

Media Statement

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Goldfields medical professionals see opportunity to treat chronic eye disease

Goldfields doctors and medical students will next week have an opportunity to learn from one of the state's leading eye specialists at a chronic eye disease workshop to be held on 26 October at the Rural Clinical School in Kalgoorlie.

The workshop, led by prominent ophthalmologist and McCusker Director of Lions Outback Vision Associate Professor Angus Turner, will assist participants to better identify eye conditions in their patients and determine appropriate treatment plans.

The workshop is one of a series, run monthly in the Goldfields. Originally offered to doctors on the Forward to Fellowship program, the workshops are now available free-of-charge to all Goldfields medical professionals as a result of additional funding from Royalties for Regions funding.

Rural Health West CEO, Tim Shackleton said the workshop will provide information about current best practice in the treatment of various eye conditions and possible referral options for general practitioners with patients who need surgical intervention.

"The rate of blindness and vision loss amongst Aboriginal people is six times higher than amongst non-Aboriginal Australians; with the vast majority of cases preventable or treatable," Mr Shackleton said.

"It's important that the local medical workforce is kept up-to-date with the latest developments in eye disease and treatment, so that local residents have access to the best possible care."

Mr Shackleton said that the remoteness of the Goldfields meant that medical professionals have greater challenges accessing regular professional development, so the regular workshops were helping to counter these difficulties and also encourage collegiate style learning and relationship building between doctors in the region.

“Rural Health West manages visiting outreach services in Western Australia on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Health’s Visiting Eye and Ear Surgical Services program, so we’re uniquely placed to link the local medical workforce with visiting specialists for upskilling and information sharing,” Mr Shackleton said.

“This is an example of how we can leverage the skills of visiting specialists to benefit both the community and local medical workforce.”

A further two workshops will be held in Kalgoorlie during 2016, including a workshop for Goldfields general practitioners preparing to sit their Fellowship exams.

Associate Professor Turner has been providing specialist eye health services in rural and remote Western Australia since 2010 and provides ophthalmology services in Kalgoorlie around five times per year through Rural Health West’s Outreach in the Outback program.

He is a previous *First Among Equals* at the *40 under 40* awards and a lecturer at The Rural Clinical School of Western Australia. He is the founder of Lions Outback Vision.

Rural Health West is pleased to be providing a range of professional development options to doctors and medical students in the Goldfields through the Goldfields Continuing Professional Development program and Forward to Fellowship.

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Rural Health West is a not-for-profit organisation responsible for recruiting and retaining a highly skilled sustainable health workforce that meets the healthcare needs of rural and remote communities in Western Australia. We are primarily funded through the WA Country Health Service and the Australian Government Department of Health.