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### Network Dates:

Meeting with DHS  
17/12/2007

Reference group meeting  
12/02/2007

## NEWS FROM THE NETWORK

This edition of the newsletter focuses on **PHYSIOTHERAPY**. It includes articles relating to support and professional development for Loddon Mallee physiotherapists. Thank you to the physiotherapists who provided these articles.

I have recently heard from a number of allied health professionals (AHPs) who wanted to find out more about the network and receive the information emails. Thanks to those people who have been informing their colleagues about the network. Please forward the network information to other AHPs (both public and private) who might not know about the network and they can contact me to be added to the email mail outs.

Planning for the network in 2008 is underway, including the 5<sup>th</sup> annual conference (further information on page 2), support programs for clinical supervisors and interested potential researchers (further information on page 2) and continuing professional development events. If you have any suggestions or feedback please email or call me.

Carol Parker (Project Manager, Region of Choice) and I recently visited Mildura, Robinvale and Ouyen. This gave us the opportunity to meet with AHPs and discuss the issues affecting practice in the northern most area of our region. Thanks for the hospitality shown to us during our visit. I will continue to visit different organisations throughout the region to find out the issues affecting allied health practice.

The February edition of the newsletter will focus on Speech Pathology. If you are able to provide a relevant article please contact me.

Best wishes for a happy and healthy festive season

Sally Harris, Coordinator –Loddon Mallee Allied Health Network (LMAHN)

T: 5454 9058 (Mon & Wed)/ E: [sharris@bendigohealth.org.au](mailto:sharris@bendigohealth.org.au)

### [www.alliedhealthnetwork.org.au](http://www.alliedhealthnetwork.org.au)

The LMAHN website includes information about the network, copies of the LMAHN newsletters, links to useful websites, information on vacant allied health positions in the Loddon Mallee region and upcoming events.

On average over the past six months 212 individuals accessed the website each month and there were 345 separate visits to the website each month. Use of the website has grown over recent months – with over 280 individuals accessing the website in both October and November.

Occasionally people report difficulty seeing text due to pictures sitting over them – if this occurs please try maximising the window you are viewing the website in. if this does not fix the problem please let Sally know.

Please contact Sally if you:

- would like a job vacancy or upcoming event advertised on the website
- have suggestions about improving the website or links you would like to see included on the website

### Newsletter submissions:

Submissions to be emailed to [sharris@bendigohealth.org.au](mailto:sharris@bendigohealth.org.au)

### NEW PROGRAMS IN 2008

The Loddon Mallee Allied Health Network is looking to provide a new programs to support Loddon Mallee allied health professionals in 2008. These include programs to support:

- **clinical supervisors**, and
- those interested in improving **research skills/knowledge**.

Whilst we are currently in the planning phase, it is hoped that these programs will involve elements of education and peer support, allowing allied health professionals from across the Loddon Mallee region to communicate about issues affecting them in relation to student supervision and/or research. It is also hoped that resources can be shared across the region.

If you would like to have input into the development of these programs or have any feedback please contact Sally Harris (details on page 1). Information will be made available as planning progresses.

### WANTED - INFORMATION ON RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS.

If you would like to share information on what made you come to work in Regional Victoria and what makes you want to stay or leave - please contact Carol Parker, Region of Choice Project Manager, Loddon Mallee region - 5454 6413, [cparker@bendigohealth.org.au](mailto:cparker@bendigohealth.org.au)

### LODDON MALLEE ALLIED HEALTH NETWORK 2008 CONFERENCE: INNOVATIONS IN PRACTICE

**Friday February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2008, Swan Hill**

Planning has commenced for the Loddon Mallee Allied Health Network 2008 conference: INNOVATIONS IN PRACTICE. Thank you to those who have agreed to be part of the planning committee:

- |                     |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| • Helen McBurney    | • Casey James    |
| • Justine O'Bree    | • Carol Parker   |
| • Rachel Fry        | • Nicola Baldwin |
| • Michelle Matthews | • Lili Tang      |
| • Sonia Rozek       |                  |

We are currently organising keynote speakers and the call for papers is currently open. Close date for abstracts to be received is December 14<sup>th</sup>. Further information about submitting abstracts for papers and posters is available from <http://www.alliedhealthnetwork.org.au/viewEvent.asp?eventID=66>

This conference is a great opportunity to

- share your innovations in clinical practice, student supervision or any other aspect of allied health practice
- gain experience presenting at a conference
- network.

For further information about the conference, submitting an abstract or to give feedback – please contact Sally Harris (details on page 1).

