

Australian Medical Association Limited
ABN 37 008 426 793

42 Macquarie Street, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604
 Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499
 Website : <http://www.ama.com.au/>



****EMBARGOED UNTIL 0001 AEDT, FRIDAY 25 MAY 2018****

**MEDICAL STUDENT FROM APY LANDS WINS 2018 AMA
 INDIGENOUS MEDICAL SCHOLARSHIP**

**2018 AMA NATIONAL CONFERENCE - #amanatcon
 QT Canberra, 25-27 May 2018**

A medical student who makes patient education films in Pitjantjara language, and who plans to provide health care to the people of Central Australia, is the recipient of the 2018 AMA Indigenous Medical Scholarship.

AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, presented Pirpantji Rive-Nelson with the award at the AMA National Conference today.

Mr Rive-Nelson, from Alice Springs, is a final-year medical student at the University of Queensland, attending the Rural Medical School in Toowoomba, who plans to return to Central Australia to work as a clinician.

“My aspirations include, but are not confined to, a fulfilling and challenging career practising medicine in Alice Springs Hospital, inspiring youth of Central Australia to pursue health careers, and to take on leadership and advocacy roles within Central Australia and national health care organisations,” Mr Rive-Nelson said.

“Many Indigenous Australians of Central Australia do not speak English as a primary language, and seeking health care from the Alice Springs Hospital is a daunting experience.

“Therefore, I hope to actively assist Pitjantjatjara-speaking patients, and my colleagues, by being a clinician who is able to navigate both languages and cultures competently.”

Mr Rive-Nelson also plans to be an educator and is currently composing short patient health education material in Pitjantjara language, including a YouTube video on kidney disease, which won an award from the University of Queensland.

“My primary focus is to work with the people of Central Australia, as I believe that I will have an opportunity to assist a vulnerable population of the Australian community,” Mr Rive-Nelson said.

“Due to my previous experiences, I am extremely eager to find a pathway in medicine that will be procedural in nature, and an area that will have a meaningful impact on the health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, so that all of us in Central Australia can enjoy a greater quality of health.

“As a future clinician servicing an area that suffers some of the worst health rates in Australia, I will not only serve the community as a doctor, but as an educator. Furthermore, I hope by working in Alice Springs Hospital, I might inspire local school-aged kids to pursue professions in health care, so we can look after our people.”

Dr Gannon said Mr Rive-Nelson is a deserving recipient of the \$10,000 a year Scholarship.

“Pirpantji Rive-Nelson is a respected member of the University of Queensland medical school, and of the tri-State region comprising the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, and the Central Lands Council lands,” Dr Gannon said.

“He grew up in communities including Irrunytju, Pipalyatjara, and Kalka, and has been exposed to a traditional life that most young Indigenous people can only dream of.

“He is a Wati – a fully-initiated man – and many of his family are Ngangkari – traditional bush doctors. Pirpantji will be the first initiated Pitjantjatjara Wati to become a doctor in the Western medical model, and he will be able to collaborate with Ngangkari to share knowledge and better outcomes for the health of the Central Australian community.

“The significant gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is a national disgrace that must be tackled by all levels of Government, the private and corporate sectors, and all segments of our community.

“It’s evident that Indigenous people have a greater chance of improved health outcomes when they are treated by Indigenous doctors and health professionals.

“Indigenous people are more likely to make and keep medical appointments when they are confident that they will be treated by someone who understands their culture, their language, and their unique circumstances. Mr Rive-Nelson is that person.”

Fewer than 300 doctors working in Australia identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander – representing 0.3 per cent of the workforce – and only 286 Indigenous medical students were enrolled across the nation in 2017.

The AMA Indigenous Medical Scholarship was established in 1994 with a contribution from the Commonwealth Government. The AMA is seeking further donations and sponsorships from individuals and corporations to continue this important contribution to Indigenous health.

More information is available at <https://ama.com.au/donate-indigenous-medical-scholarship>. For enquiries, please contact the AMA via email at indigenousscholarship@ama.com.au or phone (02) 6270 5400.

Mr Rive-Nelson’s kidney health video can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgIjvo0oQTo>

**** Mr Rive-Nelson is available for interview ****

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CONTACT: John Flannery 02 6270 5477 / 0419 494 761
 Maria Hawthorne 02 6270 5478 / 0427 209 753

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