

AMA's best and brightest

The AMA handed out its top awards to distinguished members of the medical profession at its national conference last month ...

THE National Conference of the Australian Medical Association (AMA) honoured the best and brightest in the profession with a series of prestigious awards over the weekend of 26–27 May 2018.



The AMA's highest award, the **Gold Medal**, was given to Emeritus Professor John Murtagh AM, the author of *John Murtagh's General Practice*—the pre-

eminent reference textbook for general practitioners, medical students, and registrars, now in its 6th edition, and translated into 13 languages.

After retraining from a secondary school teacher to graduating from medicine in the first intake of graduates from Monash University in 1966, Professor Murtagh was invited to write educational programs for the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, (RACGP) and to provide a rural teaching base for the Department of Community Medicine at Monash University. In 1979, he relocated to Melbourne to accept a full-time senior lecturer position at Monash University. During the 1980s and 1990s, as medical editor for the RACGP's *Australian Family Physician* publication, Professor Murtagh introduced new features, including Brain Teaser, Practice Tips, Patient Education, and Cautionary Tales. Professor Murtagh later developed these journal articles into published books, following an approach from McGraw-Hill publishers. In 1991, McGraw-Hill requested that Professor Murtagh write a new type of medical textbook, one that defined the nature and content of general practice. Using chapters based on symptoms, rather than disease categories, and building on the diagnostic model he developed, the textbook – *General Practice* – was pitched in the way that undifferentiated disease presents in a GP's consulting rooms.

In 1993, he was appointed Professor of General Practice and Head of Department at Monash University, a position he held until his retirement in 2002. He was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 1995 for significant services to medicine,

particularly in the areas of medical education, research, and publishing, and was awarded the inaugural David de Kretser Medal from Monash University in 1996. The RACGP has named its library in his honour, and the Department of General Practice at Monash has named its Annual Update Course for General Practitioners after him. In 2007, he was awarded the AMA Victoria Gold Medal for services to medicine.



Dr David Rivett OAM, a GP in the Batemans Bay area of the New South Wales south coast since 1975, was recognised with one of the AMA's highest honours, the **President's Award**,

which may be made to a person, not necessarily a medical practitioner, who, in the eyes of the AMA President, has made an outstanding contribution toward furthering the objectives of the AMA.

Dr Rivett was the inaugural chair of the AMA Council of Rural Doctors and was the first AMA Federal Councillor for Rural Doctors.

He was the Chair of the AMA Council of General Practice from 1999 to 2004, and was the inaugural Chair of the AMA Rural Reference Group from 2005 to 2009, staying on in the role when the group was renamed the AMA Rural Medical Committee. In 2007, Dr Rivett was honoured with the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for outstanding service to rural and remote medicine.

"He has been a passionate advocate for better access to quality health services for country Australians throughout his career, and for encouraging doctors to train and work in regional and remote areas," said outgoing AMA president Dr Michael Gannon. "His commitment to rural medicine stems in part from the wide variety of work a rural doctor can do—from delivering babies to performing autopsies, and from stitching up chainsaw wounds to removing maggots from a hospital patient's ear. Dr Rivett sums up the versatility, camaraderie and good humour that are so essential in

rural and remote practice, and he is an outstanding recipient of the President's Award."



Professor Judith Goh AO, a urogynaecologist who has devoted her career to women's health, was announced as the **AMA Woman in Medicine** award

winner for 2018.

Professor Goh is a world-renowned surgeon who has spent approximately 3 months every year for the past 23 years training doctors in low income countries in repairing vesico-vaginal fistula, a devastating injury that can occur after prolonged, obstructive labour. Professor Goh runs the twin projects Medical Training in Africa and Medical Training in Asia via the charity Health and Development Aid Abroad (HADA), using funds raised to help pay for women's surgeries such as the correction of genital tract fistulae and prolapse, while training the local staff in these areas. She often has to brave political unrest, and perform surgery in challenging environments, as well as deal with the emotional and social injuries to her patients due to war, rape, domestic violence, poverty, shame and grief.

In 2012, Professor Goh was made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) "for distinguished service to gynaecological medicine, particularly in the area of fistula surgery, and to the promotion of the rights of women and children in developing countries".



