

Integration Exposed

26th – 28th May, Te Papa, Wellington.



The first Rural Health Symposium was in 2005. Each year we have looked at the usually well known challenges facing rural health delivery. We've also looked at the plethora of solutions offered by the rural sector over many years and have come up with a few of our own. That year we introduced a solution to the seemingly impossible problem faced by rural people of the 'tyranny of time and distance. We called it 'teleporting'. That year we also introduced the audience to the world of 'virtual reality' with massive potential to influence training and skills acquisition of the future

In 2007 we brought over the De Bono institute and under their guidelines sat in representative groups testing how the famous De Bono 'hats' could assist us.

At the 2008 meeting we had all boiled down the challenges to access as relating to three broad areas:

Recruitment

Facilities and equipment

The ability to collaborate with colleagues and experts easily

We had all figured, however, there really was no shortage of ideas for solutions. The problem was implementing them. When clinical numbers are small the only solution seemed to be to have everyone involved in the communities as well as rural healthcare professionals across the country. With previous meetings we had encouraged the attendance of lay rural leaders, councillors and Mayors. This year we are ensuring they can have a voice and will participate in presentations and the audience in general will be automatically polled to enable them to determine direction.

In 2009 we pushed communications technology pretty hard with live links to and from the world's largest rural health meeting WONCA. Of all places this was being held in Crete. Undeterred we then presented examples of patients and clinicians being able to have a remote consultation with specialists either without the travel being needed for a face to face meeting or by collaborating a safer and more efficient transfer being possible. Needless to say not all of it worked as some 40 people behind the scenes struggled to fulfil their camera, sound or acting roles in three different centres.

We have talked and published since 2005 about better care closer to home moving many of the diagnostic technologies from big hospitals to general practices or rural hospitals so it is appropriate that the Government's health theme of 'better sooner more convenient...' embraces all of the ideas that have been pushed.

Integration seems to cover all those areas and is our theme this year. We have a host of people to be added to the speaker list from the National Health Board (Health Workforce and IT), Ministry of Health, a large PHO, our rural community leaders and of course the rural community workforce.

In all the sessions the mantra will be..... You can run but you can't hide but that the majority are keeping up!

We look forward to again having you all join us for a programme that will have conclusions

Stu Gowland, Mark Eager and the Mobile Project team