



A Snapshot of Rural Medicine Week

Spring 2008

Rural Ontario Medical Program
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Introduction

Rural Medicine Week (RMW) is a one week elective experience organized by rural or underserved communities in conjunction with the Rural Ontario Medical Program (ROMP) and is an exciting opportunity for all parties involved. The week provides an opportunity for pre-clerkship medical students (1st and 2nd year, 1st year only from McMaster) to get a 'snapshot' early on in their training of what it is like to live and practice medicine in a community outside of a university teaching center. It also provides rural communities, many of whom struggle to recruit and retain physicians, an opportunity to showcase their community to current medical trainees.



Through a variety of organized clinical rotations, medical students are briefly exposed to and learn about several disciplines from local physicians and other health care professionals in the community. Some of the most popular RMW learning experiences have been: family medicine, emergency medicine, obstetrics, surgery, and physiotherapy. The week often includes workshops or lectures presented by local physicians on current relevant health care topics. In addition to clinical experiences, medical students participate in social activities organized in the community. These activities are designed to expose participants to the unique lifestyle offered by the community in which they are staying and may include meals with local medical staff, community fairs, sightseeing, etc.

Midland RMW 2006

briefly exposed to and

The Growth of RMW

The first Rural Medicine Week in Ontario was held in Collingwood in 1999 for McMaster University medical students. The event was quickly initiated in other communities near Collingwood, such as Barrie, and eventually students from other medical schools in Ontario were invited on a rotating basis. In 2006, 14 communities in the ROMP region hosted a Rural Medicine Week. In 2007 RMW will be mandatory for 1st year Queen's and Ottawa students; therefore ROMP is hoping to increase the number of communities again. Some communities will host a one day event called a Rural Skills Day (RSD). For many communities, holding a Rural Skills Day is a trial run or a first step towards their community holding a Rural Medicine Week in the future. For others it's a great way to introduce the community to medical trainees.

About the RMW Handbook

This handbook was originally created by students at Brock University who were participating in a service learning project as part of the Med Plus program. Med Plus is an extra-curricular program delivered by Career Services at Brock University for students interested in pursuing a career in medicine or other health professions and consists of a speaker series, workshops, job shadowing and volunteering, among other activities. The students involved with this guide have assisted in the organization and planning of a Rural Medicine Week held jointly by the communities of Port Colborne and Fort Erie in June 2006 as part of their service learning project. The handbook has evolved to include RMW tips from a number of other ROMP communities and ROMP resources that have been acquired through years of learner placements.

The purpose of this handbook is to assist rural and under-served communities in initiating a Rural Skills Day or a Rural Medicine Week. In many communities this can be a daunting task and it is our hope that this guide, which is based on the experiences in Port Colborne and Fort Erie, will be of assistance to others. Not all of the factors in this guide will be relevant to all

ROMP's Role

The Rural Ontario Medical Program facilitates Rural Medicine Weeks across South-Central Ontario by providing advice and support to communities during the planning process. ROMP can also help you to determine how to best present your community to the students.

ROMP visits all six medical schools in Ontario throughout the year to market Rural Medicine Week and elective opportunities. Presentations are organized by the school's Undergraduate Departments, Rural Interest Groups or Family Medicine Interest Groups. Flyers are made to outline the charm and location of your community. The flyers are handed out and emailed to the entire first and second year classes at each school.

Students apply to Rural Medicine Week via the ROMP online application system at www.romponline.com. We also ask students to submit a one-page summary as to why rural medicine is important to them so that we may choose the best candidates for RMW and match them with a community that will suit them best.

ROMP ensures that all up-to-date credentialing is complete. This includes collecting letters of good standing which state that each student has mal-practice insurance while they are away from school. ROMP sends all documentation to the educational coordinators in order to prepare for the week of events. It is essential that hospital privileges be obtained for all participating learners and this is done through the local hospital system with the credentials provided by ROMP.

ROMP will assist your community in any way possible. Please ask us anything!

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Getting Started

A truly successful Rural Medicine Week occurs when the local medical and hospital community; city or municipality officials; and local citizens are involved. The idea to initiate a Rural Medicine Week will often come from a member of one of these groups. Interest can be generated among others in the community, especially when the idea is sold as an opportunity to showcase the community and as an important and long-term recruitment strategy.

