



Australian National University

Medical Venture Fund Award



Few professions absorb as much of the professional's time and energy as medicine. It begins in medical school. Most students, faced with the weighty impress of biomedical knowledge, and the need to present themselves as health proto-professionals, find that the medical perspective becomes overwhelming. The person on the bus has a skin mark that may be a melanoma. The odd behaviour of an uncle looks like schizophrenia. The gait of the person in the shop betrays Parkinson's disease. Everyone has a personality disorder. It can be hard not to resort to the medical lens. The medical student – and the doctor they become – may find their lives permanently rooted in medical thinking.

The Canadian physician William Osler advised young doctors that they needed an avocation in addition to a vocation. If the vocation is medicine, the avocation is deeply engaging activities that were not medical. The founder of the Venture Fund cherished a profound conviction that one's medical career would be enhanced by avocation. In this book, you will find accounts of students who have used the fund to learn everything from scuba diving to Auslan, from singing to rugby. Students have used this fund to build their own guitar, run self-defence martial arts classes, give a concert. All of these activities have two things in common. Firstly, they have nothing to do with medical studies. A student can be funded for a solo camping weekend, for example, but not to go to a medical conference. Secondly, the students' academic merit is irrelevant. The Venture Fund does not distinguish between the student scraping through their studies, and the student who is a Rhodes Scholar in the making.

The Venture Fund is unique among medical school scholarships in Australia, and among scholarships for anyone at the ANU. It is explicitly about well-being, and expanding one's curiosity and interests. Asked why he chose this idea as his gift to the medical school, the founder told us: "I learned to play the piano when I was a student. I wasn't good at it, but it was the single most important thing I learned at medical school." His gift to the medical school is the hope and promise that more students may wander outside of medicine to maintain their wonder and delight in medicine.

Christine Phillips



Venture Fund Award

Summary of activities supported



2019 Award - 10 activities supported



2021 Award - 13 activities supported



2022 Award - 4 activities supported

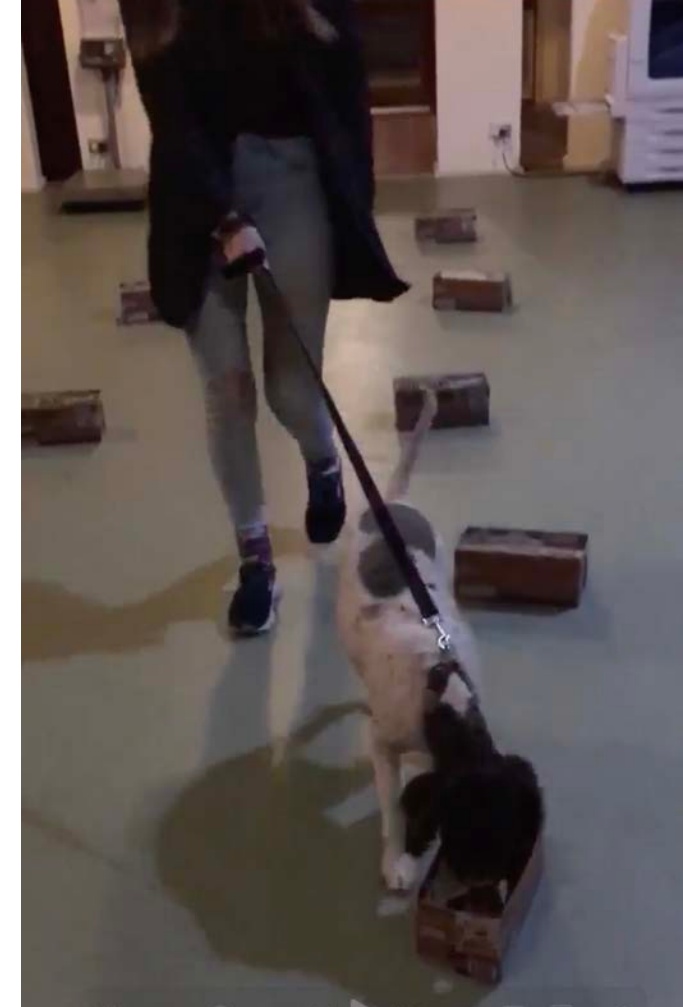


2023 Award - 16 activities supported



2024 Award - 12 activities supported





2019 Venture Fund

In the inaugural year of the Venture Fund, we received 18 applications from second-year MChD students.

We funded 10 activities overall, including dog nosework classes and the running of an ANU Kung Fu school!

The Medical Venture fund gave the wonderful opportunity to study Beginner German for 9 weeks over the Semester. Aside from the desire to learn another language and Germany being an incredibly beautiful country, I chose to study German due to my family heritage. I have not had the opportunity to know one side of family growing up and taking this course for me was a way to step inside the culture and connect with a part of who I am.

Every week a group of about 10 of us would spend 2 hours learning about the concepts of gender in language and cases that change the way each verb and noun should begin and end. I still haven't quite got my Der, Die and Das quite straight in my head! On the plus side apparently we had nice pronunciation. Our tasks for mastering the very basics were to create Who am I's? or Which City Am I's? to present to the class. I was very proud that our very competitive tutor was unable to guess my Doug the Pug who am I. She certainly got a laugh when I mixed up saying he had 'fat rolls' for 'bread rolls'!

According to our tutor, German is a much nicer, more descriptive and efficient language than English. Debatable at times I would suggest. However I did appreciate the structure and rules that I am sure once ingrained in one's mind would make communicating much easier! Although quite a bit is just dependent on the context of the conversation and the same words could have entirely different meanings - it seems a bit risky! I particularly appreciated the formality of some of the words to address people. Particularly the formal you 'Sie' for people who are elders or you don't know. It was a nice way to convey respect for those around you.

We finished our final week off with Apple Strudel (despite it being an Austrian dish) and playing with her Samoyed Mozart, Wer ist ein sehr guter Hund!?

Sophie - German lessons

Thanks to the ANU Medical Venture Award I was able to undertake a nose work class with my dog Murphy. The principle of the classes is to introduce your dog to using their nose rather than their eyes and to teach them to focus, work independently and eventually to signal to you when they have found what they are searching for – in this class it was delicious treats!

The classes also teach the handlers how to encourage their dog without actually directing them and how to read their dog's behaviour as to when they have found a scent and when they have found the source.

The classes are designed to lead to competitions but for me and Murphy it was just a fun activity we could do together and the introduction of a perfect rainy-day game when walks aren't an option. It was pretty interesting to see the change in the dogs over the 6 weeks from apprehensive about all the cardboard boxes on the ground in week one to professional level searchers in any environment in week 6.

It's amazing how only a few minutes of using their noses to search can tire them out so much and the different style of searching each dog had. It was a really amazing experience and I'm so happy that I can

use the skills we both learnt in this class to continue the training at home and one day I might be able to hunt for truffles with Murphy like a proper Italian Lagotto Romagnolo.

Carolyn - Nosework class



I used the Medical Venture Fund to help pay for cello lessons which I started soon after beginning medical school. Learning a new instrument has been an amazing form of stress relief and avenue for self-expression. This has helped me gain a better grasp of musical theory, push myself to achieve goals, and have a productive hobby outside medical school for my own mental wellbeing.

Over this year, I have had weekly lessons for cello where I learn new pieces and skills. In April, I performed at a recital hosted by my cello teacher with other cello students. This was a wonderful experience where I got to learn from musicians of all levels and



meet some lovely new people. It was also useful in overcoming nerves associated with performing for a crowd. When I started lessons, I didn't intend to attempt the cello grading exams, but I later decided it was a good challenge and a useful way to perfect a few musical pieces the best I could. I thankfully passed my first exam in June and aim to continue to sit the exams for as far as I can go.

