

Media release

13 March 2015

Mentor program to nurture the next generation of Indigenous doctors

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) and the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) have joined forces to create a mentoring program to help the next generation of Indigenous doctors thrive.

Launched this week, the GP Mentoring Program teams RACGP Indigenous Fellows with AIDA's GP students, registrars and Fellows.

RACGP President Dr Frank R Jones said the program would provide young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander GPs the opportunity to learn from their mentor's experiences and gain a unique insight into the front-line health services they provide.

"All mentors will have demonstrated experience working with Indigenous people and will use this background to nurture up-and-coming GPs in a way that facilitates feedback, mutual respect and confidence," Dr Jones said.

"We want this program to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students choosing general practice as a career and to retain Indigenous GP registrars in the RACGP training program.

"Becoming a GP requires significant commitment and the general practice profession has an obligation to give back and help Indigenous students reach their goals.

"Increasing the number of Indigenous GPs working in the community will also help break down the barriers many Indigenous Australians face when accessing healthcare."

The program forms part of the RACGP and AIDA's broader commitment to Close the Gap and achieve health status and life expectancy equity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2030.

AIDA President Dr Tammy Kimpton said the program would engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander GPs at various stages on the medical education and training continuum, building on the AIDA Mentoring Program launched in 2014.

"Mentoring is crucial to the success of AIDA's medical students, registrars and Fellows. The launch of the GP Mentoring Program is a significant milestone towards our goal of reaching population parity of Indigenous medical students and doctors," Dr Kimpton said.

"Both AIDA and the RACGP have long-held that mentoring is a fundamental component of medical education and training and we are now pleased to be able to formalise this through the GP Mentoring program.

"We know how valuable mentoring is. We are especially interested in seeking opportunities to embed culturally safe clinical training and practice in GP education, and regard effective mentoring as playing an important role in this.

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“AIDA hopes to continue working with other medical colleges to support the further development of mentoring programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students. Our work in this domain will continue to be informed by our experience and knowledge gained from the AIDA Mentoring Program.”

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Media contacts

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About the RACGP

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) is Australia's largest professional general practice organisation and represents urban and rural general practitioners. We represent more than 29,000 members working in or towards a career in general practice. There are over 125 million general practice consultations taking place annually in Australia. Visit www.racgp.org.au.

The RACGP recognises the traditional custodians of land and sea, on whose lands we work and live. We wish to pay our respects to all Traditional Owners and Elders past, present and future.

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About AIDA

The Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) is a not-for-profit professional association contributing to equitable health and life outcomes, and the cultural wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. AIDA's ultimate goal is to reach population parity of Indigenous doctors, and to inform and support a culturally safe health care system. In this context, AIDA's work provides the government and other national bodies with key outcomes and deliverables correlating with high level public policy including the Close the Gap campaign and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan.

AIDA's vision is for an Australia free from health and life outcome inequities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Visit www.aida.org.au