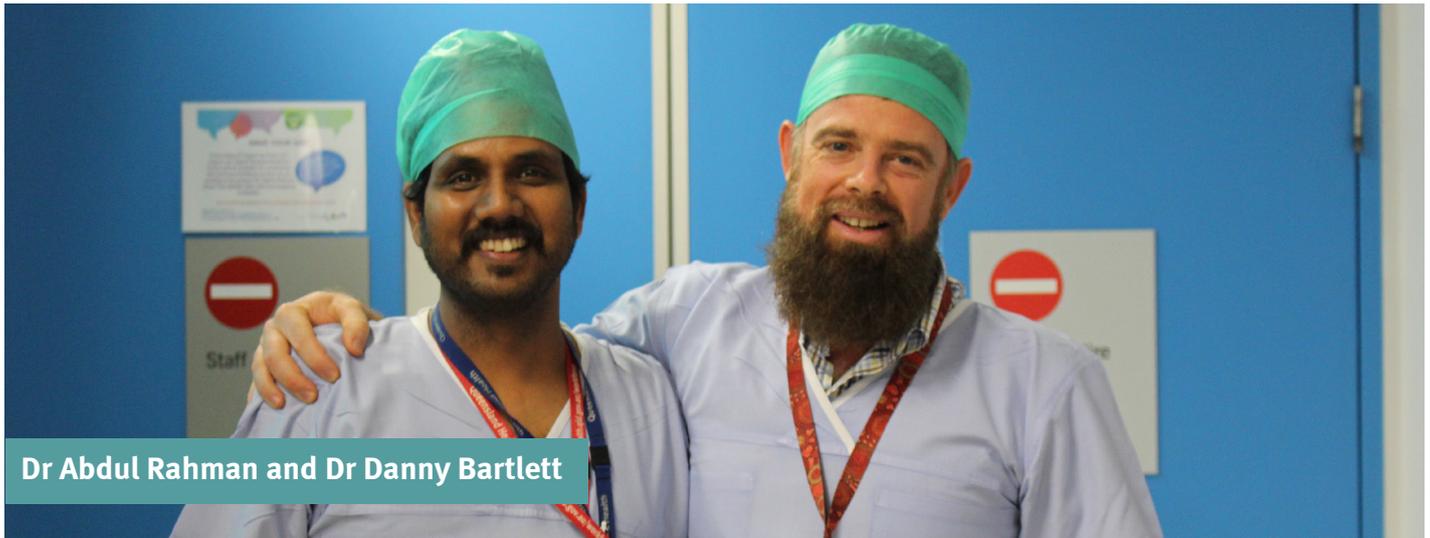
Carmel says the transition to a digital hospital has been one of the biggest changes in her career, moving from paper charts to digital records.

She has also enjoyed working in medical records, medical imaging and on the switch.

She’s now planning to do some travelling with her husband Rex in the caravan, hopefully to Western Australia.

Anyone who works for Queensland Health will appreciate Carmel’s final observation about one thing that hasn’t changed in 18 years – HBCIS!

Abdul says farewell after five years in anaesthetics department



Dr Abdul Rahman and Dr Danny Bartlett

Anaesthetic Technician Abdul Rahman has moved on after five years with lots of fond memories of Mackay Base Hospital.

Mackay quickly became home for Abdul, his wife Marilyn and son Reyshan and was a big contrast to their former life in Kuwait.

"I wanted to do something in the medical field so I did a bachelor's degree in anaesthesia technology and worked in India and Kuwait before coming to Australia.

"It was a big change to come to a new country and a new culture but everyone welcomed us and treated me well," he said.

Abdul's Mackay highlights include moving into the new hospital and being involved in the planning process and establishing new services.

"The logistics were interesting, planning all the services behind the walls people don't see, all very interesting for a technically minded person.

An anaesthetic technician is responsible for the functioning of the machines, trouble shooting any problems, ordering equipment, disposables and pharmacy items.

"We do both administration, clinical and technical work so it's a very interesting job," Abdul said.

"The hospital has grown so much and we now do more than a thousand caesars a month.

"We have a lot of interesting cases so the job is never boring. I remember one weekend we did 11 caesars and at the end we thought surely there is no one left to deliver in Mackay now," he said.

And does he have any regrets about his career choice?

"No. Sometimes you feel like you work at times when everyone is sleeping but you are in a team that is saving someone's life and that is more important, not many people get to do that. It's an opportunity and a privilege to do this."

Work took on a personal edge when his second son Roshan was born by caesarean in the new hospital in 2015.

"All of my colleagues looked after my other son while my wife was in labour. They cooked for me, brought me lunch and dinners for about a week and we will never forget that kindness," he said.



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to find out what is happening across the Mackay Hospital and Health Service

www.facebook.com/mackayhhs

Meet Tony Batchelor, our Roving Reporter for Moranbah Hospital

Tony shot to fame with his Cyclone Debbie report and now he's on board as our regular Moranbah Hospital correspondent. Follow us on Facebook to see Tony's video reports.



Hi there, my name is Tony Batchelor and I'm the Moranbah roving reporter for the Mackay Hospital and Health Service.

My day to day job, when I'm not being a roving reporter at Moranbah Hospital is being their grounds person, maintenance repair person and all round Mr Fix It.

The Moranbah campus is a large area to cover and it keeps me on my toes, with lawns and gardens to maintain.

I also keep the accommodation area clean and mowed so when visitors are staying over they feel welcome. I forgot to mention that I am also the head BBQ cook every Friday lunch time for the staff social club.

I am married with four beautiful children and we have lived in Moranbah for just over 20 years. Before I started at the hospital I ran a local tyre shop here, and worked as an outside tyre fitter for 30 years.