One of the most valuable parts of this experience has been overcoming fear associated with failure and feelings of inadequacy. Starting lessons as an adult is daunting, as most people your age are miles ahead of you in their knowledge and technique – and in this I feel a sense of resilience needs to be maintained to remain inspired and continue at your own pace. This is often the case in many other situations in life, especially medical school where you may feel that you are behind but need to adapt to these circumstances and focus on improving yourself despite barriers.

Ultimately this has been a brilliant experience that I hope to continue and learn from throughout my studies and career.

Kiran - Cello lessons

Once again thank you for allowing me to receive this fund and giving me the opportunity to commence on an activity that I had been wishing to start for many years since my arrival in Australia. It had been financially difficult previously but the fund has meant that I at least got my violin repaired, received some introductory lesson, and I am hoping to build on these lessons through my own efforts in the upcoming

months. It has been challenging in many ways, as I tried to learn everything from the basics and practise it without disturbing my neighbours on campus residence.

Musical instruments require very regular and persistent practise, which has been difficult to maintain during second year final exams when I started as well as into my first rotation in phase 2 which was rural general practice. However, the rewards are already noticeable within a few hours of lessons and I can already observe the improvement in my skills. It has also been a means through which I formed new but strong relationships with music students at the ANU and teachers at other music schools.

It has been very encouraging to build on an area outside of medicine and I am already planning to follow through with this as well as explore other instruments. I hope to be able to develop myself to a point where I can participate in events such as med revue with confidence and channel the skills I am gaining into a better cause.

Zehra - Violin lessons

I would like to thoroughly thank the generous donor who funded my 6-session course in Australian Sign Language (Auslan). Several years ago, I was working in a paediatric emergency department when a Deaf teenage girl came in with severe psychological distress. A nurse knew the very basics of Auslan but was at the end of a very busy 10-hour shift and needed rest. The official Auslan interpreter was two hours away. The only way we could communicate was with writing, which was tedious and ineffective for everyone, especially a teenager in distress. Since that day, I have often thought to myself that I ought to learn at least some Auslan so as to help Deaf patients in the interim while waiting for an official interpreter. Your generous funding for me to complete a beginner's course allowed me to achieve that. Thank you.

The course was taught by Brook Pape, a proud “big-D” Deaf woman and a big advocate for equality in all fields. The lessons were taught in almost complete silence and she pushed us to communicate visually as much as possible. In the first week, she taught us about Deaf culture and the history of sign language. I was surprised to learn that, historically, sign language was outlawed in attempt to force Deaf people to communicate with audition. She taught us about the harmful myths that surround Deaf people, as well as the dos and don'ts when communicating with Deaf people. I felt ashamed when she spoke of how the medical profession increasingly lets down the Deaf community, and the infrastructure makes seeking medical care very difficult for Deaf people.

Each week, we progressed through finger spelling (my go-to for all words I don't yet know), greetings and introductions, occupations, numeracy, emotions,

colours, family, animals, and foods. At the end of the penultimate lesson, she told us that next week we would have to tell a story entirely in Auslan to the class and two of her Deaf friends. The story had to include language from each lesson including insight into Deaf culture. I thought it would be poetic to tell the above story in Auslan. I embellished the story, changing psychological distress to schizophrenia with visual hallucinations of a large, angry, black cat (just to include the vocabulary). I said that I would like to be able to communicate about time-critical medical problems without resorting to finger spelling.

Brook and her friends taught me the signs for chest pain, breathing difficulty, stroke, allergy, broken bones and medications. I should not need to wait for an interpreter to communicate such things. In celebration of completing the course, Brook and her friends took us out to dinner and we sat around the table communicating entirely in Auslan. It was very rewarding to transition from a 3-year long smouldering desire to know basic Auslan to a casual dinner conversation at a restaurant entirely in Auslan. There is still much to learn, and I would only be able to do so with ongoing practice.

Will - Auslan

Hsien-Pang Hu - ANU Kung Fu Club



After nine weeks my classes have finished, and I couldn't be more pleased with the experience. The class was a fantastic introduction to the pottery wheel. In the first week, we were taught how to throw a "basic pot", which is essentially a little pot with straight walls. As the term went on, each session would begin with our teacher going over techniques for other forms that built on this original "basic pot" form: some of these included bowls, plates, bottles, handles for pots to make cups and texturizing techniques. Despite having an idea in my head of I would like to make, each evening I would invariably end up producing something with a completely different form and having to rethink what its final product would become.

Aside from making the pot on the wheel, trimming and glazing are two other important parts of the

process. Trimming is where you clean up the bottom of the pot (which was previously stuck to the wheel) and give it "feet". You could only trim an item you'd made on the wheel a week later, as it needs time to dry out. After this the pot could be put in the kiln for its first fire (bisque fire), which usually took one-two weeks. After this the pots were ready to glaze, which is where you dip the pots in big tubs coloured water (the glaze) to give them their decoration. After this, they go in for their second fire in the kiln and you get your finished product a few weeks later. It's a long process, but exciting each week to see how your things are developing. I am now the proud creator of a mug, gravy boat, plate, bottle, some cups and some trinket bowls!

I enjoyed going to the classes not only to get creative, but also because of the mental break it was. It was 3

hours out of my day where I was completely focused on something, I didn't feel guilty for not studying and because my hands were so messy it was physically impossible to get distracted. It was a great reminder that taking proper time out from medicine is probably the best way to refresh your mind to be productive later. My Dad owns a pottery wheel, and despite not having the time to teach me himself, has said that now I know what I am doing I am free to use it. It will be good start practicing making things with intent and potentially even some duplicates.

Thank you to the Medical School and the Venture Fund for this opportunity, it's been a blast!

Winifred - Pottery



2021 and 2022 Venture Fund

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the Venture Fund from 2020 to 2022. However, the pandemic allowed us to open applications to second—and third-year MChD students starting in 2021. This allowed us to support a variety of new community activities for rural students, many of which you will see below.

In 2021, we received 15 applications and supported 13 activities. In 2022, we received and supported 4 activities.



Learning a new instrument has been both challenging and rewarding in many ways. This summer I tried my hand at learning the violin. I began the journey with an ambitious goal, but no real expectation, to perform at a grade 4 AMEB level. AMEB or the Australian musical examination board hosts a grading system for several instruments, including the violin, and involves examinees performing a series of pieces and demonstrate other musically relevant skills such as sight reading, technical work, and aural recognition. While I couldn't take the exams as they were scheduled for later in the year, I worked with my teacher through weekly, and then bi-weekly, lessons across the span of a month to try and meet my objective.



To my surprise, I'd almost met my goal. By the end of the month, I'd started pieces that were at a grade 4 level but couldn't yet perform to those standards. Regardless, this experience has been incredibly valuable for my self-development. Performing in my lessons and practise sessions became an outlet for self-expression and a way of overcoming feelings of inadequacy. As previously mentioned, I'd started this journey by purposefully setting what I thought was an unlikely target. In trying to meet this expectation, I was able to further my time management skills and overcome, to some extent, my fear of failure.

Overall, my journey to learning the violin has been a fun way for me to discover more about how I like to learn and I'm very grateful for this opportunity.

Shelley - Violin lessons

Last year, I applied for the Venture Fund to help my band record a song with the assistance of a professional studio. Recording music can be a prohibitively expensive task, so having the extra assistance has been amazing. It has allowed us to focus on the music, rather than worry too much about finances and distribution.

Most of the original takes for the instruments were performed and recorded by us. We made sure the raw files were as good as possible. We then got in contact with Cal from Avalanche Studios in Melbourne. We had heard their work before with other Canberra and Melbourne-based artists, and thought they would be a great fit. So, we sent the individual takes over to Cal, who whipped up a great

mix for us. I truly believe that I could not get through this gruelling degree without music and art. Having the support of you to allow us to explore creativity like this is essential for my emotional wellbeing, so thank you so much for the Fund.

