

Support Scheme for Rural Specialists (SSRS) (Rounds 1 – 7)

Round 7, 2007

Neurotrauma Workshops

Project Overview

The project targets rural surgeons who need to deal with neurotrauma in the rural setting. The issue is that there are instances when rural surgeons need to perform surgery on head injuries because of the urgency of the case or because of local, seasonal or incidental difficulties with patient transport. Rapid surgically-applied relief of pressure on the brain caused in closed head injury, using burr-hole procedures, can significantly improve the preservation of brain function and the chances of survival. However, during rotations in the training program for General Surgery or afterwards as a General Surgeon there is usually little opportunity to gain experience in such procedures. Furthermore it is difficult to obtain the necessary training even if the rural surgeon visits a metropolitan neurosurgery centre, because those centres use different equipment to that available in rural centres. The Hudson Brace, the equipment commonly available in rural centres, nevertheless requires skill and experience to use, and feedback to the College from several sources, including from neurosurgeons, has been that rural General Surgeons need training in the use of the Hudson Brace. Therefore, specific hands-on training sessions for rural General Surgeons are necessary in the use of the Hudson Brace to make burr-holes.

The workshops aim to give rural surgeons access to training in burr-hole surgery for neurotrauma emergencies. A series of one day, hands-on workshops will give the foundation for improved head injury management skills. Four workshops will be offered in three metropolitan locations. Metropolitan centres are required in order to utilise fully equipped skills centres and animal handling facilities and for access to human cadaveric material.

Specialists as Teachers Workshops

Project Overview

The project targets rural specialists who act as trainers and supervisors for trainees and International Medical Graduates (IMGs). Supervisors are appointed by the hospital or the region, with College approval, to coordinate and manage a group of trainees in that hospital and region. Trainers are

surgeons who by virtue of his/her appointment to the hospital will interact with trainees in the operating theatre, outpatient department or during clinical meetings and education sessions. There are approximately 600 Fellows of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons located in rural and remote areas and most of these surgeons will be trainers and some will be supervisors during their careers.

The project aims to improve the orientation process for trainees as well as teaching and assessment skills of rural specialists. A series of one day, face-to-face courses will be designed to provide the foundation for improved educational and management skills, which can then be developed further by practical application.

Rural Craft Group Audit Project

Project Overview

This project will build on the successful outcomes of the 2006-07 'Rural Craft Group Audit – from Audit to Performance Monitoring' project. While the data will be collected at a hospital level, individual surgeons will be contributing their data to the audit, and will receive feedback on their complication rates. The project aims to recruit eight to ten rural centres to complete an audit of 5 to 7 key general surgical areas in order to provide a basis for comparison of acceptable surgical outcomes in rural/remote hospitals.

Continuing Professional Development for Surgeons in Northern Australia Project

Project Overview

The project aims to reinforce the CPD network established in Round 6 through improved communication vehicles. It aims to value add to the work done by rural surgeons within the network through video-conferences, peer visits and inter-institutional surgical audits.

The project primarily targets General Surgeons and surgical trainees in centres across northern Australia – including Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Mount Isa, Darwin, Alice Springs and Broome. The total potential target population is approximately 70 consultant surgeons practising in both public and private sectors, 20 surgical trainees and 22 International Medical Graduates. Based on past experience, about half this number could be expected to attend any one of the sessions; most of those that do, would do so regularly. Fellows of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine and rural Specialist Generalists will also be targeted for participation in the project. Such specialists at Thursday Island Hospital will be invited to participate in this aspect of the project initially, before extending the invitation to those at other sites.

Round 6, 2006

In 2006, the RACS submitted eight applications for funding to the Support Scheme for Rural Specialists. Of these, the below projects were successful:

Rural Craft Group Audit – from Audit to Performance Monitoring

The Rural Craft Group Audit project involves five major rural centres and three smaller remote centres participating in complete audit of 3 to 5 key subject areas in order to provide a basis for comparison of acceptable surgical outcomes in rural/remote hospitals. The project will aim to initiate support and to also use existing hospital information wherever possible. Participating in the project will allow contributing surgeons to fulfil the audit component of their College CPD requirements, and participation in the face-to-face meetings will also result in allocation of CPD points.

Regionally-based CPD Program for Surgeons in Northern Australia

This Regionally-based CPD Program aims to increase the knowledge base for surgeons, facilitate clinical audit and other CPD requirements and increase communication and collegiality among colleagues within the same region. It also aims to promote a culture of clinical research in regional centres and familiarise participants with the medium of videoconferencing as an educational resource.

Improving Clinical Quality by Enhancing Organisational Collaboration and Skill Development

This project aims to achieve sustainable clinical improvement in rural areas and improve specialist collaboration by teaching both QI and team skills to a mixed group of specialists from RACP/ RACS and RACMA. Through collaborative participation in local quality improvement projects, we will aim to enhance specialists' understanding of quality improvement rationale and methodology.

Clinical Improvement workshops have been scheduled for the following locations:

Ballarat - 11 August 2006

Orange - 8 September 2006

Launceston - 6 October 2006

Rockhampton - 20 October 2006

Darwin - 9 February 2007

Follow-up meetings will be held on the following dates:

Orange - 20 March 2007

Ballarat - 21 March 2007

Launceston - 22 March 2007

Rockhampton - 19 April 2007

Darwin - via teleconference

Laparoscopy in Gynaecology and Surgery: Practice Review Using Audit of Errors for Improving Safety

This is a collaborative project between the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists. The project aims to implement a quality framework for laparoscopic audit by;

- * collecting data on errors that lead to more interventions or adverse events,
- * understanding the magnitude of the issue, to. Information collected at local level varies; so that it is proposed participants collect their own data or use aggregated data from their own units to guide a critique of their practice, and
- * developing an action plan to address local issues or reflecting on issues from other centres and proactively changing practice to improve patient safety.

Indigenous Health (funded by the Specialists and Overseas Trained Doctors Projects Division of the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing)

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, in collaboration with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, will develop and deliver a web-based facility for interaction of doctors, including overseas trained specialists (OTSs) in rural and remote practices caring for indigenous populations.

Cross Cultural Communication (funded by the Specialists and Overseas Trained Doctors Projects Division of the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing)

The Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing will assist the College to develop a series of workshops tailored to medical specialists, in particular, overseas trained specialists (OTSs), addressing cross-cultural issues, facilitated by a qualified multicultural strategist and delivered via videoconferencing.

Round 5, 2005

In Round 5 of funding, the RACS submitted seven applications, and the following four were approved:

Risk Management Workshop

Facilitating Audit and Peer Review (a joint project with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists)

A Regionally-Based CPD Program for North Queensland

Dealing with Difficult Patients and Work/Life Balance for Rural Specialists.

Rounds 3 and 4, 2004

Facilitating Audit and Peer Review – Strategies for Minimalising Professional Isolation
(continuation of 2003 project)

Risk Management Workshop for Rural Specialists

Managed by the Department of Rural Services and the Department of Professional Development

A video-linked discussion group for non metropolitan surgeons in North Queensland

Managed by Mr Richard Turner, FRACS – Cairns

Rounds 1 and 2, 2003

Supporting and Enhancing Procedural Skills for Rural Specialists in the Northern Territory

Managed by Mr Peter Macneil, FRACS – Wagga Wagga

Facilitating Audit and Peer Review for Isolated Specialists

Facilitated by Professor David Watters, FRACS – Geelong and managed by the Department of Rural Services

Strategies for Minimalising Professional Isolation

Prepared and managed by Professor Guy Maddern, FRACS – Adelaide