Establishing a RMW Committee

Once interest has been sought out among physicians, other health professionals, hospital administrators, municipal councilors and local citizens, it is important to create a committee to plan for and implement your Rural Medicine Week. If possible, this committee should be comprised of physicians who will be engaged with student learning opportunities, municipal officials and at least one local citizen.

If the community has a staff member whose portfolio involves physician recruitment and improving local access to health services, this committee may fall under that person's responsibility in terms of scheduling meetings, ensuring that progress continues at a reasonable pace, and looking after administrative details such as meeting minutes and communication. Some communities may already have an "access to healthcare" or "physician recruitment and retention" committee and in this case the planning/initiation of a Rural Medicine Week may fall under that committee's portfolio.

During the initial brainstorming and planning stages, the committee should meet at least monthly and meetings should increase to biweekly as needed during the months leading up to the Rural Medicine Week. Care should be taken to keep track of ideas, minutes, contacts and sponsors to facilitate the planning of subsequent Rural Medicine Weeks.

RMW Goals and Expectations

In the initial brainstorming and planning sessions, it is essential that the community and the committee determine the goals and expectations of their Rural Medicine Week. The goals and expectations should be determined both from the perspective of the community and from the visiting students. For example; the community's goals may include exposing the specific benefits or attractions of the community or the challenges and professional opportunities for physicians in that community. It is a good idea for the community to highlight the clerkship or residency training opportunities available to medical trainees.

To determine the goals and expectations from the perspective of the visiting students, it may be beneficial to elicit the feedback of current medical students or recent graduates who are members of the community or to invite the input of other youth in the community who are interested in the health professions. ROMP can also provide some insight into what medical students are expecting from the week. It is important to consider that the students will expect to have a significant learning experience in which they can directly observe and participate in the delivery of physician care in the community. The students will also appreciate the chance to socialize with the local physicians and community members, in addition to the more structured learning opportunities. Lastly, they will enjoy learning about unique characteristics of the community, especially in an active and engaging manner.

Expectations of RMW from previous medical student participants:

1. To appreciate the rewards and challenges of practicing medicine outside of the tertiary centre
2. To understand the medical and social needs of a non-urban population
3. To appreciate the benefits of living in a smaller community
4. To apply the knowledge and skills obtained in medical school to a clinical setting

Community Participants

Upon seeking local volunteers to participate in your RMW, keep an open mind because it is not only surgeons and family practitioners that are invaluable to this program. Other volunteers can help with the planning of the program, as well as the actual event itself. Along with physicians, other allied health professionals such as physiotherapists and nurse practitioners can provide the students with information about their professions and insight into the collaborative health care that is so important in community medicine.

Please find below a list of individuals that you may find helpful when planning your event. This colourful group of people may want to donate their time, funds or their service. Approaching local businesses and attractions for donations has proven to be effective in a number of host communities.

- . Local Physicians
- . Healthcare Professionals: Physiotherapists, Respiratory Therapist, Pharmacists, Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, etc.
- . Your Medical Recruitment Team
- . Veterinarians
- . Local Businesses/Local Attractions
- . Municipal Officials
- . Local Restaurants/Caterers/Wine and Beer Retailers
- . Local Farmers
- . Hospital Volunteers
- . Local Service Clubs, i.e. Rotary Club, Lion's Club, etc.

The sample letters provided can be altered appropriately to address community members that would like to participate in various ways throughout the event.

Sample Letter for Participating Health Care Professional:

Date

Title First Last

Address 1

Address 2

City Province Postal Code

Dear **Title Last**,

We are pleased to announce that **COMMUNITY** will be hosting Rural Medicine Week this year. This event held **Date** gives us the opportunity to host **#** medical students from the **SCHOOL** for a **week/one day** in our community. This event has proven to be a successful recruiting tool for other centers and we hope to have similar success.

The medical students will be in our hospital and community for an entire **week/day**. We plan to provide an extensive clinical experience for these students. This will be the first time that **COMMUNITY** has hosted such an event and we need your participation to make this week a well-rounded learning experience.