Jonathan - Recording studio time



Jason - Auslan

Another Bega medical student and I undertook a two-and-a-half-day blacksmithing course where we learned about the practice and theoretical aspects of working with metal. This was a personal class lead by an experienced metal forger in his workshop near Cobargo, NSW.



It included insightful classes about the history and science of metal work, with particular focus on the physics underlying metallic phase changes that allow sculpting and strengthening of steel. We learnt about current industrial and artistic applications of such metalworking, and have grown a newfound appreciation of such practices.

Throughout the weekend, we crafted our own personalised camping knives, starting just from a block of steel and timber. We were taught each step in this process, carrying it ourselves to make a final product that will stay with us for life. This was a fun, educational and rewarding skill to learn, and both of us intend to expand on this in the future. I'm

extremely grateful to be given this opportunity by the venture fund to learn this skill.

James - Blacksmithing course

Thanks to the Venture Fund, I was able to join the Goulburn Women's Rugby Union team during my year in the rural stream. I have never played before and joining the team was a great way to learn a new sport, meet locals, and engage with community events. As part of the team, I was able to travel to participate in a number of tournaments, including the Kiama 7's, 10's, and ACT Women's premier's cup. During the season we trained twice a week which

was a great way to de-stress after a long day of placement.

Community sport is at the heart of regional communities, and it brings together people of all ages each weekend. The women's team is particularly special, as it is in the early days of competing in the league and providing opportunities for young women in the next generation of sports. Several of my teammates were selected for the ACT Women's Brumbies team and it was fantastic to support them on their journey. It has been a privilege to be involved in the club this year and it has been a formative part of my rural stream experience.

Kelsey - Rugby



Thanks to the funding I received through Medical Venture Fund I was able to complete my Athletics Australia Level 1 Recreational Coaching Certification. In my opinion, running is the perfect sport to combine with a career in medicine due to its flexibility. It has been the perfect outlet for me alongside my studies and has given me the opportunity to continue to compete when I have been too time-poor to commit to team sports. I have been a keen long-distance runner for about 10 years now, and despite having never been coached myself, I have found myself volunteering as a coach on several occasions. Therefore, completing a coaching qualification was a logical next step for me to not only help others enjoy running, but for me to learn techniques to improve my own ability.



The course involved a series of online learning and assessments combined with weekly online sessions under the direction of experienced running coach Tim Crosbie from Athletics Victoria, which I completed during the ACT COVID lockdown. These sessions were a great opportunity to learn from Tim and meet with the other members of the course to swap tips and exchange running stories. In completing the qualification, I learned about all aspects of recreational running coaching from leadership and practical issues such as running safety and public liability insurance to the development of training programs and improving running technique.

Completing the recreational coaching certification has inspired me to pursue higher levels of coaching education in the future. In doing so, I hope it will allow me to continue pursuing my passion for running alongside my medical career through the improvement of my own running and by helping others reach their running goals.

Lachlan - Coaching certificate

Learning Auslan has been a wonderful accompaniment, and sometimes a very welcome distraction, from my medical studies. I was taught by a deaf teacher who shared their story and welcomed us into the deaf community so we could better understand it's rich culture. Each week I attended an hour of "voice-off" classes, having practiced old signs and learned new ones, to reinforce my growing understanding of the language. Truly the best way to learn a language is to immerse oneself within it, which



is myself, and approximately 10 other students, did with the guidance of our teacher. To be able to speak in someone else's language, especially a language as unique as Auslan, removes so many barriers that can't otherwise be removed. It was a privilege to listen to the stories of my teacher and my fellow students who were hard of hearing. I would encourage everyone to learn Auslan, or even simply how to finger-spell so we can learn to better communicate with one another.

May - Auslan

I have been an avid song writer since my very first song at age 10. Ever since then, song writing has not only become a vital source of my self-expression, but also continues to have a direct positive influence on my wellbeing. Following my undergraduate degree in music performance and classical voice, I found myself equipped with the musical aptitude to develop my song writing. However, I have never had the ability to transform the musical idea in my head into a tangible end-product for others to listen to and enjoy. I therefore embarked on a quest to learn how to produce my own music.

I attended a Music Production Course offered by the Sydney Community College to learn Ableton Live, the premiere music production digital audio workstation used internationally. This consisted of 3-hour evening classes extending over 5 weeks, and was based in Rozelle, Sydney during my time on placement at the San Hospital. Through the class, I became familiar with the interface, learned how to record audio/MIDI files, and mastered the basic principles of sound design and music production. Our teacher challenged us with different homework tasks at the end of each week, inspiring us to explore the tools of the software and broaden our musical horizons. In a class of 10 students, we would also share our music projects to discover different styles and learn from each other.

This course has had a major impact on my wellbeing this year in enabling me to learn a new skill and keep my creativity alive. Learning a new skill, quite different from both my medical and performance studies, has empowered me with the tools to properly direct my music as I envision it. Subsequently, in creating music, I practise a form of artistry and self-expression which I find deeply nourishing for my wellbeing.



After so many years of writing songs, I feel prepared to take the next step in realising my music and unlocking this aspect of my creative side. Ultimately, I hope I can one day publish my songs. It would give me significant personal fulfilment to share my songs with the community and, with any luck, it will give them something too.

Meredith - Music production course

In September of 2021, as rural New South Wales was exiting lockdown, my fellow long term rural students and I attended a beginner's pottery course. This course was run by Bandicoot Pottery in Cobargo and although we had been attempting to do the course in April, we were extremely grateful to be able to attend in September.

Daniel and Gabrielle were excellent potters, and great teachers to us novices. We had an excellent time moulding, processing, coil building and shaping, learning the different aspects to clay work and firing, and observing the beautiful pieces Daniel and Gabrielle had on display. We made a variety of cups, bowls, plates and other trinkets, and the clay wheel throwing was a great tool to work out some of the frustration from lockdown!



Our initial 2.5-hour session went for nearly 4 hours, and we finished with lunch at Cobargo pub. We thoroughly enjoyed learning new skills, as well as the chance to escape the hospital and study. 2 weeks later, we returned on a Friday evening after clinical placement to do the final touches and painting. Gabrielle and Daniel had music playing, and we enjoyed chatting, some food, and some painting. A few weeks later and our masterpieces had arrived!

Although our pieces turned out beautifully, the most valuable aspect of our course was meeting Daniel and Gabrielle and being able to help their wonderful business. Over a cup of tea, we listened as Daniel and Gabrielle talked about the impact of the 2019 bushfires and the pandemic to their work, their home, and the greater community of Cobargo. We were extremely privileged and grateful to be able to hear from Daniel and Gabrielle and contribute to their business with the assistance of the Venture Fund.

**Mireille, Eluned,
Fiona, Katie, Hayley,
James, Jack - Pottery**





2023 Venture Fund

With the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, we welcomed a flurry of applications in 2023. Considering the success of including third-year MChD students, we decided to continue this moving forward.

In 2023, we received 27 applications and supported a massive 16 activities!





In Bega for my 3rd year Rural stream placement, I joined the Tathra Ladies Soccer team and met an enthusiastic, encouraging group of women (from 17 to 55yrs old) to play soccer with on Sundays. Initially, we had some difficulty recruiting enough players; I remember at our first practice we had only 4 ladies (including me). We joined the men's 2nd division team to play against the men's 1st division, in pouring rain, slide-tackling as much as possible on the muddy field. We were filthy and got absolutely smashed, though news of us playing seemed to help recruit over 15 ladies for our final team. Some of our team members were young adults employed with the local adventure tour company, or were raising babies or young children. We had 2 mother-daughter pairs in our team and so the overall atmosphere seemed really caring. As a team, I don't believe we were

particularly competitive. I think we enjoyed the kick around and fangirling about the Soccer world cup together. The team were generous – our coach and another teammate gave me a spare uniform, soccer boots and shinpads, and would always offer lifts when I needed.