### **PHYSIOTHERAPY GRADE ONE EDUCATION PROGRAM**

The Physiotherapy Grade One Education Program is an exciting new program that has arisen from a collaborative approach by Goulburn Valley Health, Echuca Regional Health and Kyabram and District Health to provide efficient and effective education to their Grade One Physiotherapists. The 3 health services have pooled their resources and expertise to develop an education program that is specific to the learning needs of the Grade One staff. The Education Program was implemented for several reasons including to give the opportunity to access specialist senior staff that may not be available on their own campus and to decrease the pressure on sites to conduct their own internal education sessions for Grade One staff. The program also helps to improve the connection between Grade One staff across the region and to reduce the professional isolation felt by rural health practitioners.

The education sessions take place one afternoon each month, and rotate across all three sites. The program has proved to be very successful with the Grade One physiotherapists enjoying the exposure to senior staff in other health services, and the opportunity to network with their peers. Further evaluation is being undertaken to determine the outcomes of the program, but it is hopeful that the program is assisting with retention of staff and alleviates the perceptions that grade one's need to move on to a metropolitan setting in order to gain a broader skill base. We are looking forward to continuing the program in 2008 and to the ongoing partnership between the three health services.

Lou Brennan, Chief Physiotherapist, Kyabram & District Health Services

### **CENTRAL VICTORIAN REGIONAL GROUP (CVRG) OF THE AUSTRALIAN PHYSIOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION**

Monday 26<sup>th</sup> of November saw the final event of the year for the Central Victorian Regional Group (CVRG) of the Australian Physiotherapy Association. Fifteen physiotherapists and student members enjoyed a social and informative evening at the GPO restaurant in Bendigo.

The CVRG comprises over 70 Australian Physiotherapy Association members from Bendigo in the north to Gisborne in the south, from Heathcote in the east to Maryborough in the west, with the majority of members residing within Bendigo. Unlike in the past there is no additional fees for membership to the regional groups, membership is determined solely on the residential address given to the APA.

Regional groups of the APA are supported financially by their state branch in recognition of the additional expenses and potential social isolation borne by members in regional and rural areas. This year the CVRG allocated funds to provide social events, bursaries for attendance at interstate conferences and provision of a site for the APA Global Telehealth videoteleconferences in Bendigo. It is hoped that next year in addition to these activities, sites for the videoteleconferences and social evenings are able to be run outside of Bendigo.

For further information about the CVRG please contact Kim Hitchman on ph 5444 5578 or email [simkim@aapt.net.au](mailto:simkim@aapt.net.au).

### **VIDEOCONFERENCING IN MILDURA PROVIDES NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY**

Physiotherapists from Mildura and the Sunraysia district have been making the most of the Australian Physiotherapy Association's evening videoconference lectures over the past 2 years, and look forward to more events in 2008.

Topics seen to date have included "Effective exercise for people with persistent, recurrent low back pain," "Aquatic physiotherapy; can it help hip and knee osteoarthritis?" and "Overcoming work-related injuries: a cognitive behavioural approach."

Event co-ordinator, Barney Mitcham, Allied Health Manager at Mildura Base Hospital, reports an enthusiastic turnout for most evenings – with up to 15 local practitioners attending some lectures. "These events are an effective way to maintain CPD and a great way to network with local colleagues. We also get to see and hear Physiotherapists from as far afield as Perth, Darwin and Coffs Harbour."

The cost of the videoconferences is shared between Mildura Base Hospital, where the management understand the importance of staff education, and by the attendees (usually no more than \$20). The regular support from local practitioners has secured the events for 2008, and we hope to attract other practitioners for certain topics, eg Podiatrists, Occupational Therapists and medical staff.

Barney recommends this education format for other hospitals where attending professional development opportunities is difficult due to distance – make use of modern technology!

Details of registration and upcoming events can be obtained from [www.telehealth.com.au](http://www.telehealth.com.au)  
Barney Mitcham, Allied Health Manager, Mildura Base Hospital

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

- **Seating Special Interest Group**  
December 11 2007, 4.30pm, Bendigo Health- Ann Caudle Campus
- **Mentoring training**  
December 11 2007, 9.30am, Bendigo Health- Ann Caudle Campus (see also following pages)
- **2008 Allied Health Conference**  
February 22 2007, Swan Hill

Further information on all of these events available from  
[www.alliedhealthnetwork.org.au/events\\_calendar.asp?eventTypeID=2](http://www.alliedhealthnetwork.org.au/events_calendar.asp?eventTypeID=2)

### **ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER**

This newsletter is for the use of allied health professionals within the Loddon Mallee region to communicate what is happening within the area. If you wish to contribute or have a suggestion of a topic you would like to see covered please contact me (details above).

### **EVER THOUGHT OF BEING OR HAVING A MENTOR?**

Many of you will have heard of or seen the flyers promoting the MentoringWorks program. You may be wondering why the Department of Human Services is promoting Mentoring as part of their recruitment and retention strategy for rural areas and what is the relevance to you as a worker in the country.

The MentoringWorks program commenced in 2006 grounded in an evidence based review of mentoring and mentoring programs. Topics included in the mentor training are connectedness and resilience, reflective practice, adult learning principles. Underpinning all the training is Appreciative Inquiry – a strength based approach.

