



Thriving as a rural doctor; the advantage of working regionally and why it is an exciting time to start a career in rural medicine.

Advanced Skills trainee in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Dr Sinead Turner shares how her incredible career took a change in direction after taking advantage of an exciting opportunity. During medical school her eyes were opened to the benefits and the types of clinical exposure she could only access in rural. The range of possibilities motivated her to start a training pathway into Rural Generalism.

Dr Sinead Turner

Sinead grew up in Adelaide and was lucky enough to attend Saint Aloysius College, a wonderful school that prepared her well for university and life. Her first time living away from Adelaide was during medical school in Murray Bridge, initially seeking to gain experience and upskill before returning to the tertiary hospitals for work. After experiencing how rural GPs utilise multiple different specialties within a single day, in comparison to metro, it completely changed her perception of rural medicine. As someone who likes to continuously grow and learn and try new things, Sinead decided it was the ideal career path for her.



“I’d shadow them in the morning on their patient rounds, watch them deal with complicated GP presentations during the day, then head to ED with them overnight, all with sprinkles of anaesthetics or obstetric work as needed in between; it was truly intoxicating!”

Sinead is currently working in the Riverland through the Riverland Mallee Coorong Local Health Network’s (RMCLHN) Riverland Academy of Clinical Excellence (RACE) Single Employer Model (SEM) trial which enables her to move between private general practice and hospital settings for her training and not worry about losing her entitlements or negotiating pay. It’s here that she’s gained invaluable experience and clinical skills during her prevocational training in paediatrics, Emergency Department (ED), surgery, medicine, and anaesthesia, all within the same region.

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To meet the local community needs, she is now the very first RACE trainee to be undertaking the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) Associate Training Program, an essential component of the advanced skills requirement for Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) training, to become a Fellow Rural Generalist.

During her advanced skills training, Sinead gets to work across Riverland General Hospital and Berri Medical Clinic, as well as with RMCLHN's Midwifery Group Practice (MGP) Midwifery Model of Care (MMoC) midwives, assisting in antenatal clinics and birthing, including caesarean sections, supervised by a team of GP Obstetricians (GPO), as well as clinical practice in the gynaecology clinics and theatre, supervised by Fellow of RANZCOG Consultants.



In 2022, Sinead applied for a Rural Generalist Program South Australia (RGPSA) scholarship to undertake training that would be beneficial to her rural community. This scholarship allowed her to attend the Advanced Paediatric Life Support Training (APLS) course, a course she cannot recommend highly enough. Dr Turner enjoyed the course as it was practical and focused on hands-on learning rather than purely didactic lectures.

“The course improved my confidence with paediatric and neonatal emergencies significantly, including miraculously reducing my discomfort around paediatric drug calculations.”

Sinead says the best thing about working and living rurally is the flexibility. She appreciates how lucky she was to join the program with a relatively small team of nine Trainee Medical

Officers (TMOs), who had all moved to the region around the same time becoming a tight-knit group of friends. Through the RACE program, she's provided with lots of support:

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“We have an incredible Medical Education Unit who are responsive to any requests and put a lot of effort into maintaining a good relationship with us both in and outside of work.”

The next step in Sinead’s career is to focus on finishing her training program and obtaining fellowship. Her long-term career goal as a Rural Generalist involves working part-time in general practice, part-time in obstetrics and covering the ED roster. She would also love to do more upskilling in endometriosis and sexual health, and aims to run education sessions and clinics focusing on young women’s health. The Riverland is fortunate to have some amazing women’s health specialised allied health providers and Sinead anticipates some exciting collaborations with them in the future.



Sinead met her now fiancé, who also works as a GP Registrar, and together they recently purchased a gorgeous small family orchard in Renmark. She now has a newfound passion for gardening where she spends a lot of time just pottering around in the backyard. Sinead has come to proudly call the Riverland home, a place of wonder and endless exciting things to be discovered around every corner.

“I’ve joined a gym and enjoy training there, as well as our weekly trivia night at the pub. I’m obtaining my recreational pilot’s licence and have fun kayaking when the weather permits.”

Reflecting on when she was younger, Sinead says she felt an incredible amount of apprehension to get everything done immediately and if she could go back, she would tell herself to *‘stop putting so much pressure on yourself and have faith that it will all work out exactly as it is meant to’*.

On a final note, Sinead shares some encouraging advice to medical students and trainees that are currently considering training in rural or becoming a rural generalist:

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RURAL GENERALIST PROGRAM

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

A day in the life of a
Rural Generalist

October 2024

“I couldn’t recommend it highly enough! If you’re someone who finds joy in (nearly) all aspects of medicine and wants to enjoy a fruitful life outside of medicine, then Rural Generalism is for you. It’s also a particularly exciting time to be starting a career in rural medicine, with new changes in rebates and reimbursement on the horizon allowing greater recognition of the specialty.”



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