I hadn't played soccer since high school, so it was certainly a physical challenge to run for 75mins. I played either centre midfield or striker- for some reason. I certainly developed some foot-eye coordination and fitness over the winter – because I had little to begin with. Soccer also enabled me to explore the coast as we played against all the seaside villages down to Mallacoota in Victoria. More so than actually playing soccer, I loved the mental break and the sense of community I felt as part of the club. In

the grand final, I missed a penalty shootout kick (I aimed right at the goalie). The next day, our nurse supervisor who played for the men's team, ensured that all the emergency staff knew that I was a terrible soccer player. And you know Bega is a small town when your soccer mate gets injured, then the next day you call her name into the emergency department and she goes; 'IT'S YOU!.' Thank you to the Medical School and the Rural Stream Program. There were certainly challenges this year, though the Bega community absolutely helped me through these.

Cellina - Soccer

I completed the defensive driving and skid pan courses, and I know I'm a better driver now because of them. The defensive driving course involved emergency braking in different conditions. It was remarkable to see how much I improved over the day, cutting the braking distance down by half! The first time the car lost control of the car in the wet, I freaked out and had a huge adrenaline rush, but by the end of the course I could calmly take control of the car back. The skid pan course was different, the goal was pushing the limits of the car and understanding how the different functions of the vehicle work. Testing myself and my car in a safe environment has enhanced my driving skills and boosted my confidence.

Jessie - Defensive driving course

With the grant, we chose to delve into the world of skiing at Perisher. Neither of us had any prior experience, making it a genuine leap into the unknown. The anticipation was palpable as we set out early in the morning, with the 4:30 am alarm reminding us of the adventure ahead. Our 9:00 am group ski lesson was a mix of fun and learning. With around ten participants, all of us beginners, there were moments of graceful glides and others of unexpected tumbles. The shared laughter and mutual encouragement fostered a sense of community among us. Our patient ski instructor then pointed us towards the "Blue Cow" mountain area, a place that would soon become our training ground. At Blue Cow, every trip up and down the slope felt like a new lesson. Each time we felt a bit more comfortable, a tad more in control. The morning's hesitations slowly faded, replaced by a growing familiarity with the snow beneath our skis. By day's end, we had found our rhythm in the beginner's area and looked forward to future skiing adventures.

Looking ahead, our upcoming move to Cooma brings a new layer of excitement. Cooma, often referred to as the gateway to the Snowy Mountains, promises not just proximity to skiing locales but also a rich tapestry of experiences. The thought of weekend ski trips, exploring local trails, and immersing ourselves in the local culture is exhilarating. Skiing, which started as a one-day adventure at Perisher, now holds the potential to become a regular activity, allowing us to integrate more deeply with the Cooma community and its surrounding natural beauty. In reflection, we owe a debt of gratitude to the Venture Fund scholarship program. It offered us more than just a day on the slopes. It gave us a chance to step back,

enjoy a new experience, and draw connections between our passions.



Harrison and Tiana - Skiing

For four days, I camped out among some of Australia's highest peaks in Kosciuszko National Park in the coldest part of Winter. The Medical Venture Fund has allowed me to undertake an amazing trip that I will never forget and gain a unique appreciation for the beauty of the Australian Alps.

I had visited Kosciuszko National Park many times before during the Summer and Spring; however, without the Venture Fund, I would not have been able to undertake a trip during the winter. The first day consisted of hiking for several hours with snowshoes and poles to our campsite. We made camp nestled in the monochrome peaks of the Ramshead range with Mount Kosciuszko looming in the distance.

The second day, we woke to see the tops of puffy clouds from ice-crusted tents. Throughout the day, the weather deteriorated quickly, becoming a snowstorm with terrible visibility. However, by the third day, the weather had cleared sufficiently that we could climb Mount Kosciuszko. Crossing Etheridge Gap before approaching from Rawson Pass, the climb was short but steep. The views are hard to describe, but the wintry landscape was spectacular and well worth the trip.

I would like to say a very special thank you to the Medical School and Venture Fund for this opportunity; without it, I probably would never have had this experience. I would also like to thank Mike Edmondson, who was the guide for the trip and shared his pearls of wisdom on camping in the snow.

Edwin - Hiking trip

Stage 1: Painting: In the past, I had sanded the paint of cheap guitars then repainted with a brush and oil paints. My most recent attempt in 2020 was limited by the share-house I was living in not having the space to safely use aerosols. The final result was largely streaky and the final clear coat was full of bugs and dirt (as I had to let it dry on the washing line).



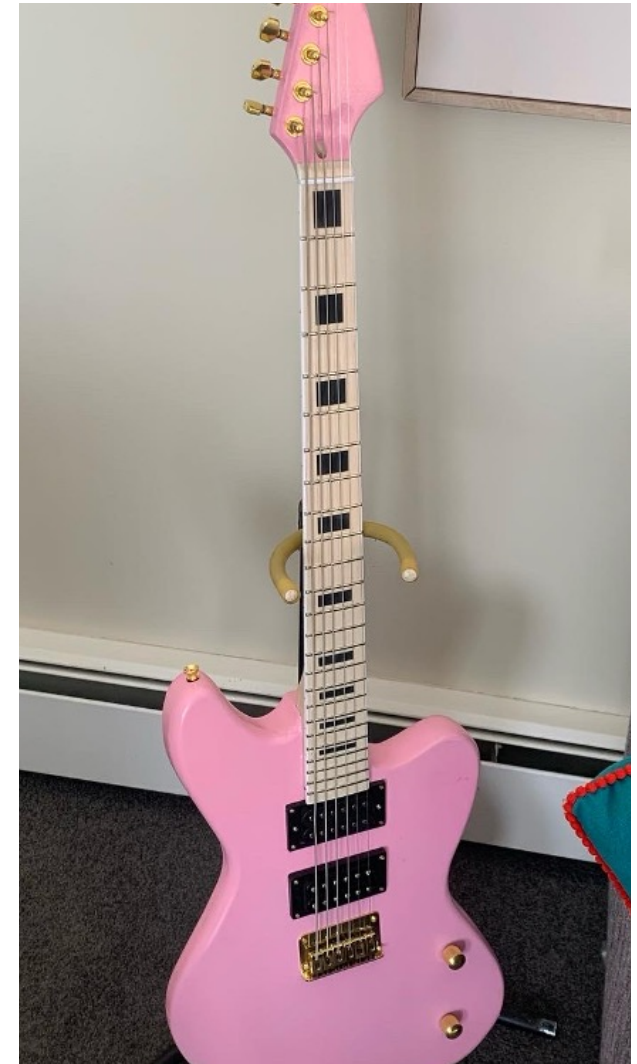
For this project, I researched options and went with a polyurethane spray paint. The Fender guitars I was modelling from used this type of paint in the 80s-90s, and was relatively affordable compared to nitrocellulose paint. I found a brand that made paints for visual art, and used a water-based medium rather than hydrocarbon. This meant I didn't have to use a respirator and minimized the amount of fumes. This worked very well, and the water dried rapidly. I expected it to take multiple months between each coat drying, but I was able to perform three layers of

undercoat, three of paint, and three of clear in about six weeks. I got into a routine of sanding and painting once I got home from placement each day. I found it very satisfying, and was in the end very happy with the result. Without access to professional equipment/spray booths, I ended up improvising with cymbal stands I had nearby.

Stage 2: Assembly/Set-Up: The assembly was quite a bit more difficult than I thought. Whilst I was familiar with what I had wanted, I underestimated how precise things would have to be. Installing the tuners and strap buttons were easy enough, although bolting the neck to the body required some readjustment. I had wired many electric guitars in the past, and although I couldn't thread the neck pickup into the control compartment properly, I had it there more for aesthetic reasons than for the sound.

