

## “Rural Week” underway within Prairie Mountain Health

First-year medical students enrolled in the University of Manitoba’s (U of M) Faculty of Medicine are spreading out across rural Manitoba this week during “Rural Week” (May 25-29<sup>th</sup>).

Rural Week 2015, coordinated by Manitoba’s Office of Rural and Northern Health (ORNH), the U of M and rural regional health authorities, will provide an excellent opportunity for medical students to gain first-hand experience of how a rural medical practice works. It also doubles by extolling the benefits of working and living in a rural area.

Prairie Mountain Health (PMH) is once again an active partner throughout the week, with 33 medical students assigned to 13 communities within the health region. Communities participating this year include Brandon, Dauphin, Glenboro, Grandview, Hamiota, Neepawa, Rivers, Russell, Souris, Ste. Rose, Swan River, Treherne and Virden.

PMH Director of Medical Services Administration, Michelle McKay, says the event is a ‘win-win’ all the way around.

“Students participate in a variety of rural physician practices, spend time at wards and units at rural health centres, and in most cases, walk with a ‘doc’ to see how their day unfolds,” McKay said.

“We really appreciate the opportunity to highlight communities and medical facilities and sites within the health region in the hopes that some of these up and coming physicians will select to live and work in rural Manitoba.

Wayne Heide, Administrative Director of ORNH, says part of the organization’s goal is to expose medical students to rural practice and rural life and show them the diversity that exists.

“Rural Manitoba offers tremendous opportunity for a rewarding career and a great lifestyle but it is only through direct experiences like Rural Week that students become aware of the possibilities. For urban origin students this may be their first real experience with rural life. For those from rural areas it is a chance to reinforce the positive aspects of rural life and to connect them to medical professionals that have chosen to practice rurally,” Heide stated.

“There are also lifestyle itineraries set up so the students take part in everything from fishing expeditions to recreational activities as well as learn about unique community festivals, events and claims to fame!”

McKay adds, “Prairie Mountain Health very much appreciates the efforts of all of the physician preceptors, health care professionals and community volunteers to ensure Rural Week meets its goal and objectives.”

Rural Week first started in Manitoba in 2003 as an optional experience, although it was selected by 70 per cent of the Medicine class. In 2004, Rural Week was officially approved as a component of the Medical 1 curriculum and now the entire class spends one week within rural and northern Manitoba communities.

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