I love watching my favourite football team play, which is of course is the Cowboys, and also I am right into the V8s. I love going over to Rubyvale when we can, as we have a claim over there which can be very rewarding just prospecting and specking for gems.

I have been at Moranbah Hospital for nearly five years and have never looked back. I love working here as we

are one big family and being one of two males working here doesn't faze me one bit.

Make sure you keep an eye out on the health service's facebook page as I am in the process of putting together three roving reports:

- 1] Six months on since Cyclone Debbie hit our region
- 2] Our prize winning Rachel's Rose Garden
- 3] The opening of the new mental health building.

Also with being September I am involved with the Keep Your Hat On to help raise money for skin cancer as I have just found out that have one on my ear.

As I mentioned earlier, we have lived in Moranbah just over 20 years and love it. I have seen the ups and downs with the mining industry over the years.

I have seen a lot of good people leave our little community with the down turn. But like any little rural town the best thing is when the chips are down we all get together and help each other out.

I love working for Mackay HHS, should have done it a long time ago. Till next time this is Tony your roving reporter signing off.

P.S I could be in your neighbourhood any time doing a roving report so if you see me make sure you come and say hello.

Resilience on the Run program delivered to intern doctors

23 Mackay HHS interns have learnt lifelong skills this week as part of the Resilience on the Run program.

Psychiatrist and life coach from Breeze Life Coaching Dr Ira van der Steenstraten said the program was aimed at improving coping strategies and wellbeing in junior doctors.

“One of the things I address in the program is mindfulness, which nowadays we know there is science behind it and we have a lot of excellent research showing the benefits of mindfulness both on mental health wellbeing and attention,” she said.

“We also address interpersonal communication skills as well as where and when to get help, signs of burnout, compassion fatigue, when to recognise it and how to approach it.”

The program was initially developed following the 2013 release of beyondblue’s National Mental Health Survey of Doctors and Medical Students.

“The survey showed there were shocking numbers of distress amongst medical students and doctors in Australia, which we know is also the case internationally,” she said

“In response to these findings AMA Queensland Council of Doctors in Training asked me to develop a resilience program to better equip young doctors to cope with the transition from medical school to the workforce, which is an especially challenging phase.”

During her time here Dr van der Steenstraten sung praise of the supportive environment offered to junior doctors by the Medical Education Unit.

“What I find particularly interesting in the Mackay HHS is how caring and supportive the Medical Education Unit, along with their Director of Clinical Training Dr Stephen Lambert, is,” she said.

“They really recognise how building resilience is such an important skill for our interns and it really is a pleasure to come to a hospital where you can find that support for young doctors.”

AMA Queensland’s Resilience on the Run program is now funded by Queensland Health and will be delivered by AMA Queensland to all Queensland-based intern doctors from 2017 - 2019.

Welcome to Rebecca McDonnell



What is your role?

My role is Allied Health Team Leader for Mackay Hinterland – based in Clermont. This involves looking after the Allied Health rural generalist clinicians in three main rural sites in the hinterland (Moranbah, Dysart, Clermont). My background is nutrition and dietetics. Part of my role will involve establishing and implementing a Dietetics service in the area, which is currently serviced by the wonderful nutrition and dietetic team at the Mackay Hospital via telehealth.

What are you working on at the moment?

I am working on strengthening our rural-generalist model of practice and task delegation, and skill-sharing using the Calderdale framework to provide innovative, patient centred care. As a team we are also working on developing strong partnerships with internal and external stakeholders in the communities.

What did you do prior to starting with the health service?

Prior to entering this role I worked as a clinical and community dietitian in various settings across the continuum of care, and in a number of different Queensland Health services - both rural and regional. I joined MHHS in July 2016 as a clinical dietitian and haven’t looked back!

What are you most looking forward to in your role?

I am very passionate about the delivery of healthcare in rural areas, so I am keen to further strengthen and develop our Hinterland Allied Health Team to ensure that we can continue to deliver high quality rural services in areas where resources are often limited.

Pounding the pavement pink for BreastScreen

The Lazy Runners Club's pink fun run has raised \$800 to support BreastScreen Mackay through the Mackay Hospital Foundation. Jacinta Richmond and Jody Plate were there to represent BreastScreen and helped on the morning with registrations for the 5km event. Thanks to LRC for supporting this important service!

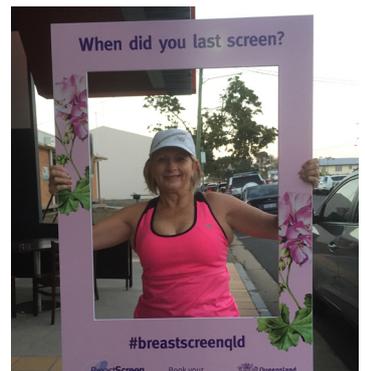
Women's Health Week

It's Women's Health Week and a reminder for women to put ourselves first, for just one week, and start making positive changes that can last a lifetime. The two biggest barriers for women not maintaining a healthy lifestyle is 'lack of time' and 'health not being a priority'.

Book your free mammogram on-line at <http://www.breastscreen.qld.gov.au/make-appointment.asp> or by calling 132050.



Check out these pics from the fun run!



Staff show support for jersey day



Mackay Base Hospital staff wore their favourite sporting jerseys today in support of the Donate Life Network as part of national Jersey Day.

By wearing a jersey to work our staff are starting conversations around organ donation and encouraging others to register their wishes on the Australian Organ Donor Register. You can join the Australian Organ Donor Register by visiting www.donatelife.gov.au

Here are a few pics of some of the staff who wore their jerseys to work today as part of Jersey Day.