I had not installed a bridge before though, and this turned out to require millimeter precision. I took my time with my first attempt, and whilst it looked good, it was not functional. Once assembled, I was unable to intonate the guitar. When playing an octave, the higher note was pitching almost an entire semitone high. This made the guitar unplayable. I replaced the bridge to a higher quality tune-o-matic style, although not much had improved. After much tinkering (and with some frustration), I drilled two new holes approx.. 2.5cm back, turning the guitar into a 28.5inch scale rather than the 27inch I had wanted. This did solve the intonation issues, although there are now two large holes that I will need to patch at a later date.

Reflection: The guitar sounds exactly as I was hoping. The baritone scale holds the tension required



for detuning very well, and the high quality pickup sounds clear under heavy distortion. There are still quirks that I am ironing out, and this is likely to be a long term project with much tinkering and improving to go. I very much enjoyed the process of building a custom guitar from scratch. I learnt many more skills, and have a further appreciation for the skill that building a quality instrument takes.

Matthew - Custom guitar

This year the three of us used the Medical Venture Fund to undertake a series of yoga and meditation classes together at Wild Studio. The classes were not only great for us to schedule time together during busy periods, such as exam season, but were also incredibly rewarding for our wellbeing and starting a lifelong habit. The principle of yoga is meditation through movement, repetitive flows that challenge strength and balance, as well as a dedicated silent meditation at the end of each class known as Shavasana. It is so incredibly hard to switch off a busy mind - buzzing with thoughts of items left on the to-do list, tomorrow's class schedule, and looming exams. Overtime gaining this control, being able to catch these thoughts and silence them, has been so refreshing. Entering into such busy careers, being able to mentally switch off is such a vital skill – a necessity to preserve mental clarity and energy.



Upon reflection, one specific instruction during our classes really resonated with us. At the end of the 60-minute session, the instructor would ask us to thank ourselves for taking the time to participate - to thank ourselves for the effort we have invested for our

minds and our bodies and for giving ourselves a guilt-free hour to step away from the stressors of the day. This is something that we now try and implement each time we do something for our own wellbeing, whether that's a gym session, a walk around the lake or something as simple as sitting down with a cup of tea to watch our favourite show. Showing gratitude and kindness to yourself is so often overlooked.

Thank you to the Medical School and the Venture Fund for this opportunity, it has been so special and something we cannot wait to keep doing together. We hope to continue exercising our new skills and habits throughout the remainder of our studies and into our careers as doctors.

Mel, Diba and Dilan - Yoga

We chose to do horse riding at Forest Park Riding School. Lo and behold, Saddle Club 2.0 was born. We all really like animals and we have enjoyed horse-riding in the past, so we decided to rekindle this hobby. We are also in the rural stream of medicine, and will be moving rural next year, so we thought that this would be the perfect introduction to farm life. Our first riding experience was a trail ride through the lovely Cotter Mountains. As the wind hit our face and the sun splashed off our backs, we were in bliss atop our noble steeds. The trail ride went for an hour, and it was a great opportunity to meditate and reflect on the past year. Although we thoroughly enjoyed the trail ride, we thought that it would be good to acquire some more formal riding skills and decided to book in for a group lesson the following time. During the

lesson, we were each assigned a horse: Ernie, Garry and Holly. It was cute to see their different personalities and it made us think about how sometimes animals are so similar to humans.

We are so grateful for the opportunity to pursue our interest in horse-riding, and we hope to continue The Saddle Club 2.0 as we move to our rural destinations.



Emaan, Ainsley and Sarah - Horse riding

Practically as soon as our final 3rd year exams finished, myself, another long-term rural Bega medical student (who wishes to remain anonymous) and Emily, one of the interns at SERH (an ex-ANU student) took the scenic, coastal drive from Bega to Bateman's Bay to participate in our first ever attempt at wakeboarding. Whilst we were quite nervous getting changed into our wetsuits, the cool and calm instructor assured us that we were guaranteed to have fun, whether or not we succeeded at standing up on the water behind the moving boat. We tumbled into the small but luxe motorboat at Bateman's Bay marina and set off up the Clyde River to the sound of Emily's DJ-ing set blasting through the boat's speakers. The overcast weather conditions and hundreds of cauliflower-sized jellyfish scattered throughout the river added to our apprehension, but even the prospect of a jellyfish sting to the face wasn't enough to quell our curiosities for the unique sport.

I was the first to have an attempt, warmly bullied into it by my friends. The instructor, Brownie, attached the board to my feet and told me to stand up and take a few hops off the stern until I was in the water. The water was warm and it was easy to hold my head above the surface to avoid the jellyfish. We were going to use the pole that extends out the side of the boat to hold onto before progressing to holding the rope handle extending out the back of the boat. The boat stayed stationary while I gripped the bar above my head, crouched in the water and leaned back. The boat started to move and I tried to understand how to position my board and myself correctly when I lost hold of the handlebar and faceplanted into the water. After 5 failed attempts it was the other student's turn. The boat jolted from stationary to



moving and in a second, she was up! Nailing it. Just like she nails her academic coursework - effortlessly. Even the instructor was impressed. She'd said she'd briefly tried water skiing once in the past. She had a few more goes and proceeded to easily wakeboard for about a kilometer before deciding that she'd had a good enough attempt. Emily was next. While struggling for the first few tries to get into the standing position, Emily managed to also stand up and wakeboard for a good distance. We had a few rounds of turns each, with my second attempt suddenly seeming much easier than the first as I managed to stand and board for some distance too. Our anonymous hero was the only one of us to progress to using the rope handlebar to surf at the back of the boat's wake. This was like going from level 1 straight to 10. The rope handle provides essentially zero

stability to brace yourself as you pull your body up to a standing position. Perhaps with some more time and practice, she could've gotten up, since she looked close on multiple attempts. However, the body tends to tire faster than the mind in wakeboarding and our two-hour booking slot was soon due to expire. Brownie, and our boat's captain, Dave, allowed us to attach a toboggan-like device to the back of the boat for the ride home. For the next half an hour we bounced over jellyfish and skidded side-to-side on the body board until we reached the marina.

Naomi - Wakeboarding

I applied for this scholarship to do scuba diving because I wanted to experience the adventure of exploring the underwater world in all its vibrant colours and unique life. However, by the end of the experience, I found that this adventure in Saint Lucia was not just about exploring the vibrant underwater world; it unfolded into a transformative journey, revealing layers of discipline, environmental consciousness, and personal growth.

The initiation into scuba diving began the night before my medical elective in Saint Lucia. Anticipating a quick and easy adventure, I unexpectedly found myself immersed in 10 hours of e-learning – a lesson in discipline that extended beyond resisting the temptation to binge-watch the in-flight entertainment. This initial phase underscored the dangers of diving and the discipline essential for safety, fostering a mindset to remain calm in unforeseen circumstances.

The scenic drive through the undulating mountainous terrain of St Lucia heightened a sense of anticipation mixed with a hint of anxiety on the day of the first dive, as I had now spent some significant time learning about the dangers of diving. However, upon reaching Soufriere, the Island's spectacle – a volcanic mountain (the famous Petit Piton) against a backdrop of clear aquamarine waters and a blue sky – rekindled excitement.

I had decided to dive with a local shop, as opposed to diving with a resort, to support local business. Meeting the experienced divemaster, Chester, further eased my nerves, because he was not only kind and understanding but also seemed experienced and relaxed. I was also impressed by his commitment to

underwater preservation, exemplified by his focus on hunting invasive lionfish during our first dive.

The initial anxiety gave way to the exhilarating sensation of breathing underwater as we descended into the ocean. Beyond the practical skills learned online, the dive brought a unique interaction with marine life. A moray eel, exhibiting cat-like curiosity, and the responsive coral species added a layer of enchantment to the underwater experience. The second open water dive, on Christmas Eve, dispelled any lingering anxiety. Amid underwater arches, kaleidoscopic coral, and an array of marine life, the absence of anxiety prompted a realization – the desire to express excitement was tempered by the limited vocabulary of dive hand signals. This dive highlighted the art of patience, allowing experiences to accumulate silently and, upon resurfacing, weaving them into a narrative to share with fellow divers.