Through a number of half-day sessions (*or shorter for a skills day*), it is our goal to show the next generation of physicians what rural medicine is all about. To make this week a success we need your help. If you or your clinic/department would like to participate we need volunteers from Family Medicine, (*list the other specialties that your community has to offer*). If you would prefer to lead a short seminar, suturing, casting, or "how to" scrub-in clinic, it can be arranged. If you have other ideas that would benefit first or second year medical students please feel free to let me know. I would love to hear your suggestions.

I look forward to your reply and feedback. This week will be a great success with your help. Any time that you are able to donate is greatly appreciated.

Best Regards,

www.romponline.com



Sample Letter to Encourage Community Participation:

Date

Title First Last

Business

Address 1

Address 2

City, Province, Postal Code

Dear **Title Last**,

We are pleased to announce that **COMMUNITY** will be taking part in Rural Medicine Week this year. This event held **DATES** gives us the opportunity to host up to 10 medical students from **SCHOOL** in our community. This event has proven to be a successful recruiting tool in other centers and we hope to have similar success.

The medical students will live in the community for the week and receive a basket/gift bag etc. of local items and gift certificates. In addition, we plan to provide meals and social activities for the students and our physicians. We anticipate an exciting week, showcasing the best of our communities and the surrounding region.

The **R&R COMMITTEE AND/OR HOSPITAL** is inviting local businesses to show their support for our medical community during Rural Medicine Week. We are asking you to please consider making a donation to our basket of local goods. Sponsoring a meal or event is also an option. Your support will be recognized throughout the week, as well as highlighted in various media releases.

On Behalf of the **R&R COMMITTEE AND/OR HOSPITAL**, thank you for your consideration. A member of the Rural Medicine Week planning committee will contact you soon. In the mean time, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at _____.

We look forward to your participation.

Sincerely,

undergrads@romponline.com



Schedule Planning

Perhaps one of the most vital RMW organizational planning strategies is to prepare a rough schedule well in advance to the actual event. There are many scheduling strategies that will accommodate both student and physician needs:

1. It is important to provide a balance of medical experiences including both specialty medicine, such as surgery, and general family practice.
2. Organizing workshops that encourage the students to work in a team environment and to learn new skills will prove to be very beneficial.
3. Organize a short, informal speaker series. This could involve physicians sharing a brief introduction to their profession, as well as describing the procedures that they will be performing during student observations. This could even be tied into workshops or skills sessions.

Participating students want hands-on learning so ideally each student should partake in at least five half day clinical rotations during a 5 day RMW week. The week should focus on one-on-one learning with some group clinics/ learning sessions.

Another idea that could benefit your RMW is to allow the students to interact with the physicians outside of their work environment. Going out for dinner with the physicians provides an excellent opportunity for the students to interact with them in a more informal setting. This could be extended to approaching these medical professionals regarding the students' lodging for this period of time, which has proven to be beneficial for both the students and the physicians! To begin, you may want to develop a draft schedule and introduce it to the physicians and ask them for their input.

Students participating in RMW do not only want to observe the lives of the physicians in your hospital, but also their lifestyle in the greater community. In order to familiarize them with what the community has to offer, organize outings to introduce them to local attractions, nightlife and any venues that might be interesting to those in their age group. Setting a day or half-day aside to take the students to a local attraction is definitely an asset. Before planning any outings with the group, it is very important for you to consider what kinds of events are attractive to young future professionals.

Workshop Ideas

- . Suturing: Have your local grocer supply pigs feet for this.
- . Stress Testing: Not only can students look at various examples, but they can also volunteer to be a patient.
- . How to Scrub in: Do's and Don'ts
- . Lumps and Bumps: Physicians in Fergus Ont. used bananas and grapefruits for this!
- . Casting: The local physicians may want to bring their kids into work this day!
- . Physiotherapy: Introduce other members of the medical community
- . Intubation: Using dummies

Physician Shadowing Ideas

- . Family Medicine, Emergency Medicine, Hospitalist, Paediatrics, Obstetrics/Gynecology, Surgery, Palliative Care, Psychiatry, Urology
- . Hospital rounds
- . Nursing Home rounds
- . Physiotherapy, Audiologist, Chiropracist, Veterinarian, Pharmacist, Wellness Center, Mental Health, Dentistry, Optometry, Cardio respiratory, diagnostic imaging
- . Grand rounds

**Please note that students do not have to spend all their time with physicians. They can learn from all healthcare professionals.

