

Ayman Shenouda - My Story

Early life

I was born and raised in Cairo, Egypt into a loving family with parents and two brothers. My family upbringing influenced me greatly as my mother, who was a school teacher, valued learning and was always supporting people in times of need. Unfortunately she died of cancer in her early forties. My father was a renowned political journalist who encouraged us all to work hard and study for success.

I graduated with a Degree in Medicine from Cairo University and subsequently completed a Master in Surgery in 1990. I have always enjoyed lifelong learning and in 2003 I completed a Diploma of Dermatology University of Wales, UK, followed in 2015 by completion of an AICD course in company management.

The journey to General Practice

My wife and I decided to migrate to Australia in 1992 and in January 1995 we started working in Tasmania.

I was a surgical registrar in Launceston General Hospital for 3 years then I moved to The Royal Hobart Hospital for 2 years. An opportunity then opened up for us to work as general practitioners.

In January 2000 we moved to Wagga Wagga in New South Wales and soon after I worked in general practice I realised what a wonderful profession it is. It was as if the dream I had when I went to medical school had come true - patient communication, family care, diversity, and lots of challenges. I was instantly hooked on it. I was lucky that I entered into general practice at a time of change so I could see clearly where general practice was going. Concepts of a multi-disciplinary approach and information management were in my thinking as the corner stone for the way forward in primary care. I thought the most important start is the infra structure so I

decided to build a purpose built premises with plenty of room and equipped with IT infrastructure and the best medical equipment available.

I made an effort to travel to previous winners of the RACGP "Practice of the Year" award in both New South Wales & Victoria, in order to gain an understanding of what was regarded as the best practice at that time. This information, together with hours of research and a strong commitment to be the best was finally put together in 2005 when the dream was realised.

In August 2005, Glenrock Country Practice was opened in Glenfield Park Wagga Wagga to meet community needs in the Riverina with a state of the art, purposely built modern medical centre in a growing rural community. The practice was awarded General Practice of the year NSW /ACT 2007 followed by 3 AGPAL awards in 2009 and 2010.

Involvement in a General Practice Training and Education

In January 2008 I assumed the role of Director of Medical Education for the MRLTG working with Coast City Country Training.

As well as providing medical education for 33 GPs, support was also provided to approximately 30 International Medical Graduates (IMGs) preparing for their Fellowship exams under the auspices of the Rural Outreach Vocational Education (ROVE) program. This enabled these IMGs to receive educational practice visits and to attend examination preparation sessions.

Currently in my practice I have 4 IMGs whom I supervise on a daily basis. I have created a system where I get IMG doctors to be observers in my practice for 3-6 months before they apply for the medical board. This way I believe they gain a better orientation to Australian General Practice.

In the practice I also supervise 2 registrars on the GP training program and we are always mentoring 2-3 medical students from UNSW Rural Campus and The University of Notre Dame.

The practice was also involved with the PGPPP program and trained around 12 interns unfortunately the funding for this program stopped in 2015.

At all times being involved in education not only improves my own knowledge and performance, but also that of my fellow Doctors, surgery and even the patients. I believe education is an essential part of the culture of our practice which is committed to delivering quality care to its patients.

Involvement with the Division

I was elected to the Board of Management of the Division of General Practice in 2002 and served in that position consistently and consecutively for eight years. During the time, as a member of the Division Board, I learned the machinations of governance which has enabled me to participate in an increasingly active manner. Additionally, I utilised the acquired skills, experience and expertise gained from this role to assist with the orientation and preparation of newly appointed Board members.

During the period as a Board member, I have held committee membership of several key Division committees including:

- Population Health Committee
- Enhancing General Practice Committee
- IM/IT Committee
- Quality Use of Medicines Committee
- GP Aged Care Panel and Enhanced Divisional Quality Use of Medicines Committee

Throughout the course of my involvement with Division committees I chaired the IM/IT Committee and the Enhancing General Practice Committee. In addition, I was a founding member and chaired the Wagga Wagga GP after Hours Service for several years (a model of cooperative after hour's service delivery that has attained national recognition).