The subsequent dives delved into refining skills and embracing the local spirit of support. Chester's act of catching lionfish, not only for environmental preservation but also to assist a friend and feed local stray cats, resonated with the island's ethos of mutual support.

The final dive, shared with another medical student, Ash, encapsulated the joyous culmination of the learning journey. As we surfaced to sunshine and the picturesque view of the Pitons, the experience served as a fitting conclusion to a series of dives that had not only imparted a new skill but had also instilled a profound sense of resilience in the face of anxiety.

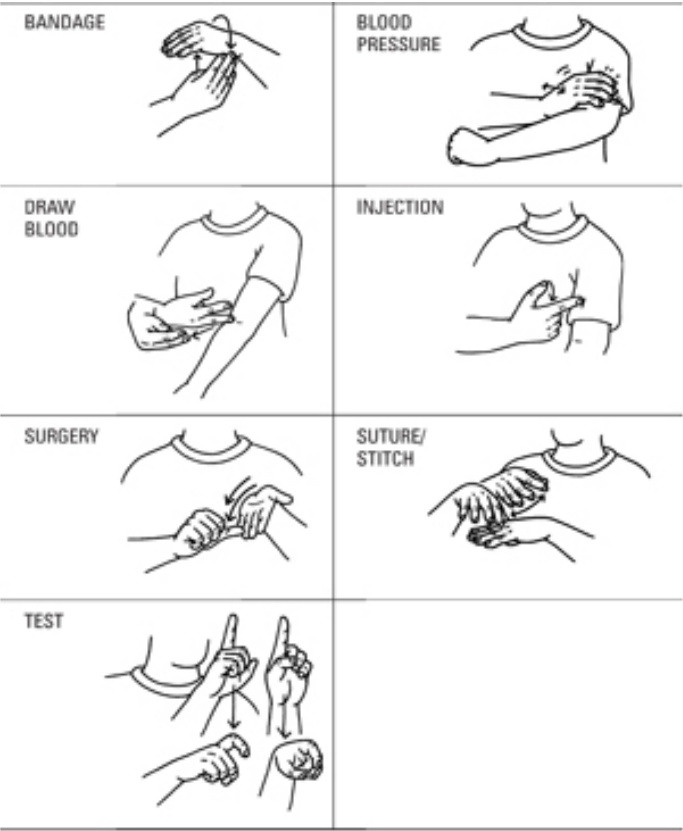
In retrospect, scuba diving in Saint Lucia exceeded expectations, offering not only a means to interact with nature but also a unique form of self-discovery. The values of conservation and camaraderie, coupled with the



requirement to communicate silently, underscored the depth of this underwater adventure. It is an experience that, akin to any interaction with nature, calls for a commitment to practice with a minimal negative impact, leaving an indelible mark on my experience of Saint Lucia, as well as my experience of the underwater world more broadly.

Taliesin - Scuba diving

I completed the 6-week introductory course for Auslan (Auslan 1) with Natasha finishing 16th November 2023. This involved 6 weeks of 2 hours classes and there is no talking in class, only signing. This is the same process for other spoken language classes I've taken in the past, but this came as a surprise to me on the first class when the tutor wrote this to us. If we don't know how to sign something, then we can write it down and sign 'please read this' or 'how to sign this'. Reflecting on this, I was surprised by my reaction as I don't know why I thought there would be a different process. Of course, there may be a teacher for which Auslan is their first language which included deaf and hearing-impaired.



It was respectful to not talk in class when they would miss what we were discussing and we were all there to learn Auslan. Then I began to think about how through language we can convey so much of our personality and mood with tone so I wondered how this would be shown in sign language. It was nice to discover that you can still convey mood and personality such as using facial expressions and body language. As someone who is quite talkative, I thought I would struggle with the silence and inability to talk in class. Surprisingly, I found that I really enjoyed the silence since there was still the ability to communicate another way. The silence became easier and easier the more we learnt sign language and we could sign and make jokes to communicate with peers in the classroom.

It was very nice having that time away from medical studies to focus on something else for a few hours every week. It was nice to make some friends outside of medical school and be immersed in the deaf community. It was a really great experience to do with Natasha as we could practice throughout the week at home together, helping us to pick up Auslan faster.

This course involves not only the introductory signs for Auslan but also information about deaf culture. This was particularly interesting to learn about the historical language branches and how different Auslan is in Melbourne (southern) dialect vs Sydney (Northern) dialect. I enjoyed this aspect of the course reading about deaf culture each week as it provided a deeper understanding of what you were learning.

It has been very nice to use these new skills both in medical school and outside including the disabled

school placement and in my retail job on the weekends. It's important to remember that not only deaf people use sign language as it can also enable people to communicate with learning difficulties who are non-verbal such as some people with autism spectrum disorder. I'm hoping to practice the basics some more and then apply later in the year to do Auslan level 2.

Zoe - Auslan

Living Faiths was a course run by Sydney Missionary and Bible College (SMBC) every Wednesday night for around 2 hours from 26/07/23 – 08/11/2023. This course gave an overview of animism/folk religion, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. It was an eye-opening experience for me. I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the heart of these religions and why people around the world believe in these religions as well as the spiritual worldview that persists outside of the Western secular/Christian context. I was also able to reflect on the differences between the central tenets of these religious beliefs and my own Christian faith and how I could respectfully explore and engage the different spiritual beliefs that others hold. My favourite part were the very informative readings and answered a lot of questions I had as well as providing insightful information. We were also able to speak to a Buddhist Nun from a Sydney Temple over Zoom.

Christine - Faith course



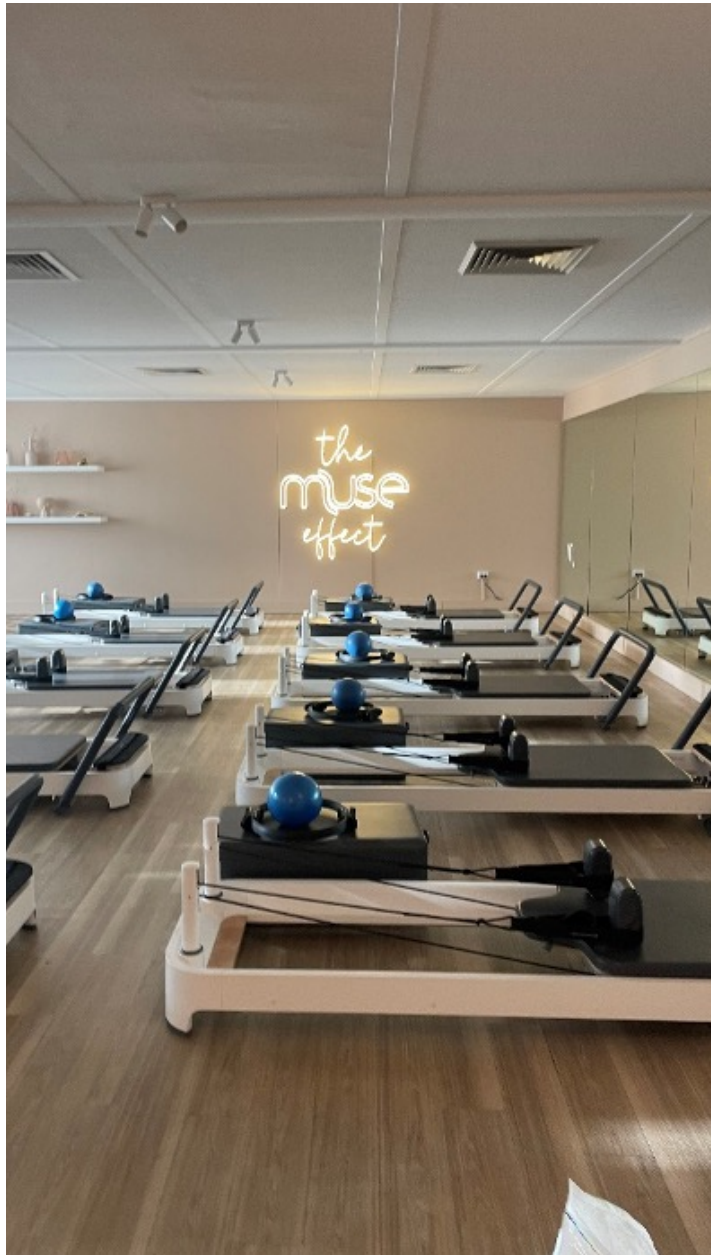
2024 Venture Fund

2024 was another big year for the Venture Fund. We received 14 applications and supported 12 activities from a variety of second and third-year MChD students.