Potential Seminars

- . Panel discussion on practice management and models of primary care
- . Lifestyle and stress management
- . CME events
- . Physiotherapy, Occupational therapy
- . Mental Health
- . Diabetes

- . Men's and Women's Health
- . Malpractice
- . Infection Control

Possible Social Activities

- . Dinner with preceptor and students
- . Local sight seeing
- . Biking
- . Hiking
- . Canoeing
- . Golfing
- . Boat tour
- . Farm tour

**These activities should be designed to highlight your community and what makes it an appealing place to live and work.



Orangeville RMW 2006



Orillia RMW 2006

Sample Schedule

Time	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8 a.m. to Noon		5 Students in clinical setting in respective communities	5 Students in clinical setting in respective communities	ALL students enjoy horseback riding in Wainfleet	5 Students in clinical setting in respective communities	5 Students in clinical setting in respective communities
Lunch		Lunch in Respective communities	Lunch in Respective communities	Lunch in historic village of Wainfleet	Lunch in Respective communities	Lunch in respective communities
1 p.m. to 5 p.m.	Depart Toronto at 2pm for drive to PC	ALL students in PC for a 1:30 to 4:30 workshop	5 Students in clinical setting in respective communities	ALL Students enjoy a scenic cruise up Niagara River	5 Students in clinical setting in respective communities	ALL students in FE for a 1:30 to 4:30 workshop
Dinner	Dinner at AT 27 Restaurant		ALL - BBQ and pool party at Doctors house	Followed by dinner in Chippewa	Dinner at Roselawn	ALL for good bye dinner in FE
Evening	Settle in at respective host homes	BBQ and Beach party in PC	Followed by swimming, volleyball, hot tub, Bocce Ball, etc.	Pub Night students switch homes	Showboat Theatre	6:30 p.m. Departure from FE

Schedule Courtesy of Fort Erie/Port Colborne RMW 2006

Skill and Knowledge of a Pre-clerkship Medical Student

- Some basic anatomy and physiology
- Some knowledge of infection and host response, cardiovascular and respiratory systems
- Have minimal knowledge of other body systems
- Some knowledge of interviewing skills
- Some knowledge of physical examination of the cardiovascular and respiratory systems
- Limited experience in the clinical setting and interacting with patients
- Some students may have never scrubbed in before

*When planning your Rural Medicine Week or Rural Skills Day schedule you may want to take into consideration the skill set of the students participating in the event.



*Fort Erie/Port Colborne
RMW 2006*



Lindsay RMW 2006

Budget

As the plan for Rural Medicine Week begins to unfold, it is important to consider what sources of funding are available for the initiative and who will be responsible for ensuring that the event is on budget. In some communities the local municipality may take on the responsibility of the budget or contribute significant funds; for example, funds from the local 'Recruitment and Retention Committee' budget.

Some common expenses for RMW include providing transportation, accommodations and meals to the visiting students. Although there may be generous sources of funding through local service clubs, businesses or individuals, there are ways to save costs. Brantford has hosted a number of very successful Rural Medicine Weeks and they typically budget \$1000 per student including accommodation. They have had great support from the community in the form of reduced rates for canoe rentals, meals, hotel rooms, etc. Some ideas for saving costs include billeting students with the families of local physicians. This has proven a popular initiative and many students in the past have expressed that they preferred to stay with a local physician as opposed to in hotel accommodations. Billeting allows students to have additional time with local physicians and to learn what it is truly like to live and work as a physician in the given community. In addition, some restaurants are willing to provide discounts for meals when they are aware of the purpose of RMW and realize the initiative is an opportunity to contribute to the community. The cost to host a RMW can grow rapidly if you are not careful in choosing the accommodations, meals and types of activities the learners will participate in so make sure you keep on top of your budget.