As of October 2007, 128 mentors have been trained around Victoria and the response to the content and presentation of the training is a resounding Excellent - (4.5/5). Our research demonstrated that mentors gain as much, if not more, than those they are mentoring and the feedback we are receiving supports this.

The program has been extended from providing mentors to new graduates to mentoring across all levels and classifications within Allied Health. On several occasions, senior workers who were moving into management, undertook the mentoring training, and requested a mentor themselves, recognizing the need for support from a more experienced worker.

MentoringWorks is one of the few mentoring programs that has regular follow up and offers quarterly learning circles for up to one year where all mentors and mentees can join together for sub regional professional development sessions. The topics of the quarterly learning circles include Time Management, Team roles in the Workplace, Conflict Management in the Workplace, Presentation skills and Group Facilitation skills. The feedback from participants in these sessions indicates a high appreciation for the relevance of the topics to the workplace and for the quality of the content and presentation. Mentors are provided with on going support – and many contact the MentoringWorks office to gain information for the mentees.

The MentoringWorks program is a pilot program and is flexible to meet the needs of the participants. Our initial research showed that ideally, mentors and mentees should be matched across disciplines to maximize the understanding and appreciation throughout the Allied Health disciplines. The research also showed that it is better to match a mentor with a mentee from a different workplace and that the mentoring partnerships should meet face to face regularly.

While we know the ideal, in practice it is often difficult to cross discipline and cross agency match and also to meet face to face on a regular basis. Some people have found the commitment to travel a difficulty and others want more clinical supervision. There are several ways to address these concerns. Some of our best matches have been those with the greatest distance to travel. The partnerships have utilized emails and phone calls and then have met at the group quarterly learning circles. The time commitment is what best suits the partnership and we know that meeting at the quarterly learning circle reinvigorates the relationship and provides a focus for further discussion.

Some mentees have requested a mentor and a clinical supervisor so we have been able to match them with a qualified mentor, and link the mentee with their professional body which has then assigned them a clinical supervisor. The feedback to this has been extremely positive with the mentee getting the support from a mentor from another discipline and clinical input from a supervisor within their discipline. Occasionally the mentor has been of the same discipline who can provide both mentoring and clinical support. Some organisations have requested the program to be in-house so that the mentoring is across discipline and within the organisation.

### EVER THOUGHT OF BEING OR HAVING A MENTOR? (CONT.)

As can be seen, we adapt the program to meet the needs of the mentor, mentees and organisations. Our feedback demonstrates that participants are growing in confidence, feel aligned with the organisation, benefit from the initial training and then the quarterly learning circles. Mentees value both the support of the mentor and their organisation for giving them time for mentoring. It is too soon to comment on the impact on recruitment and retention.

#### Some comments from Mentors:

*Working in Allied Health management in a rural setting I have been acutely aware of the difficulties with recruitment and retention in rural areas. I am pleased to be involved in a mentoring program which aims to help address this problem.*

*I saw mentoring as an opportunity to further stretch myself, use my experience and support someone new coming into the Allied Health field, particularly in the area of rural practice.*

*The training was great and I have particularly tried to implement the concepts of Appreciative Inquiry and Reflective Practice across my work roles in general as well as in the mentoring process.*

*This particular mentoring model emphasizes all aspects of living and working in rural/isolated areas. It highlights that individuals have to be happy in relation to areas such as maintaining connection with family, social life and community as well as with work and professional support.*

*Much more holistic focus rather than clinical supervision – aims to provide a broader level of support.*

*Great to network between different organisations and provide a more objective perspective.*

*Learning circle has provided a wonderful opportunity for reflection of work practice, identification of shared experience in relation to aspects such as prioritizing, procrastination etc in managing workload, and the practical strategies discussed, useful in assisting me to become more effective in my work role.*

#### Some comments from Mentees:

*I guess you would say I was a little hesitant in taking part in the mentor/mentee program. I was not really all that sure what it was going to be about, and was not sure if I really needed a mentor. But I must say, 12 months later, that it has been the best program that I have ever been a part of.*

*I was placed with the very best mentor for me. We were well suited, and seemed to click from the beginning. I believe that this is the key to this program working well.*

*I feel that I as a person have grown very much in this last year of our mentee/mentor relationship. I have become much more confident, and feel that I am now able to stand up and make my opinions heard.*

*I found the quarterly learning circles to be very beneficial. It was good to get together with all of the other mentors and mentees to get to know them and discuss the topics. I found the time management session very beneficial.*

*I would recommend this program to anyone who wants to grow and develop as a person.*

**Mentoring Training is to be held in Bendigo Tuesday 11 December 2007 and Echuca on 7 and 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2008. Please contact Serapina at MentoringWorks 03 9481 5979 or [serapina@success-works.com.au](mailto:serapina@success-works.com.au)**