



Steppe by Steppe: Initial emergency care in Mongolia

Dr Simon Hendel gained much from his experience as the recipient of an ANZCA Overseas Aid Trainee Scholarship.

Being largely ignorant of Mongolia and its history prior to travelling there, my notions were no more formed than clichéd ideas of Chinggis Khan merged somehow with years of Soviet occupation. I had prepared myself for boiled mutton fat washed down with homemade vodka for breakfast, lunch and dinner. I couldn't have been more wrong.

It's an exciting time for Mongolia and not only for anaesthetists. Sandwiched between Russia and China and rich in mineral resources, Mongolia is in the throes of an economic and social boom, driven largely by the mining industry. This boom has seen vast sums of money injected into the country, particularly the capital, Ulaanbaatar.

Boutique stores such as Louis Vuitton, Hugo Boss and Ermenegildo Zegna

juxtapose potholed roads and the city's population of urban poor. Like many booms in developing countries, one effect is to highlight the enormous disparity between the haves and the have-nots. The other is to inject money into a country that previously didn't have much.

It's not my place to discuss the relative merits and detriments of foreign investment for development in general, however, the Australian investment of time and money into the joint Australian and Mongolian anaesthesia project has been overwhelmingly successful.

Australian anaesthetists have travelled annually to Mongolia since 2001, when Ulaanbaatar, I'm told, was still a small town. The origins and progress of anaesthesia in Mongolia since that time have been previously published in the *ANZCA Bulletin*, so I won't go through it again. The secret to the program's success

lies in the collaborative support provided to key local champions by Australian anaesthetists and in the educational focus of the project. It was a privilege to participate in this project in my final year of training, as the recipient of an ANZCA Overseas Aid Trainee Scholarship.

The Joint Australian Society of Anaesthetists (ASA)/Mongolian Society of Anesthesiologists (MSA) Continuing Medical Education Seminar for 2013 was a successful first step in the implementation of initial emergency care education in Mongolia. The Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists and the Australian Society of Anaesthetists donated 100 oximeters jointly – 26 were successfully distributed during this seminar along with the corresponding education package. The remainder will be allocated by the MSA.

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The much-lauded Essential Pain Management course was also run with great success.

The support of ANZCA in making this scholarship available is an enormous asset, which enables Australian trainees to gain experience and build professional relationships in other parts of the world. The opportunity to work together and grow friendships with anaesthetists of a similar age in low and middle-income countries is an important part of ensuring the longevity of organisational relationships, such as this.

The ready access to email, Skype and social networking sites, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, make collaborating with our Mongolian colleagues easier than ever. However nothing beats face-to-face communication. It is only with the strength of a genuine professional and

personal friendship with peers that we can support one another to improve outcomes for our patients. By collaborating, as with the ASA/MSA partnership, we each gain significantly and take valuable lessons back to our practice.

There is widespread and growing interest among prevocational and vocational trainees in global health. This is clear in the number of undergraduate and graduate global health societies as well as annual conferences such as the Global Ideas Forum. An increasing number of resident medical officers, registrars and Fellows are pursuing further global health training through masters of public health or masters of international health degrees.

ANZCA has shown leadership among other specialty colleges by supporting scholarships such as this for interested and qualified trainees. Engaging trainees in the

issues of global health and development is essential for the future of relationships as described above, but also for producing grounded and globally minded specialists.

Dr Simon Hendel, FANZCA

For more information on the ANZCA Overseas Aid Trainee Scholarship 2014 please visit www.anzca.edu.au/fellows/overseas-aid or email overseasaid@anzca.edu.au.

Clockwise from left: The view from Arkhangai Aimag Hospital; Dr Simon Hendel and Dr Tim Furlong feeling slightly underdressed with the National Mongolian Military Band in their dress uniforms at the course dinner in Ulaanbaatar; Airway training in Ulaanbaatar; Australian and Mongolian Faculty with Mongolian course participants in Arkhangai Province. Professor Ganbold Lundeg, the immediate past president of the MSA is seated fourth from the left; Delivering a Lifebox pulse oximeter to the operating theatres in Arkhangai province.