Another related idea is the creation of a community welcome pack consisting of pamphlets and information about local attractions, gift certificates and unique gift items from the community. For example, in Fort Erie the community welcome pack included Loganberry Juice concentrate, Crystal Beach suckers (both of which are only available in Fort Erie) and information about local attractions and festivals. The community welcome pack also provides an opportunity for local businesses that have given donations for the Rural Medicine Week to advertise and connect with the students.

Sample Budget

(Fort Erie/Port Colborne combined RMW: 10 students)

<u>Item Description</u>	<u>Actual Cost</u>	<u>In Kind Cost</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
Fort Erie Expenses			
<i>Mileage</i>			
During RSW	\$ 219.60	\$ 45.00	\$ 264.60
Meetings Before and After RSW	\$ 63.00		\$ 63.00
Accommodations			
Trailer @ Sherkston Shores	\$ 350.00		\$ 350.00
Incidentals (Cleaning supplies, snacks)	\$ 104.38		\$ 104.38
Golf Cart	\$ 230.00		\$ 230.00
<i>Food</i>			
Lunch - June 6/06	\$ 57.43		\$ 57.43
Lunch - June 6/06	\$ 13.78		\$ 13.78
Dinner - June 6/06		\$ 150.00	\$ 150.00
Dinner - June 7/06		\$ 350.00	\$ 350.00
Lunch - June 8/06		\$ 45.00	\$ 45.00
Lunch - June 9/06		\$ 150.00	\$ 150.00
Dinner - June 9/06	\$ 349.36		\$ 349.36
Loganberry	\$ 51.64		\$ 51.64
Snacks	\$ 14.09		\$ 14.09
Breakfast	\$ 5.88		\$ 5.88
Meeting with Doctors	\$ 39.33		\$ 39.33
<i>Thank-Yous</i>			
Plaques	\$ 136.80		\$ 136.80
Thank-You Presentation	\$ 20.00		\$ 20.00
<i>Transportation</i>			
To/From U of T, Sherkston to Wainfleet	\$ 326.35		\$ 326.35
Parking - Niagara Falls (\$12 X 3)	\$ 36.00		\$ 36.00
Boat Cruise on Niagara River		\$ 300.00	\$ 300.00
Total Fort Erie	\$ 2,017.64	\$ 1,040.00	\$ 3,057.64
Port Colborne Expenses			
<i>Accommodations</i>			
Trailer @ Sherkston Shores			\$ 350.00
<i>Food</i>			
Dinner - June 4/06			\$ 350.00
Dinner - June 5/06			\$ 150.00
Lunch - June 7/06			\$ 120.00
Dinner - June 8/06			\$ 350.00
<i>Activities</i>			
Horseback Riding			\$ 750.00
Showboat Theatre			\$ 375.00
Total Port Colborne	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,445.00
Grand Total	\$ 2,017.64	\$ 1,040.00	\$ 5,502.64

Public Awareness

It is important to inform the community about the planning and execution of a Rural Medicine Week in order to convey the value and significance of the event in the promotion of the community and rural medicine to medical trainees. The local newspaper can be an effective tool to make the public aware of the establishment of a Rural Medicine Week committee. Articles or interviews can be given to keep the public aware of preparations as RMW approaches and to document the student experiences and the impressions of the participating physicians. Good public relations over the course of the planning and execution of RMW can help ensure that the community continues to support the initiative in the future and can help to demonstrate and convince the local citizens that their taxes are being used for a worthy cause.

The community should be made aware of the event immediately prior to RMW so they know to expect trainees at the hospital or in their doctors office. This too can be done through the local newspaper and/or with bulletin advertisements.



Simcoe RMW 2006

Follow Up

After the event itself has been completed, it is very important to ensure that it was viewed as a success by all of the parties involved. Sending out preceptor and participant surveys are great ways to find out what worked and what did not work during the week. All participating medical students are expected to evaluate their RMW experience in an online ROMP evaluation completed after the week. The evaluation allows learners to evaluate the preceptors, clinical opportunities, the accommodations, the community and the overall experience. A copy of this rotation evaluation is sent to the community from the Undergraduate Coordinator at ROMP. Most students do complete this evaluation but it is a good idea for communities to have one that the students fill out on site in case they don't complete the ROMP evaluation.

