

EDITORIAL

## The legacy of health professional educators

“Why do I bother?” At some stage, most health professional educators may have asked themselves this question. While trying to implement what might seem an obvious and simple educational innovation, they may instead be greeted with sceptical resistance. However, on other days, we look back and see the incremental and continuous improvement of our education programs and gain some sense of satisfaction in having contributed a small part. When we see the impacts on our students, and their impacts on our patients, suddenly, it all seems worthwhile.

The obituaries of two stalwarts of our ANZAHPE community appear in this issue of *FoHPE*. They caused me to reflect on what it is to be a health professional educator. I would like to introduce you to the notion of the multiplicative effect of health professional education.

When a health practitioner interacts with a patient, it has a direct impact on one patient and, most times, an impact on that patient’s friends and family. However, when a health professional educator interacts with a health practitioner, the impact goes on to benefit all the patients that health practitioner subsequently sees. There has been a multiplicative effect. This multiplies further when we consider the health professional educator’s impact on multiple health practitioners who, in turn, interact with multiple patients. Many health professional educators also have an impact on a curriculum—this is less of a person-to-person intervention, but it trickles down to impact on the learning of many health professionals. One of my students referred to this as a “public health effect of health professional education”—our efforts impact on populations of health professionals who, in turn, impact on populations of patients.

Finally, there is what might be called a health professional education influencer—the person who influences the people who impact on the curriculum or who influences the people who impact on the teacher. It includes those who read, and contribute to, *FoHPE*. This is a rarer breed of health professional educator and personified by our two dear colleagues—Tony Egan and Rufus Clarke—who contributed to and influenced ANZAHPE over decades of service. They both influenced our health professional community of practice. That’s why we bother.

Tim Wilkinson