

## Spotlight on practice policies and staff development

by Marianna Kelly, Medico-legal Risk Adviser, Avant Mutual Group Limited, phone 07 3309 6840, email [Marianna.Kelly@avant.org.au](mailto:Marianna.Kelly@avant.org.au)

Marianna is well known to AAPM members and her advice is much sought after. She often presents at AAPM conferences and writes regularly for the *Practice Manager*. Don't miss her workshop on June 4.

The quality of staff is fundamental to the success of any service provider, particularly in healthcare where staff constantly face anxious, unwell or demanding patients in a busy environment.

Reception staff are generally the patient's first point of contact with the practice. The procedures that practice staff follow, and the skills developed – particularly in communication – can have a significant impact on patient outcomes and satisfaction.

Guiding both clinical and non-clinical practice staff with sound policies and procedures is critical to effective risk management. This is clearly demonstrated by the case of *Alexander v Heise* [2001]<sup>1</sup>, which rested on the details of a conversation between a patient and the receptionist regarding an appointment. This case confirms that:

*A doctor's receptionist has a duty of care to assess a patient's condition, determine the urgency of the case and make an appointment based on the circumstances and urgency of the patient's symptoms.*

Luckily in this case the Court found that the receptionist did not breach her duty of care in assessing how quickly the patient needed to be seen.

However, this judgement changed the landscape of medical practice management from one of relative simplicity to increasing complexity requiring investment in staff training and the development and implementation of sound policies and procedures.

Avant recommends the following key risk management strategies for all practices:

- ensure all staff have signed job descriptions
- train staff in the practice clerical and clinical management systems according to their roles and responsibilities
- ensure staff understand what is expected from them and are given clear delineation of their responsibilities and delegated authority
- conduct regular practice meetings to discuss system improvements
- encourage open communication at staff meetings and all other times to unearth any sources of conflict or dissatisfaction
- implement an annual performance review and development process
- allocate time for staff to attend relevant professional and continuing education courses
- ensure staff are provided with clear directions from the doctor on how to manage patients who attend or contact the practice with a potentially serious illness.



It's on again! Our favourite AAPM Qld event for all staff - Staff Development Day Saturday 4 June at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre

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To advertise in this newsletter, please contact AAPM Qld Secretariat.

Copy Deadlines

For Jan-Feb issue: January 10

For April-May issue: April 10

For July-August issue: July 10

For Oct-Nov issue: October 10

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# President's message

As a practice manager we are continually challenged with issues to do with efficiencies, effectiveness and events (adverse or otherwise). Our approach to planning for great outcomes in the three e's, is usually spending time in the areas of diligent preparation of documents, disseminating new policies to our staffs and principals; and maintaining a constant eye on risk management and policies and procedures.

I was reminded recently at the risk management module of the Diploma of Practice Management (a course offered through UNE Partnerships) that risk comes in many forms. The so correctly labelled, "Umbrella of Risk", which is a diverse range of areas that as a practice manager we need to be constantly monitoring our three e's to ensure we are compliant, and that our staffs and clients are protected, as well as ourselves.

With the day to day excitement of practice life we tend to push aside those tasks which seem too daunting or 'we'll get to when we have time', however with practice partners such as your professional indemnity insurers and AAPM on your side these tasks are less of a mountain and more a molehill. Some, if not most, insurers do offer a service for assessing practice risk in the form of an assessment. This usually involves a visit to your practice or they will supply you with a check sheet for monitoring and assessing yourself. It is a great starting point for you in reviewing the

three e's to ensure your practice is up to date and compliant.

I wish to thank the hardworking team on the AAPM Qld Branch Committee for the endless time and effort that they volunteer into putting together great educational opportunities for you. I value their ideas and am consistently inspired by their energy, thank you.

Lastly, I want to share with you an article written by Adam Bryant recently published in The New York Times. It is a bit of thought leadership reading to help you on your professional journey of success in practice management. Search on Google for the following title:

*Google's Quest to Build a Better Boss*, by ADAM BRYANT, published: March 12, 2011

I look forward to meeting you at our upcoming educational events, Pit Stop Education Session on May 17 and the Staff Development Day on June 4, and wish you all great success in management over the coming months.