We continued to support the always-popular pottery and horse riding classes, but welcomed some new activities, including Pilates and boxing!



Completing 20 classes of reformer Pilates at Muse in Dickson, supported by a generous grant from the Medical Venture Fund Award, has been a transformative experience for me. As we know the demands of studying can be overwhelming—balancing rigorous academics with the emotional weight of patient care often leaves little room for personal well-being. This grant gave me the chance



to step back, reconnect with myself, and prioritise my health in a way I hadn't before.

Pilates offered me a sanctuary where I could disconnect from the relentless pace of medical studies. The structured yet fluid movements required focus and precision, which helped quiet my mind and centre my thoughts. The mindful engagement with my body during each session became a form of meditation, allowing me to release built-up tension and return to my studies with renewed energy and clarity.

This experience has left me feeling more balanced, both physically and emotionally. It's a reminder that investing in oneself isn't indulgent but necessary for sustaining long-term success and resilience. I am deeply grateful for this opportunity, which has not only enhanced my physical health but also equipped me with tools to better manage stress—a skill I will carry forward in both my personal and professional life.

Brie-Anne - Pilates

We lived in Young this year for our long-term rural stream, and with the help of the Venture Fund award we had the opportunity to play two netball seasons spanning most of the year in the Young & District Netball Association's Seniors Twilight Competition. The highlight of the season was meeting some great new friends that quickly became a key part of our social circle here in Young, and truly bettered our overall experience here.

Having netball each week meant we always had something social to look forward to and prevented us from being too isolated in a small rural town. We also really looked forward to playing netball each week as it had become such a fun way to exercise and do something different (slightly outside our comfort zone!) than what we would normally do, such as going to the gym or for a run.

Going into it, we weren't expecting the quality of netball to be as high as it was given it was a social competition, but because of the high level we improved quickly, and it was fun to play with a team full

of players who were so skilled as we learnt off them. On top of this, the netball season was a great way to engage in the local community and meet people we wouldn't normally meet in our everyday placement setting. We are grateful for the Venture Award as it has contributed significantly to our costs, which were quite high for a social competition, and believe we made the most of the help provided to us.

Lili and Mirella - Netball



I had the privilege of participating in the Canberra Potters Society introductory pottery course with the support of the ANU Medical School Venture Fund. The course was a wonderful opportunity for me to try a completely new skill - pottery. I am so grateful for this opportunity as it is not often that we are given the chance to embrace something which we have never done before.

The first few weeks of the course focused on 'hand building' using different techniques, I found these sessions to be relaxing, and I learnt a lot. In the first week we made 'pinch-pots' which was quite a fun blast from the past as I haven't made one since primary school. I made two small vases which were organic looking that's for sure! In the second week we focused upon coil building pots and the third we rolled clay out into slabs to build vases and bowls using thin sheets of clay. I made a porridge bowl from a large slab that I draped over a mould which has become my favourite piece from the course. In the

fourth week we learnt about glazing and glazed our work from the first two sessions, I found this process to be super interesting as the vases did not look at all polished when they had been dipped in the glaze but after firing the glazes made the work look significantly more polished. I loved how much the glaze changed colour in the kiln and become firm and luminescent. From the fourth week onwards, we learnt how to throw pots on

the wheel which was incredibly challenging while also being very fun. I found that using the wheel took so much patience and concentration that it allowed me to forget about any stress that I had and just focus on what I was making in the moment.

Overall, I absolutely loved being given the opportunity to participate in the pottery course. The course provided me with a creative outlet and a space to take some time for myself and to learn something new that was not related to university or studying. I am thoroughly looking forward to continuing to build my pottery skills in the future.

Bryher - Pottery

The first time I considered professional singing lessons was in 2012 after improvising a jazz song on peanut allergies in a year 7 music class. 12 years later

the Medical Venture Fund has provided me with the opportunity to finally fulfil this dream.

My lovely instructor, Dr Marie-Cecile Henderson, has been wonderful in creating a safe space for me to experiment with my voice. It is easy to be embarrassed when your voice breaks at the climax of a song, or when you can't quite reach the notes your teacher pushes you to try, however I have been working on enjoying the process of trial and error. While I first approached Dr Henderson with specific interests in musical theatre and jazz, she has given me the confidence and skills to broaden my scope. I never thought that I could be capable of classical singing but with lessons I'm now empowered to give it a go. Two singers I have always admired include Lea Salonga and Eva Noblezada, both who rose to international prominence as Kim in the musical Miss Saigon. The song "I'd Give My Life for You" has always seemed impossible to me, but is currently part of the repertoire I am rehearsing for performance next year. It is humbling and exciting to be working on pieces sung by theatre legends such as Salonga and Noblezada, especially when I thought their repertoire was far beyond my ability.

I am extremely grateful to be able to pursue my 12 year-long dream of taking professional singing lessons thanks to the Medical Venture Fund. I am excited to continue singing both as a soloist and in community groups!

Catherine - Singing lessons

The Medical Venture Fund enabled Joe and I to undertake horse riding lessons and I am so grateful for this opportunity. I have always loved horse riding but growing up Sydney there was limited opportunity to do it. Being able to pursue this hobby has been a highlight of this year for me and would not have been possible without the generous fund.

Joe and I would drive out on a Wednesday to Gorromon Park, meet our fellow riders and instructor and then make our way to the horses we had been assigned for that day's lesson. Joe's favourite was a horse called Jamoeka and my favourite was Alfie. One of the things I love most about riding is that when you are on a horse you can't focus on anything else, it requires all of your attention as there are so many things to think about, and in that way, it is excellent for mindfulness. Joe and I undertook our riding lessons in the weeks leading up to our exam period and it became my favourite time in the week because of this mental break it provided. We are lucky in



Canberra to be so close to rural areas with large paddocks and fields enabling an escape from the city. So much of our lives is consumed by studying medicine and talking to people also studying or working in medicine and when we were at the stable we were able to be emersed into a totally different world where horses were the most talked about conversation topic. It provided a much needed break from exam stress and was a good reminder that whilst sometimes difficult, it is important to find balance both whilst studying and working in medicine.

Overall, participating in the Venture Fund was an incredible experience. I had the best fun, got to spend time with friends, develop a hobby further and have a break from the stress of our daily routines. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the generous donor of this fund. We have had the best time, thank you so much.

Charlotte and Joe - Horse riding

I feel honoured to have received the support of the Venture Fund award to facilitate my first individual ice-skating competition. The award allowed me to receive the support of my amazing coach, Tanisha, to work towards choreographing and performing my final routine in the Spring Competition in the ACT. It's been a privilege to have the opportunity to learn many new skills, from several new jumps and other skills in my program to the somewhat daunting prospect of being judged by a panel of professional skaters and judges.

Thanks to the support of the award in helping me achieve this goal, I can now look towards new ambitions, including new skills and higher-level competitions. I can push myself even further knowing that the things I've learnt and the experiences I have gained this year will support me. This has been a very rewarding experience, and I am very grateful to have been awarded the opportunity to fulfil a life goal!

