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AMA INDIGENOUS MEDICAL SCHOLARSHIP WINNER – ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

**2018 AMA NATIONAL CONFERENCE - #amanatcon
QT Canberra, 25-27 May 2018**

**AMA Indigenous Medical Scholarship Winner's Address
AMA National Conference 2018
QT Hotel Canberra
Friday 25 May 2018
Mr Pirpantji Rive-Nelson**

***Check Against Delivery

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

Before I begin, I would like to pay my respects to the Elders of the Ngunnawal Nation, both past and present. I have a strong connection to my Aboriginal heritage, and I feel that I owe a great deal to my elders, and the people that came before me.

My name is Pirpantji, I am a final year medical student from Central Australia, and I am studying at the University of Queensland. I would like to say that is an honour to be the recipient of the 2018 AMA Indigenous Medical Student Scholarship.

My family is from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands, which are located in the north-west corner of South Australia. I have been most fortunate to have spent my childhood on my family's country, as well as in Alice Springs.

I am truly lucky to have had the experiences, and support from my community. It is through my unique upbringing, that I have become comfortable in Aboriginal Medical Services, and large tertiary centres.

But, sadly, my people are amongst some of the sickest, and this has always been the catalyst for me to serve my community, in some capacity. The fact that my people will, on average, die 10 years younger than non-Indigenous people is a fact that we should not be content with, nor accept.

During my childhood, I did not know of any Aboriginal person that worked in medicine. I presumed that it was something that Aboriginal people did not do.

I was fully aware of doctors, and the role that they performed, as sadly many of my people, which includes my family, have had lives cut short due to poor health.

Fortunately, through my medical studies and prior work experience as an ICU nurse, I have been able to channel my passion for helping my community through health care.

This is something that I hope will make a contribution to the health and quality of life, not only for my people, but all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

I hope that by working in medicine, I might inspire other kids back in Central Australia. To inspire them that a career in medicine is not just a job for non-Indigenous people, it is fully within their reach. To the best of my knowledge, I will be the first Pitjantjatjara person to become a doctor in the western model of health, and I am somewhat saddened by the fact that it has not happened sooner.

In accordance with Recommendation 4 of the 2018 Close the Gap Report, I firmly believe we need greater participation of Aboriginal people in the health care workforce, and I feel that there is a great need for Aboriginal people to look after Aboriginal people. Furthermore, the health leaders in the report should be local people speaking and acting on behalf of their local community. These local leaders have the intimate knowledge of the community and traditional life.

To this end, I have composed patient education movies on YouTube that are fully delivered in Pitjantjara language, and I plan to make more Pitjantjara patient material.

My plans for the immediate future is to return to Alice Springs Hospital for an internship next year, and eventually pursue a specialty that is in line with my long-term goals.

In closing, I want to fully express how truly happy and fortunate I am to be on this wonderful journey, in this amazing career, and I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the AMA again for this opportunity.

Thank you all for listening.

25 May 2018

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