

GP LINK Lunches | Dr Danielle McMullen

Dr Kenneth McCroary, Chair of Sydney South West GP Link, hosts a series of meetings with clinical/political/regional individuals or organisations to discuss issues and solutions for GPs working in South Western Sydney.



Dr Danielle McMullen



Dr Ken McCroary

Ken McCroary - As we rapidly near the third anniversary of the first cases of COVID-19, I thought it may be worthwhile to reminisce somewhat about our journey as clinicians and members of the primary healthcare team through the pandemic, particularly as GPs and members of the general practice team, out here in South Western Sydney where we have had a particularly significant impact throughout the pandemic with significant numbers, significant mortality and the unfortunate events of curfew and lockdown.

One of the silver linings I have noticed during the dealings of traversing the COVID pandemic has been the significant collaboration and cooperation between the various levels of health, not just bureaucracy, but government and health districts and the way the various stakeholders have come together working closely and working in difficult circumstances to forward the care of our patients and the wider community.

I have seen cooperation and interaction throughout the GP community as well both on local state and federal levels. Even throughout the most harshest lockdowns and curfews with the wide spread use of virtual and digital technology we were able to continue to meet and work together towards improving outcomes.

Sydney South West GP Link has spent many an hour working closely with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and The Australian Medical Association, the Primary Health Network in South West Sydney the Local Health District and more wider, the NSW Ministry for Health and Federal counterparts throughout the pandemic we have spent considerable time working with the AMA particularly the NSW/ACT faculty of the Australian Medical Association and during this time of pandemic Dr Danielle McMullen was the President of the NSW/ACT faculty branch of the Australian Medical Association and did a tremendous job in leading the profession throughout many of the trials and tribulations of the past three years and I am extremely grateful for Danielle for being able to join me today to discuss life as president of NSW AMA throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr Danielle McMullen is the Vice President of the Australian Medical Association and a GP in Sydney's Inner West. She is the immediate past president of AMA(NSW), holding that role throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr McMullen has demonstrated skills in leadership, effectively engaging decision makers to further the AMA's strategic policy aims. She also developed a significant media presence and was the trusted voice of doctors throughout the pandemic.

Danielle completed her speciality training in general practice in 2016 and has clinical interests in women's health and family planning, mental health, and doctors' health.

Ken McCroary - Thank you so much Danielle for being here today. I know the new role must be even more busy than what you are used to, so I am really pleased for you to be here and thanks for spending the time discussing life throughout the pandemic. Could you give us some insight into the last few years when you were President of NSW AMA and what that was like during a once in a 100 year pandemic?

Danielle McMullen - Yes, I think like many people, actually reflecting on the past couple of years is really challenging and it all blurs together and I think because we have never faced such a pandemic or such chaos in our lifetimes at least, often it is actually really hard to pick it apart. Initially I think my first response to taking over the presidency role in May 2020 was one of naivety really I think we at that stage that this might be three or four months of this strange new virus and then life will get back to normal and I think it is with that hat on that I took on the role thinking I will face this challenge and get us through it and then get on with the business of the rest of the presidency but obviously that wasn't to be and it then consumed the rest of the role for the next two years.

Ken McCroary - So yes, I was going to say just in the right time that you took on the role, that came from a previous background in the AMA how did you get to that role?

Danielle McMullen - Yes I have been involved with the AMA since my internship and that was at my hospital visit where the AMA comes around meeting the interns and they were talking about what the Doctors in Training Committee does and what the AMA does and I thought that sounded like an interesting thing to be involved in. I am one of those strange people who likes going to meetings, so I went along to some of the Doctors in Training Committee meetings and to hear about what was happening at other hospitals and what was important to other junior doctors and ended up chairing that committee and like many things once you start being involved in stuff you work your way through the organisation and up through the ranks.

I joined the board of AMA (NSW) I had more involvement as I went through my GP training bringing the AMA along to be more involved in GP training issues and GP issues more broadly and got engaged with the federal AMA and its GP groups and sticking around still at NSW and on the board for a few years before being vice president when Kean-Seng Lim was our last state president and kept the chain of GPs going and then wound up president last time around and am pleased to say that we have got another GP as our state president again this year with Michael Bonning so certainly a long track record of GP leaders in AMA (NSW).

Ken McCroary - Yes you mentioned you are one of those strange people who likes meetings. That would have been an excellent skill because the amount of meetings you would have had during the pandemic, even the meetings that we were on together, was sort of numerable so tell us about all the meetings you were doing not as much in face-to-face or sorry in person, but more online these days?

Danielle McMullen - I got very adept at zoom and teams and WebEx and whatever other video platforms exist and still yet somehow make the mistake of not coming off mute for meetings now and then, but we really did sort of throw ourselves into doing these meetings.