In the preceptor evaluation you should include questions such as: was the event well organized; what could have been done differently; was the event suitable to your practice schedule/style; what did and didn't you like about the event; would you be interested in participating again.

You might want to make a list of the pros and cons that you saw during the actual RMW and the planning leading up to it. These surveys or evaluations will help you to get an idea of how to make your next RMW even better.

It is important that thank you letters or gifts are sent out to those individuals that helped you to implement your RMW. This small gesture is a great way to let all those involved know that the time that they dedicated to this project was appreciated and will encourage them to return to assist you in the following years.

Finally, a point that cannot be stressed enough upon doing the follow-up from your RMW is to start planning for the next one early! As you will know after implementing your first RMW, it takes a lot of planning and dedication to make sure your program gets off the ground. Starting early will ensure that you will have more time during the year to get the planning done and will lead to a less stressful successful week.

Top 10 Tips for Hosting a Successful Rural Medicine Week

SUGAR FOR THE UNSUSPECTING

by Frances Roesch, MHA, CHE, Brant Community Healthcare System in Brantford, Ontario, Canada **Vol 12 NO. 3, Fall 2005 PAGE 21 A S P R**

Rural Medicine Week is a great event but one that takes a tremendous amount of leg work and attention to detail. The ability to manage very large last minute changes without batting an eye is also a must, and there is a lot of communication required with everyone involved. And, like most special events, everyone wants to show up and have it all done, with nothing for them to do but enjoy the experience. We've (Brantford) hosted Rural Medicine Week for three consecutive years and hope it will continue as an annual event. In case you want to hold your own Rural Medicine Week, our planning committee has a few tips that should help make it a seamless affair for attendees and ensure you still having your sanity by the end of the week:

1. Secure your dates for the week well in advance and send a "save the date" with a quick overview of the event to your medical staff at least five months in advance.
2. Have a small, informal orientation for students and try to get to know them as well as possible during this time.
3. Remember, this week is about showcasing YOUR community – it's not a cookie-cutter event.
4. Be sure you have the list of students and their requested rotations 8-10 weeks in advance and know if they have access to vehicles during their stay.
5. Invite sponsorship at least four months in advance for a repeat event – not less than six months for your first time out.
6. Remember that participating students won't have been to your community before – have directions and a map handy showing all of the places they need to go in detail.
7. Have your senior leadership attend events and spend time with the students. This makes a lasting impression and is probably the first (and last)

hospital CEO they will meet as a medical student.

8. Have a staff lead for the event who is willing and able to rank this event over competing priorities during the planning phase. Your second in command must be equally available and committed to the event.

9. Preceptors can make or break you. If your best preceptors don't sign up, invite them personally to do so – and be sure they know what to expect during the week.

10. Make a plan, a contingency plan, a back up plan for your contingency plan and have them all ready. At some point in the week, you will need them all.

Frances C. Roesch, M.H.A, CHE is the Director, Medical Affairs and Medical Recruitment for Chattam-Kent Health Alliance and can be reached via e-mail at: froesch@ckha.on.ca. Frances previously worked for Brantford as a Physician Recruitment Specialist.



Midland RMW 2006

Summary

Hopefully you have found the information in this handbook helpful and will be able to use it to create a fun and successful Rural Medicine Week or Rural Skills Day in your community. Remember RMW and RSD are meant to be fun learning experiences for the medical students and a chance to showcase your community so tailor your event appropriately.

If at any time during your planning you would like to contact a community who has already hosted one of these events, please contact the Rural Ontario Medical Program and we will forward you the contact information for an individual who has been involved in the planning and implementation of either a Rural Medicine Week or a Rural Skills Day.

Hosting a RMW or RSD is a lot of work but try not to get frustrated. Many communities who have hosted these type of events have started to see the long term benefits as learners return for future training and in some cases even to practice. If the students enjoy the experience, they will spread the word to their classmates and that is a good start to recruiting these future physicians.

Good Luck!



Cambridge RMW 2006

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