*Carolyn Ingram*



## New Members

*A warm welcome to these new members*

Tracey Allen	Upper Tenthill	Tony McClelland	
James Bidgood	Mackay	Dentist	Kirwan
Andrea Bone	Westlake	Makayla McIntosh	Toowoomba
Anna Blake	Brackenridge	Kylie Nash	Bundall
Margaret Clayton	Northgate	Glenys Ross	Spring Hill
Amanda Graham	Kippa Ring	Julie Ruhle	Bundaberg
Sarah Hayward	Noosaville	Rebecca Sheldon	Cairns
Rebecca James	Bargara	Sharon Tonazzi	Gold Coast
Joanne Lawless	West Burleigh	Emily Whitehorn	Bundaberg
Meri Liutama	Forest Lake		

# Excel at your work

by Bruce Sullivan, Red Hot Relationships, [www.brucesullivan.com](http://www.brucesullivan.com), phone 07 3268 3111

**Bruce Sullivan is presenting our first keynote address at Staff Development Day. The topic is Building RIPPA Relationships: How to live and work with people... who are not like you. We can all benefit from such advice.**

Getting ahead at work may be a really big priority for you. This might be something that you have been striving to accomplish for a really long time, but you were not sure what steps to take in order to get ahead.

If that describes you then you will want to take a few moments and read this small article.

You will find a few simple tips that you can follow in order to get ahead, and excel, at your work.

One of the main things that you need to do will be to make sure you are showing your boss that you are responsible and reliable.

You do not want to miss work a lot if you want to get ahead.

Just because you may feel rough on Monday morning does not mean that you need to be at home.

If you do not have a fever, you are able to move, and you are not contagious, you need to be at work.

You should never assume that others will take care of your job for you. Assume that you are the only one who can do your job and make sure that you are there to do it.

This will help your employer know that you are responsible and reliable.

If you work in an office with several people, there will most likely be some office politics.

There will also be a lot of arguing, and bickering back and forth, from time to time.

This is definitely something that you will want to make sure you are avoiding and staying out of.

You should never feed into this behavior and you should not be the one who is starting it.

This is one of the fastest things that you can do in order to ruin any chance of getting ahead.

Remember what your job is and focus on that while you are at the office. After all, that is what you are paid to do.

Finally, take some time to evaluate your job. What can be done in order to improve your job?

There may be some things that can be



completed that would make your job more effective. There may be reports that could benefit the company that are not currently completed.

It is not difficult to become stuck in the everyday routines. This means that we find ourselves continually doing the same tasks over and over again.

While this is a good thing, there are other things that can be done as well.

Taking the time to reinvent the wheel may show your boss that you are thinking ahead and that you are trying to improve the company.

How to live and work with people who are not like us ... On June 4, Bruce Sullivan will tell us that people naturally like people who are like themselves.

When you meet someone who likes to think the way you do, you generally tend to "click with them" almost immediately.

The reality is, however, that we have to live and work with people who prefer to engage, take in information, arrive at decisions and live in the world differently to us.

The old adage suggests that we should treat people the way we would want to be treated. That's an awesome start particularly at a values level and great if we meet people who are like us. One question remains: what do we do with the other 80% of people who are not like us?

Bruce Sullivan draws on over 25 years of experience to guide you on an educational and highly entertaining journey that will help you with practical and proven ways to enhance your ability to relate to ALL members of your team, your customers and your family.

It will improve your understanding of what each person can bring to the group in terms of different styles of thinking preferences and provide you with a practical way of increasing your own effectiveness with the people who are NOT like you.

Register now at [www.aapmevent.com](http://www.aapmevent.com).

## Water Cooler Wednesday hit the spot for networking

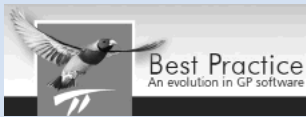


The Outdoor Fountain Courtyard at the Diana Plaza Hotel in Brisbane was abuzz with conversation and exchange of ideas, business cards, and phone numbers one Wednesday in February.

“A great part of the event was the way we all sat around at the end and discussed together as a group how we each deal with Facebook and mobile phone use in our practice,” said one happy networker.

The event was the first post-flood event for AAPM Qld, with welcome sharing of experiences and business recovery tips.

## Best Practice software - SDD Gold sponsor



“Best Practice was initially released in 2004. At that time, it was purely a clinical program, with no practice management functions.

We had always intended to provide a fully integrated offering and in 2007, we included the initial release of the Management module.

In 2009, we added Medicare Online Bulk Bill claiming, followed by Online Patient Claiming in 2010.

With all this new functionality, and as the number of practices using Best Practice has grown, the need to be able to provide training has grown significantly.

In 2009, we introduced a number of training options, including online training, regular visits to major cities for group training, and even on-site training.

The Best Practice team understands the needs of general practice and is focused on producing high quality software that can improve the efficiency and productivity of your surgery.

