**Indigenous Health Officer**

**Tammy Keerthipala (MBBS II)**

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| **Name of position:** | Indigenous Health Officer |
| **Elected:** | At AGM, by secret ballot |
| **Position description and main roles:** | The Insight Indigenous Health Program was founded in 2011 by three final year medical students  who accompanied a specialist Ophthalmologist on a trip to the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands. The trip broadened their views of Indigenous health and inspired them to make a  difference in the area by giving other students the opportunity to gain a similar experience in Indigenous health. Since its founding the program has greatly expanded and now has three main arms: outreach trips, education and mentoring. We have sent 40 students to remote Indigenous Communities and educated almost 500 students on Indigenous cultural competency.  *Outreach trips:* The outreach trips aim to prepare and inspire students to work in Indigenous Communities by providing them with hands-on experience and education in Indigenous health by allowing students to visit remote Indigenous Communities with visiting Specialists and General Practitioners, with financial support from Insight. Your role is to liaise with visiting specialists and community health centres to arrange student placement positions, select students through applications, and help organise the student’s trips who are selected. An element of this includes continuing to secure funding for the program, however new sponsors are currently not required.  *Education*: Insight run an annual Cultural Communications Workshop which has educated almost 500 medical, dental and allied health students on culturally sensitive clinical practice. We invite Indigenous Elders, Aboriginal Health Workers and other health professionals with experience in Indigenous communities to give presentations on Indigenous cultural competency, and to discuss their experience working with Indigenous patients. Your role is to organise this event.  *Mentoring*: additional programs run by the portfolio include Indigenous student mentoring (Wirltu Yarlu) and Pitjantjatjara language teaching (Mobile Language Team). Whilst only run a few times, and postponed due to COVID, these elements include the potential to run a student “come and try” event for prospective Indigenous students who want to get into medicine and organising Pitjantjatjara language workshops for medical students.  You will need to be proactive, self-motivated and efficient, with the passion and persistence to get projects off the ground. The role requires a lot of communication and leadership. Ideally suited to someone who wants to work in rural / remote / Indigenous healthcare in the future. |
| **Positives of position:** | * Very rewarding, you can see immediate results of most of your work and the program genuinely contributes to making a difference in Indigenous health * There is a recognised lack of Indigenous health teaching in the current curriculum, so students really appreciate the opportunities that you offer them. There is no difficulty rallying support and involvement in events! * You learn a lot more about Indigenous culture and the issues surrounding Indigenous health * You learn and develop leadership skills through leading the working party, liasing with doctors and sponsors * The program has a lot of potential for expansion. You have the opportunity to be autonomous and steer the expansion of the program |
| **Negatives of position:** | * Sometimes, new programs/ideas can be hard to establish because there is a lot of red tape surrounding some areas of Indigenous health. * Due to COVID related issues, the outreach trips haven’t run properly over the last 2 years, so there will be some work involved with re-establishing this program |
| **Time required:** | Between 2-6 hours per week, most weeks. Sometimes quieter. |
| **Ideas for the future:** | There is also scope to engage new doctors/health care professionals in the Outreach Trip program, so that we have new and diverse experiences to offer students. |
| **Experience required:** | None explicitly required, but a keen interest in the area is essential. Indigenous health / community exposure recommended. |
| **Past office bearers:** | 2021: Tammy Keerthipala (MBBS II)  2020: Shaun Gerschwitz (MBBS VI)  2019: Vishak Senthil (MBBS II)  2018: Michael Riceman (Honours MBBS VI)  2017: Gordon Goh (MBBS VI)  2016: Jessica Mitchell (MBBS II)  2015: Xi (Cicy) Li (MBBS VI)  2014: Hannah Davidson (MBBS VI)  2013: Johanna Warren (MBBS V)  2012: Anna Kennedy (MBBS VI) |