

Tuesday March 4, 2014

Virginia McMillan wins 2013 ANZCA Media Award for pain story

“Pain, finding perspectives”, a cover feature by *New Zealand Doctor* journalist Virginia McMillan, has won the \$A5000 Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) Media Award for the best news story or feature about anaesthesia or pain medicine that appeared in the Australian and New Zealand media in 2013.

Ms McMillan’s article appeared in the December 4, 2013 edition of *New Zealand Doctor* and examined why chronic pain is so difficult to treat.

“This article was sparked by a comment from an anaesthetist that there is limited understanding of pain management in the wider health community,” Ms McMillan said.

“I found this was backed up by anecdotes heard over a number of years ... the indirect message that “it’s all in your head” was often picked up, and a feeling of blame engendered.”

“I set out to gather a wide range of experiences of pain, both on the providing and the the receiving end of care.”

Ms McMillan wrote a compelling piece of long-form journalism and included case studies, extensive interviews with health professionals and recent statistics to illustrate the story, including young, outgoing and active people who live with persistent pain, to shatter the stereotypes of chronic pain sufferers.

Ms McMillan’s story was just one among entries for the ANZCA Media Award that spanned pain medicine and anaesthesia - across print, radio and television media. The award will be run again this year.

The award was judged by former ABC journalist, lecturer and media training expert, Doug Weller; anaesthetist and *ANZCA Bulletin* Medical Editor Dr Michelle Mulligan, and former *Age* health editor and Ambulance Victoria media director Tom Noble.

The judges were impressed by the breadth of the entries but found it very difficult to pick the winner from what they described as a “tough field” with some “terrific entries”. They particularly commended Ms McMillan’s extensive research and concluded:

“Pain, finding perspectives” took as its subject a challenging and little understood phenomenon – the world of chronic pain. We were impressed with the how thorough the reporting was, and that it included not only case studies and the views of clinicians but some little-understood and often under-reported statistics on the nature and complexity of chronic pain – both its experience and its treatment.”

Entries for the \$A5000 ANZCA Media Award for the best news story or feature on anaesthesia or pain medicine to appear in the Australian or New Zealand media (print, television, radio or online) in 2014 are now open.

To see Ms McMillan's winning award, please go to www.anzca.edu.au. Details about the \$A5000 ANZCA Media Award for 2014 can be found at www.anzca.edu.au/communications/Media.

- **For more information, please contact ANZCA Media Manager Ebru Yaman on +61 3 8517 5303, +61 408 259 369 or mshaw@anzca.edu.au. Follow us on Twitter [@ANZCA](https://twitter.com/ANZCA).**