Our primary focus is on the needs of our doctor customers and their patients.

We will be holding a workshop during the Staff Development Day; tell us what you think.

What would you like to see us add to the program in the future? What can we do to improve our service?

We are happy to listen to your thoughts and ideas.”

## Workshops for *all* practice staff

This year’s Staff Development Day continues the tradition of offering something for everyone in a healthcare practice.

The full-day conference will feature a comprehensive education program, networking, and a trade exhibition showcasing a range of products and services available to assist in the management of healthcare practices.

### **This year’s workshops**

- Improving the quality of healthcare: what is the support staff’s duty
- Perform CPR
- Best Practice Software: Appointment book workflow
- The secrets of being a front desk superstar
- Sterilisation
- Innovations in cancer screening
- Performance appraisal in practice
- Latest news from NEHTA
- Taking care of you: Portion control made easy
- Informed financial consent

Register now at [www.aapmevent.com](http://www.aapmevent.com).



# Want to know more about eHealth?

[www.ehealthinfo.gov.au](http://www.ehealthinfo.gov.au)

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- The delivery of a standard clinical language for use across Australia's eHealth implementations and how it is a significant step towards improving the quality and safety of healthcare.

[www.ehealthinfo.gov.au](http://www.ehealthinfo.gov.au) is jointly brought to you by Australia's Federal, State and Territory health authorities and the National E-Health Transition Authority (NEHTA) to help you explore the eHealth concept and stay in touch with the latest innovations as they unfold.

Gold Sponsor  
Staff Development Day

## AAPM Qld Calendar

For all events, contact the Qld Secretariat

Date	Event	Location
May 17	CEW: Managing staff performance (Tracey Jessie)	Brisbane
June 4	Staff Development Day	Brisbane
June 4-5	Diploma of Professional Practice Management	Brisbane
June 21	CEW: Risk management	Brisbane
July 15	UNEP: Fundamentals in project management	
July 16	Diploma of Professional Practice Management	Brisbane
August 19	Practice managers day	tbc
August 19	AAPM Qld AGM	tbc
August 27	Diploma of Professional Practice Management	Brisbane

## 2011 RACGP AWARDS OPEN NOW

Nominations for the 2011 Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) awards are open from 8 April – 7 June.

Nominations may be made for the following 2011 RACGP awards: Rose-Hunt Award, Life Fellowship, Honorary Fellowship, Honorary Membership, General Practitioner of the Year, General Practice Registrar of the Year, General Practice Supervisor of the Year, General Practice of the Year, National Rural Faculty Brian Williams Award and National Faculty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Standing Strong Together Award.

Do you know someone who deserves recognition? Nominate now.

For more information and to download nomination forms, please visit [www.racgp.org.au/awards](http://www.racgp.org.au/awards).

## “Mr body language” at SDD

In 2011 we will be treated to a closing keynote address by Allan Pease.

Allan Pease has been known internationally as “Mr Body Language” for almost four decades since his definitive book with that title became a multi-million seller and the communication bible for organisations worldwide.

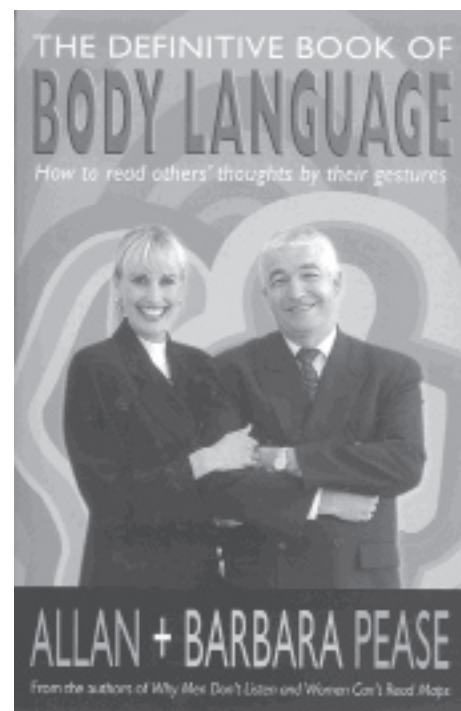
His keynote addresses, books, videos and audio programs, TV shows and advice on personal image are sought after by everyone from business executives and prime ministers, to TV presenters, royalty and stars.

His sales and communication systems have grown companies from one-man bands to multinationals.

We're pleased to have him close this year's AAPM Queensland Branch Staff Development Day.

Saturday 4 June 2011  
Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre  
South Brisbane

Register now at [www.aapmevent.com](http://www.aapmevent.com).



