

## AIDA Communique – Specialist Trainee Support Program

AIDA held a highly productive meeting of the Specialist Trainee Support Program (STSP) Cross-College Project Group (the Group) on Wurundjeri Country on Thursday 10 August 2023. This was the sixth meeting of the Group and continues the collaboration between AIDA and colleges to support growth of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specialist workforce through stronger recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors in non-GP specialty training.

AIDA opened the meeting with an update and informed the Group that reporting and planning templates were being developed following discussions at the Cross-College meetings and following feedback from both trainees and fellows. All colleges shared updates on their activities, noting their performance against the goal of 100% retention of all trainees and their top 2-3 strategies to progress in 2023. College attendees continued to comment on the high value they receive from hearing and learning about the initiatives of other colleges.

The Group was fortunate to have presentations by exceptional guests. These began with a one-hour session by the Our Collaboration in Health Research (OCHRe) Network titled 'Creating Culturally Safe Research Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Trainees' led by Professor Alex Brown and Associate Professor Carmen Parter. The group was reminded of the sombre history of racism that dominated and continues to infiltrate research on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The OCHRe Network was formed to "establish a culturally secure and inclusive network of Indigenous researchers across Australia and sovereign Indigenous Nations, that builds unique skills at the interface of culture, science, and health research and translates to improvements in the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples."

Prof Brown noted feedback from trainees from a recent Masterclass delivered for AIDA that some trainees' experience of research in college training programs had been culturally unsafe and traumatic. Professor Brown extended an offer to support all colleges' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees undertaking research by matching trainees with the best Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers around Australia to support the trainees to have a positive experience of research and contribute to positive health outcomes.

Emergency Medicine Trainee and Trawlwoolway man, Dr Brenton Earl spoke to the group about his experience in training, personal circumstances and the additional cultural load expected of him which led Dr Earl to consider taking leave from the training program. Dr Earl spoke highly of the response from his Emergency Department Co-directors, Dr Chris Hercus and Dr Katrina Romualdez and his employer the Royal Adelaide Hospital in recognising and responding to the cultural load and the value that Dr Earl brought to the hospital and health outcomes. Dr Earl and his supervisors formalised one day per week of his clinical time for



non-patient facing clinical work to balance the load. Dr Earl challenged the Group to not only measure retention of trainees but measure time in training, progress through training and the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees on interrupted leave.

Alana Lee from the Southern Regional Training Hub Alliance (SRTHA) gave an overview of the Hubs' role in supporting medical students and junior doctors with an interest in rural practice. In the last 12 months, AIDA and SRTHA have progressed a discussion to tailor existing flyers that SRTHA produce to promote specialty training to include information relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors. Colleges were presented with the SRTHA webpage at <https://regionalmedicaltraining.com.au/specialities/> and saw an example of a flyer showcasing medical administration. The group was supportive of the project and agreed to go ahead and tailor flyers for each major specialty.

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians presented a summary of their recently funded project through the Commonwealth's Flexible Approach to Training in Expanded Settings grant. The project will develop resources for supervisors to improve cultural safety in supervision building on AIDA's early work through STSP. The group was supportive of the proposal and of the opportunity to continue to collaborate and share where possible.

## **Attendees**

1. Australian Indigenous Doctors Association
2. Department of Health and Aged Care
3. Australasian College of Dermatologists
4. Australasian College of Sport and Exercise Physicians
5. Australasian College of Emergency Medicine
6. Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists
7. College of Intensive Care Medicine of Australia and New Zealand
8. Royal Australasian College of Physicians
9. Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators
10. Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
11. Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
12. Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists
13. Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
14. Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists
15. Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia