



**AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL COUNCIL
AND
THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY
NEW MEDICAL SCHOOL FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM**

The James Cook University School of Medicine, Australia's first new medical school in 24 years, has won endorsement to take its first students in the Year 2000. The national standards body for undergraduate medical education, the Australian Medical Council, has granted the School accreditation from 1 January 2000.

AMC President Dr Kerry Breen said: "To receive AMC accreditation, a medical school must demonstrate that its medical course produces broadly educated doctors who are capable of practising medicine safely and competently and who possess the appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes for modern medical practice. The AMC has carefully reviewed the new JCU School of Medicine, and it is confident that the University's plans meet the AMC's accreditation standards. Accreditation by the AMC means that graduates of the JCU medical course will be registrable as medical practitioners in any State or Territory of Australia."

Responding to the AMC decision, the Dean of the School of Medicine, Professor Richard Hays said: "It's really pleasing that the Australian Medical Council has given us the go ahead for next year. We realise that implementing the Medical School is a big job but we look forward to making a difference in medical education in Australia."

The JCU medical course is a six-year undergraduate medical degree, which will take a community-oriented approach to medical education, emphasising learning in North Queensland's health and community service system. Students will be based on campus in the first four years, with assignments in local communities. In the last two years, students will be based in hospitals in Cairns, Townsville, Mt Isa and Mackay, with assignments in surrounding centres. The course will take 60 students a year, and students will be selected on a combination of their academic achievements and their personal attributes.

The AMC has presented a detailed report on its assessment to the University. To assess the Medical School, the AMC set up an expert team, which reviewed the School's plans and spent a week in North Queensland speaking to course planners, local clinicians and general practitioners, hospital managers and members of the local community.

Professor Ian Simpson of the University of Auckland, who chaired the team, said: "The University has strengths in biomedical sciences and public health teaching, and the new medical course will build on these. JCU is to be commended for developing a curriculum that addresses the challenges of health care delivery for rural and remote communities and for indigenous people. The School of Medicine aims to prepare its graduates particularly for clinical practice in rural, remote and tropical environments and the School is well placed to meet these aims. The Team could not fail to be impressed by the support of North Queensland clinicians, general practitioners, and the local community for the medical school. This is evidenced in the contribution by local community groups to course planning and by the commitment of the public and private hospitals to provide facilities and resources to support teaching."

Professor Laurie Geffen, who chairs the AMC Committee that oversees the accreditation of the Australian and New Zealand medical schools, said: “JCU’s unique program adds to the rich diversity of medical courses now available in Australia compared to the 1960’s when all the medical schools followed a traditional model derived at the turn of the 20th century.”

While the School is accredited to begin its medical course next year, an AMC review team will be returning to the University late next year to assess the School’s progress in implementing the new curriculum.

Dr Breen said: “Developing a new medical course is a major undertaking. JCU has broad plans for the entire course, but the AMC will need to assess the detailed plans for the later years of the course before they are implemented. Like all accredited medical schools, the JCU School of Medicine will also report annually to the AMC on its progress in responding to the issues raised in the detailed assessment report.”

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