# Vale Jo Weller 1961-2011

by Colleen Sullivan

In March this year one of our AAPM Queensland members died in England just three weeks after celebrating her 50th birthday. Jo finally lost her battle with breast cancer and right to the end remained strong and positive. In April, a memorial service was held for her at their property Kintakirri, Kilcoy. This service, which was attended by her family, friends, the wonderful staff of the Kilcoy Medical Practice, and members of the Kilcoy community came to join her husband Mark Weller and daughter Zoe for a farewell.

Who was this remarkable person we remember as Jo Weller or JoJo?

Like many of our members, Jo joined AAPM for all the benefits we talk about – education, networking, improving our practices. She came from a background in working with both rural and urban practices to establish computerised medical systems in the early days of computerisation. From this background Jo and Mark moved to Kilcoy where Mark took up the position of medical superintendent with right of private practice at the local hospital. Later he moved into solo general practice and took on the challenge of owning and managing a medical practice. It was then that Jo stepped on to the steep learning curve and transitioned to practice manager and business manager.

It was also the time of Jo's introduction and commitment to AAPM and to her studies with UNEPartnerships.

When Jo's practice became accredited in 2000, she met Carmel Brown who was also an active member of AAPM and on the Queensland committee. She encouraged Jo to take up membership and it was through AAPM that Jo became aware of the professional development opportunities provided through UNE Partnerships. Jo not only encouraged but mentored one of their receptionists to do the Certificate III – Medical Receptionist course to further increase her knowledge. A course through UNEP seemed to be the natural choice and it also provided a distance education option with ongoing support. Jo not only was able to mentor the receptionist but also to see the opportunity for herself. Jo could see that through studying for her Diploma in Practice Management she would have the opportunity "for meeting other practice managers,

## AAPM QLD PITSTOP EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

The first of the three Pitstop Education Workshops, "Intellectual Property (IP) and your practice" presented by Katrina Chambers, took place on 6 April 2011. Delegates agreed that it was informative, tailored to practice management, easy to understand and gave a great overview. There are two more workshops in this series, both at the Novotel Hotel in Brisbane.

**Tuesday 17 May** Performance Management: A Practical Perspective Tracey Jessie Partner, Flower and Hart

**Tuesday 21 June** Risk Management  
Nell McKay, Risk Manager &  
Gregg Sivyler, Senior Associate  
Flower and Hart

sharing knowledge and ideas, gaining new, appropriate and applicable health industry knowledge whilst gaining a worthwhile qualification".

So, in typical fashion, Jo threw herself into her studies and her AAPM membership and also establishing and growing a very successful practice with her husband Mark. Jo told me about this time, "My passion has been re-ignited! I'm so excited about the possibilities for our practice." It was always wonderful to talk with Jo about how she would take ideas and tools back to her practice and actually put them into place. She was the ultimate enthusiast. Jo graduated from UNEPartnerships with her Diploma at the AAPM national conference in Melbourne in 2009. Even there, Mark was by Jo's side – always supportive and always encouraging.

So far, I have spoken only about Jo's membership of AAPM and her studies with UNEPartnerships. Jo was an amazing person and touched many lives – particularly as a wife and mother – the practice family, the Kilcoy community, and her huge circle of friends who came from all over Australia and the UK and indeed around the world. For as long as I knew Jo, she had breast cancer and yet never once did I hear her complain, to say "why me?" As I have said before, Jo was an enthusiast. And she was also an optimist. She managed to fit in managing the practice, travelling, entertaining, meeting and making friends. At her memorial service, everyone noticed the number of girls (women) who spoke about their connection with Jo and they all had the same positive stories. Jo knew how to connect with people, to make each person feel as though they were important, to leave you feeling good about yourself.

For the last year of her life, with Mark and Zoe and her family by her side, Jo returned to her homeland, her beloved Yorkshire. They were always there for her. They managed to celebrate Zoe becoming a teenager, Jo turning 50, a white Christmas, walking the Yorkshire Dales.

To Mark and Zoe, what a journey for you both! We acknowledge your strength and we offer you our sincere sympathy and love.

I would also like to pay tribute to the loyal and capable staff who managed to keep the practice running during this time. They held the fort, always in contact with Jo and Mark.

For the family and friends who couldn't make it to England, Jo kept in touch via email and Skype – she never lost touch. In her final days, Jo left some wonderful words for all of us. She said she didn't want us to be "too doomy gloomy".

So like Jo Weller, let's all love life and live life to the full!