Dr Mikaela Seymour, an Army captain with a passion for the health of the people of the South Pacific and for the welfare of her junior colleagues was named the **AMA**

Doctor in Training of the Year.

A general surgical principal house officer at the Sunshine Coast University Hospital, she graduated from Griffith University in 2015 with a Master of

Medicine. Dr Seymour combines her hospital work with her role as an associate lecturer at the University of Queensland, her service with the Australian Army as a Captain in the 2nd Health Support Company at Gallipoli Barracks, and volunteer work in remote Papua New Guinea. She is currently undertaking her Master of Surgical Sciences at the University of Edinburgh. Dr Seymour is also a member of the AMA Queensland Council of Doctors in Training, chairs the Junior Medical Officers Forum of Queensland, is a previous deputy chair of the Australasian Junior Medical Officers Committee, sits on the Medical Workforce Advisory Committee to the Office of the Chief Medical Officer, and is on the Hospital Accreditation Committee for Queensland Recreational Medical Education.



Professor Elizabeth Elliott AM FAHMS, a pioneer in research, clinical care, and advocacy for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) was presented with the **AMA Excellence in Healthcare Award 2018**. Professor Elliott is a Distinguished Professor in Paediatrics and Health at the University of Sydney School of Medicine and a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Practitioner Fellow. She has been a passionate advocate for raising awareness of FASD for more than 20 years.

Professor Elliott played a significant leadership role in developing the *Australian Guide to the Diagnosis of FASD* and online training modules, new clinical services, a national FASD website, and a national FASD register. She chaired the Australian Government's National FASD Technical Network and

is Co-Chair of the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in FASD, and Head of the NSW FASD Assessment service. She was lead clinician in the Lililwan study on FASD prevalence in the Fitzroy Valley and has published extensively on FASD. She contributed to World Health Organization, NHMRC, and Royal Australasian College of Physicians alcohol guidelines and has been a keynote, invited or scientific presenter at more than 300 conferences nationally and internationally.

A program that aims to make patients healthier by increasing the health and resilience of doctors in training in Queensland public hospitals won the **AMA Best Public Health Initiative from a State or Territory Government Award**. Nominated by AMA Queensland, the *Resilience on the Run* program is the first consistent program offered to doctors in training in Australia to support their mental stress and emotional demands as they transition to a career in medicine.

AMA Queensland developed a pilot program aimed at equipping young doctors with the resilience and coping skills needed to survive and thrive in medicine, through a two-part workshop focused on developing resilience and mindfulness techniques, managing interpersonal relationships, and strategies for dealing with burnout and fatigue. The program was piloted in 2016 with a cohort of interns at Rockhampton Base Hospital, Ipswich Hospital, and the Metro South health area.

In recognition of the strong results achieved for doctors in training in the pilot project, the Queensland Government provided funding in the 2017–18 Budget to deliver *Resilience on the Run* to all Queensland-based medical interns from 2017 to 2019. AMA Queensland is now

advocating for the State Government to extend funding for *Resilience on the Run* beyond the intern years to post-graduate years 2 to 5.

Five new members were inducted into the **AMA Roll of Fellows** in recognition of their outstanding contributions to both the medical profession and the AMA:

- the Chair of the AMA Federal Council, Associate Professor Beverley Rowbotham;
- AMA Northern Territory President, Associate Professor Robert Parker;
- immediate past AMA Queensland President, Dr Chris Zappala;
- former AMA ACT President, Dr Elizabeth Gallagher; and,
- long-time AMA South Australia State Councillor, Dr Nigel Stewart.



Final-year University of Queensland medical student, Pirantji Rive-Nelson was the recipient of the \$10 000 a year 2018 **AMA Indigenous Medical Scholarship**. Mr Rive-Nelson, from

Alice Springs, is attending the Rural Medical School in Toowoomba, and plans to return to Central Australia to work as a clinician. Mr Rive-Nelson also plans to be an educator and is currently composing short patient health education material in Pitjantjara language, including a YouTube video on kidney disease, which won an award from the University of Queensland.

Mr Rive-Nelson's kidney health video can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgIjvo0oQTo>

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