Elise - Ice-skating





Hockey was the sport that I played growing up. I have played hundreds of games and competed in local, state and national tournaments. Because of just the way life goes, I haven't been able to play any organised sport for the last few years.

The venture fund award has made it significantly easier for me to engage in organised sport this year. I was excited to play at the start of the year, but I didn't realise how much I actually missed the sport. It felt SO GOOD to be able to be part of a team again, and I had such a good time getting to know my teammates. Being part of a team again was a great way to disconnect from my studies and definitely helped my mental health throughout this year of study. I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the venture fund donors for contributing to the costs of my hockey.

I also had a productive year on the field, playing over 30 games in both the ACT internal competition and the University Nationals (Unigames) competition. I ended up playing 2 grand finals for teams in the local competition (unfortunately losing both), and our Unigames team won gold in division 1. At our presentation night last week, I received the 'best and fairest' award and was also named on the 'Presidents 11' team. The president's 11 is awarded to 11 players in the club who stand out in their team and are also people the president would want to play and have a beer after games with. To my surprise (and excitement), I have also been nominated for a university 'Blues' award, with the ceremony scheduled for later this month.

Morgan - Hockey

Receiving the Medical Venture Fund Award pushed me out of my comfort zone and allowed me to try something entirely new — boxing. This funding supported eleven personal training sessions with a professional boxer at Chopper's Gym in Dickson, and I'm deeply grateful to the donor for enabling me to explore a long-standing fascination of mine.

Boxing proved to be an unexpected yet highly rewarding challenge. With no prior experience, I knew that stepping into such a physically and mentally demanding sport would test my limits. From learning basic techniques to building endurance, each session became an exercise in perseverance. Boxing demands precision, coordination, and focus. Despite my concentrated efforts, I often encountered setbacks—such as initially struggling to maintain proper form. These challenges tested my patience and resilience, teaching me that progress is gradual and that each small improvement counts. Ultimately, my experience with boxing has been about more than just fitness; it has been an exercise in resilience, discipline, and self-reflection. Through these training sessions, I've learned to embrace challenges, recognise my growth, and persevere through adversity. These qualities are as vital in medicine as they are in boxing, and I'm confident they will make me a better doctor—one who is resilient, focused, and dedicated to continual self-improvement for the benefit of my patients.

Shriya - Boxing

While I have always been an avid reader and enjoyed creative writing, I had never completed a story until the end of my first year of medicine. Reading a variety of genres and writing styles allowed me to develop my own voice, and my increasing life experiences have helped me create characters with depth and realistic growth. What started as a fun hobby and form of creative escape from medicine became a regular creative outlet, and I am grateful for the encouragement from friends and family.



Being accepted to the Adelaide book signing event 'A Romantic Affair' was incredibly daunting and exciting. It would be the first time I would meet a community of independently published authors, and the first time I would be presenting myself as an author amongst them. While I had moments of imposter syndrome, the authors were all very welcoming and gave me great tips for how to make the most of the day! The event itself was a huge success; After buying, printing, and shipping 80 books to the venue, setting up my table, meeting the host and 100 selected authors from all over the country, I ended up selling over half of my stock, and met lifelong friends along

the way. I was especially thrilled to meet readers who had come specifically for my books, or who had brought their own copies along to be signed! Ultimately, this event taught me to have faith in myself in my skills outside of medicine, and encouraged me to keep investing in my creative hobbies - I am now writing the third in the trilogy, as well as planning to start a fantasy novel (time permitting, as medicine still comes first). Speaking to readers and authors about our works and the stories we created was extremely fulfilling, and I have been keeping in contact with many of them since. It was an absolute privilege to be able to contribute to the book community in this way, and I hope to get involved in more book signing events in future! A huge thank you again to the venture fund for making this opportunity possible!

Tahlia - Book signing

Thanks to the Venture Fund I was able to participate in a ring making class. I did a two-hour ring making class taught by Blonde Canberra in which I made two gold rings from scratch. I chose this class because I have always been fascinated by jewellery making. Many years ago, I did jewellery making as an elective in high school and absolutely loved it. This art is a fantastic combination of technical skill and creativity. Since high school my appreciation for jewellery making continued, but it was difficult to pursue as most classes are expensive due to the great expertise of teachers and cost of materials.

I thoroughly enjoyed the whole class, but I couldn't help being a bit of a perfectionist. I really wanted the end products to look exactly like I had imagined. It turns out a few other students were struggling with



that perfectionism too and Cate commented that she sees this a lot. She made some jokes and helped us all relax and let go of our stress. From that point on I tried to just enjoy the process instead of worrying about what the final product would be. I think this is an attitude that I should try to cultivate more broadly in my life and studies. I want to get better at letting stress go, taking things one step at a time and enjoying the process of learning medicine. I am really proud of the two rings that I made. I kept one for myself and gave the other to my partner. He doesn't normally wear jewellery, so it makes me so happy to see him wearing it with pride. Thank you again for this fantastic opportunity.

Veera - Jewellery making

Prior to January of 2024, the thought of learning French never crossed my mind as I have always had the impression that it is a difficult language to pronounce with an extensive range of vocabulary. However, during my travels to Québec in January, I fell in love with the francophone culture and language and set myself a goal of becoming fluent in French by the end of the year. Just like medicine, everyone learns languages differently and I began to search for the best learning method for me. I realised that the most effective learning method for me is not by burying my head in dry grammar textbooks, but when I'm fully immersed in French content. Thus, I immersed myself in French content for 6 months and built a solid foundation.

In July, I was fortunate to receive support from the venture fund towards my French learning journey. This is when I thought I was ready to begin lessons to work on my speaking. The support from venture fund allowed me to take weekly French lessons on zoom with teachers all around the francophone world. Initially I was extremely nervous as I had never spoke French in real time for the first 6 months, however, as the lessons progressed, I realised that it forced me to begin thinking in French in order to keep up with the conversation. At the time of writing this reflection, I have just finished taking the DELF exam (the official French as a foreign language exam by the French ministry of education) at B2 level. At the level, they expect learners to understand main ideas of complex texts, express themselves clearly on a range of subjects and interact with native speakers spontaneously. The exam consisted of listening to real French radio clips, reading comprehension with French newspapers and debating with the examiners on a random topic (for me, I had to talk about if it is

possible to have privacy in the age of internet). People were shocked that I was able to reach B2 level in less than a year. I have learned so much about myself, my learning style and my passion in enriching my life through this journey.

Having the Venture Fund to support me through this was such a privilege, and I can't express enough my gratefulness! Thank you so much! I love languages so much, they contain so much culture and so much human beauty, and I will continue learning alongside my journey in medicine.

Zachary - French lessons

One of the most important points to take home from the cooking class was to practise patience. On the evening of September 22nd, I had the privilege of being guided through Mediterranean cooking from a professional chef who had recently retired from his job at a 3-Hats restaurant. The experience was quite unexpected, as both Franchesca and I had preconceived ideas that we would be front and centre with aprons on getting our hands dirty. However, the night turned out to be us, along with a few other fortunate spectators, sitting back and watching an expert get to work, talking through his techniques and providing some priceless tips on how to get the best results out of every dish we aimed to make.

We wrote pages of notes that we probably won't ever look back on again, but only because the most important points were the memorable ones... and because we were provided the recipes to take home

anyway! I myself have now learnt the importance of having a visual reminder in front of me to ensure I don't forget things in the oven or on the grill whilst I prepare other elements of the dish (in this case, having a single walnut placed at the top right corner of the chopping board).



It was amazing to see just how effortless Chef Cameron was in his actions, reflecting the decades of experience doing what he loves most. Chef Cameron was comical and engaging throughout, ultimately leading to a pleasant and relaxing night. The food was delicious, and we can't wait to share what we have learnt with those that we love as well.

Kento - Cooking class

Medical Venture Fund

2026

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