During my involvement with the Division I enjoyed participating in health promotion activities within the community including:

- being nominated 'GP media Spokesperson' covering a variety of health topics
- being the GP representative on non-Division working parties (including reviewing cardiovascular care within the Local Area Health Service)
- preparing and delivering presentations to community groups and as part of Division community activities (i.e. men's health; healthy lifestyle programs)

National Primary Care Collaborative Program

Our surgery was elected to be part of the National Primary Care Collaborative (NPCC), which centres on improving patient care in the areas of Diabetes management, Coronary Heart disease management, and patient access to their usual Doctor and nurses in a timely manner.

I was then selected to present our surgery's new and innovative "Diabetes Cycle of Care Program" at a workshop in Melbourne presenting to approximately 400 clinical staff. This was well received and due to the over-whelming success, I was asked back to present another workshop the following year. I felt this was a great acknowledgement of the efforts and commitment of my staff to develop and implement extremely efficient and effective integrated systems (patient, personnel, electronic information, administrative) to ensure best practice and improved patient outcomes. The program also ensures that the Doctors' reporting requirements to outside organisations such as Medicare Australia and HIC are covered on an annual basis.

Involvement with local community - The Rock

My wife, a fellow GP, and I have been delivering medical services to The Rock - a community of about 1000 population about 20 minutes from Wagga Wagga on the way to Albury - since the year 2000. Although the medical facility there was located in a rented room in the CWA building, we were committed to continuing to provide our services to this community.

In January 2006 I was nominated on The Rock & District Aged Care Facility Committee which was a steering committee to try to develop an aged care facility at The Rock - a community

dream for many years. It was a privilege to work with this committee which not only achieved its goal of building the facility but also raised more than \$200,000 towards its construction.

At the same time I had a vision to build a medical centre in conjunction with the aged care facility so I approached the local Council and the Division to submit for funding under the Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund which was approved. Now, The Rock has the aged care facility, the medical centre, a pathology service and a full time pharmacy. I consider these to be wonderful community achievements that will last for many years to come and I am so privileged to have been part of it.

Involvement with the Coptic Orthodox Church

The Church in Wagga Wagga

As with all Coptic Christians (Egyptian Christians) our church is an important part of who we are. When I started in Wagga Wagga there were three Coptic families and a few months later we became four. At a social gathering we decided to establish a church building in Wagga Wagga, so we went and discussed the matter with our bishop who agreed. Coincidentally there were two churches in Wagga Wagga for sale at that time. We decided to purchase the big church building believing that god would fill it with people. It is unbelievable but this church has attracted twenty nine GP's to the Riverina / Murrumbidgee area and now we are a congregation of fifty five families and approximately hundred and fifty Copts. On top of that the church has attracted twenty eight university students to Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga. Again, I feel so privileged and honoured to be part of this establishment.

Saint Mary Welfare Project of Sangklaburi Thailand

I was fortunate to be nominated by the Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Sydney to be Vice Chairman and Secretary of the Board responsible for development of the Thailand project.

Sangklaburi is a county of Kanchanaburi city located at the North West of Thailand, a few kilometres from the border with Myanmar (Burma). In this area and particularly in Woh

Malai village there are at least another 4-5 orphanages to help the poor orphans of this country. Besides the children orphaned as a result of the ruthless military regimen of Myanmar close to the border, Christian Karen tribes and others have been displaced from their houses and lands and forced to move into the jungles close to the border. Many massacres have resulted in leaving widows, wounded elders and orphaned children. They have been helped by the UN to flee through the border to Thailand and the Thai government with merciful tolerance has allowed them to stay in the Sangklaburi area.

The objective of this project is to create, through the Grace of God, a multi-purpose centre to accommodate around 220 orphans, and poor under privileged children in the area of Sangklaburi and to raise the level of their human well-being, living standards, academic performance and provide medical services.

Unfortunately the standards of hygiene and well-being are extremely limited because of the tight economic situation. For more than ten years now, the Diocese has operated a registered Welfare Foundation in Bangkok under the name of "Saint Mark & St. George Foundation of Bangkok". The establishment in Sangklaburi is an extension of the foundation. The building has been fully operational for some years now and provides care and support for more than 90 orphaned children and it is wonderful. It is one of my greatest pleasures to visit Thailand regularly to view the progress of the project which is having such a positive impact upon lives.

Ayman Shenouda