Future doctors test emergency response skills in rural disaster scenarios

Medical students from the University of Tasmania will respond to mass casualty scenarios in large-scale training exercises on the West Coast this week.

The *Emergency Skills* course is coordinated by the Rural Clinical School annually for final year medicine students who are immersed in realistic emergency environments to learn about disaster management and critical response in rural or remote areas.

Guided by emergency services personnel and health professionals, the 29 students will respond to simulated time-critical disasters in Queenstown *(Thursday, 16 March)* and Strahan *(Friday, 17 March)*, facilitating patient treatment, retrieval, and mock medical phone calls.

Associate Professor Deb Wilson, Co-Director of the Rural Clinical School said the students would be challenged to put their emergency medicine knowledge and skills into practice with no briefings about each casualty event.

“The *Emergency Skills* course has been designed to provide realistic settings for our students to experience responding to unforeseen rural emergencies where there are limited resources available,” Associate Professor Wilson said.

“As rural doctors, they will need to exercise time-critical judgment and treatment while working effectively with emergency services and health professionals to ensure patients receive the best possible care.

“There will be five wilderness scenarios in Queenstown where the students will treat mock casualties presenting with a number of medical emergencies. This training will then culminate with a simulated mass casualty event in Strahan on Friday morning which will remain unknown to the students until they arrive at the scene.”

Coordinator of the major casualty incident Ms Lynn Greives from the Rural Clinical School said the annual course would not be possible without the continuing support of the Tasmanian Ambulance, Fire and Police services, the health workforce, West Coast council and members of the community who volunteer time and resources.
“We value and greatly appreciate these relationships which help us facilitate this important training program that exposes our future doctors to working in rural and remote environments,” Ms Greives said.

“This is also a timely opportunity for the local emergency services and health professionals to practice their own emergency procedures when responding to a rural disaster event.”

West Coast residents are advised to be mindful of the Rural Clinical School training events which will attract a large visual presence of emergency services personnel across the two days.

Wilderness training scenarios will be facilitated on Thursday, 16 March at the Preston Street Reserve in Queenstown between 11am – 3pm, with the mass casualty scenario taking place in Strahan on Friday, 17 March between 9.10am – 11am.

The West Coast Emergency Skills course will be preceded by a day of presentations and hands-on stations at the Rural Clinical School in Burnie on Wednesday, 15 March, allowing the students to practice and prepare their emergency medicine skills ahead of the rural training events.

Information released by:
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