

HOT Topics

Teaching Agricultural Health and Medicine

Observations on an Australian Experience



Gert van der Laan¹⁾ (g.vanderlaan@ocmed.eu) International Centre for Rural Health, University of Milan www.icrh.eu, Italy and Foundation Learning and Developing Occupational Health (LDOH) www.ldoh.net

Introduction

The National Centre for Farmer Health in Hamilton, part of the Deakin University's School of Medicine, Australia organizes annually an intensive multidisciplinary training in agricultural health and medicine. It aims to develop the next generation of rural and agricultural health leaders to improve the health, wellbeing and safety of rural and remote Australians. It is inspired by the work of Kelley Donham in the USA, whose book²⁾ is used as teaching material. In this note some observations of the Australian February 2016 Training Unit are made.

Participants

The Unit is open for graduate level students and professionals from nursing, medicine, health, agricultural science, agribusiness, social work, veterinary and environmental science backgrounds. This course was attended by 20 students including 8 registered nurses, 1 medical doctor, 1 paramedic, 4 agricultural/biological scientists, 2 agribusiness/farmers, 4 allied health professionals and included students from most states of Australia and 2 international students. Most of the participants have an

agricultural background and some of them also run a family farm, which provides practical application and deep involvement in the course content.

Structure

It starts with a five-day intensive program with lectures, group work, farm and livestock saleyard visits. Lectures start and end with multiple-choice questions to assist with learning. Lectures are interactive and group work is integrated in the lectures. In the remainder of the trimester on-line tutoring, group work and on-going assessment is structured. During this period students have e-access to the University Library. During the farm visit students develop skills to do a walk-through survey and risk assessment. The curriculum covers a variety of topics on specific hazards like pesticides, zoonoses, injuries, mental and physical health and interventions/prevention strategies. Students learn to evaluate critically the agricultural health literature and use online communication technologies to investigate and address agricultural and rural health problems. Also the organization of health and safety, occupational health assessment and remote emergency medicine are issues in this unit.

How much did you get?

Hearing this question of a farmer to another farmer one would expect it is about the price of cattle or land. Australian farmers answer in terms of millimetres rainfall. Global warming is a big issue and new varieties of grass are developed with better resistance to drought and heat. Also water supply for the animals is a critical issue.

Career perspectives

The course is accredited to offer continuing education and professional development points through a number of professional colleges and associations, including the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine. It can also be taken as an elective unit (worth 1 credit point) towards a postgraduate qualification at Deakin University and is a

1) Gert van der Laan, Chair ICOH SC Rural Health was observer and delivered a lecture in this course.

2) Kelley Donham, Anders Thelin. Agricultural Medicine second edition, 2016. ISBN-13: 978-1118647202

core unit of Australia's only Graduate Certificate of Agricultural Health and Medicine. The unit is also a requirement for recognition as a health provider by AgriSafe Australia so it provides pay-back options. Student feedback is collected daily and also by the university eVALUate system where the course has performed well above faculty average.



Conclusion

This is a well-organized multidisciplinary blended learning course in Agricultural Health and Medicine. Success factors are:

- dedicated competent trainers with a rural background, who serve as a role-model.
- the blended (online and face-to-face) learning structure
- the multidisciplinary background of both teachers as course participants
- the incorporation of the programme in the Deakin University infrastructure with electronic access to the library
- the career perspectives that are offered and related pay-back options

Acknowledgment:

Susan Brumby, Clinical Associate Professor and founding director of the National Centre for Farmer Health; see:

<http://www.farmerhealth.org.au/>

This website also provides more information on an e-course in Agricultural Health and Medicine and details of the AgriSafe Programme and is HONcode accredited.



Occupational Health Nursing: Role in International Travel Health

Susan A. Randolph
Chair, SC OHN



Occupational health nurses (OHNs) provide for and deliver health and safety programs and services to workers, worker populations, and community groups (American Association of Occupational Health Nurses [AAOHN], 2015). Prevention is at the heart of the practice, focusing on promotion and restoration of health wherever workers are around the globe.

International travel continues to grow substantially every year due to the increasing global marketplace, holiday vacations, study abroad programs, humanitarian aid/disaster/mission work, military deployments, and availability of flights to developing areas of the world that once were rarely