

RACGP's cream of the crop recognised

Announced at GP18 last month, the RACGP's annual award winners are the best of the best ...

QUeensland GP Dr Evan Ackermann has won the Royal Australian College of GPs most prestigious honour, the Rose-Hunt Award, presented to an RACGP Fellow or member who has rendered exemplary service in the promotion of the objectives of the RACGP.



"Dr Ackermann is a prominent and passionate advocate for the RACGP, the general practice profession and, more broadly, high-quality healthcare for Australians," new RACGP President Dr Harry Nespolon said.

"For more than a decade, Dr Ackermann has been an invaluable asset to the RACGP and is a highly respected member of the medical community, particularly in his hometown in Warwick, Queensland. Holding many senior positions within the RACGP, Dr Ackermann has contributed to shaping RACGP policy and guidelines.

"Dr Ackermann has continually demonstrated exceptional leadership and has been instrumental in contributing to and shaping RACGP policy and advocacy during his time as Chair of the RACGP Expert Committee and driving growth and change in general practice."

Dr Nespolon said Dr Ackermann's knowledge and expertise in the area of pain management and opioids was critical during the 2017–18 codeine change in Australia.

"Dr Ackermann is a willing and competent spokesperson for the RACGP and was essential to informing Australian patients through the media on the importance of ongoing and sustainable pain management through general practice," Dr Nespolon said.

"His advocacy is grounded in evidence and the practical reality of general practice."



Western Australian GP, Dr Bill Sands has been named as GP of the Year.

Dr Sands, who practices at the Canning Medical Centre

in Fremantle, said in an interview with *newsGP* (<https://www1.racgp.org.au/newsGP/Racgp/RACGP-awards-In-Practice>), that "this award is not for any great personal attributes of mine, but as a recognition of the simple persistence and dedication to general practice that I see reflected in so many of my colleagues".

"General practice provides breadth of practise and continuity of care more than any other branch of medicine," he said. "These are precisely the features that attracted me to be a GP in the first place, and continue to be my main motivation."

Dr Harry Nespolon, President of the RACGP said: "Dr Sands has provided a high level of clinical care to his patients and passionately cares for the elderly, visiting nursing homes to ensure they receive the full spectrum of care required.

"With over 20 years' experience in GP obstetrics and a later transition to specialising in elderly health, Dr Sands' career has encompassed a cradle to grave approach."

The Brian Williams award, which commemorates the late Dr Brian Williams, a rural GP, medical educator and Director of the Western Australia Centre for Remote and Rural Medicine, rewards a practitioner whose guidance and support enables rural GPs to dedicate themselves to their patients, families and communities.



This year's recipient, Dr Stewart Jackson, from Hinchinbrook Healthcare in Ingham in far north Queensland, has mentored and supported 35 staff

members and their families. Speaking with *newsGP*, he said that "many others would be equally deserving of such an award".

Medeco Inala was named the General Practice of the Year. Based in Brisbane's southwest, the practice services a suburb known for economic hardship, substance abuse, violence and crime, with one of the highest rates of hepatitis C in the country.

The clinic launched a weekly mobile hepatitis C service from the back of a VW

Kombi, with two doctors, a nurse, and a phlebologist.

"This award is ... a recognition of the simple persistence and dedication to general practice that I see reflected in so many of my colleagues"

"We take it to drug rehab centres, drop-in centres, rough-sleeping locations and even street-side venues," Dr Matt Young told *newsGP*. "We screen, scan, test and then cure hep C in people who are most disadvantaged, marginalised and excluded from mainstream medical services."



Medeco Inala had 180 patients with hepatitis C on its books in 2016, Dr Young said. Within 18 months, the team had cured 152 of them.

Dr Holly Deer, of Crystal Brook Medical Practice in South Australia, was named GP Supervisor of the Year. Dr Deer holds a dual fellowship with the RACGP and the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), demonstrating her strong passion for learning and a commitment to general practice and training. Dr Deer has been involved in exam delivery for the RACGP and is trained at all levels of the Australian General Practice Training (AGPT) program. Dr Deer uses her experienced gained in exams and the AGPT program to help guide her



registrars towards Fellowship.

"She is a strong advocate for the positive wellbeing of each and every one of her registrars and is

committed to teaching time management skills to help them avoid burnout, alongside practical strategies to apply throughout the training period," said Dr Nespolon.

"Dr Deer has contributed to the education of many registrars and medical students during her career and will continue to be a valuable role model and teacher for future GPs in South Australia."

Dr Daniel Epstein, creator of the Vaxcards collectible card game that acts as education and reward for children during the vaccination schedule now played in 25 countries, has been named the GP Registrar of the Year.

Dr Epstein, from the Yarra Valley in Victoria, was "a strong role model for his peers as he excels across many fields of general practice in the pursuit of a healthier Australia", according to Dr Nespolon.

"In his short career in medicine, Dr Epstein has displayed a remarkable commitment to and passion for preventive healthcare," Dr Nespolon said. "His conceptualisation and creation of the Vaxcards game will encourage children and parents around the world to remain up-to-date with the vaccination schedule, protecting them from disease."

doi:10.5694/mja18.1911C1