

Cycling for Fun, Fitness and Charity

Medical Forum spoke to doctors with interesting stories about their passion for cycling.

When you catch the cycling bug, on-road risks take a back seat. Not only is it a form of exercise we can recommend to patients who can enjoy exploring while building fitness, it is also a great outlet for busy doctors. *Medical Forum* spoke to four doctors who are now keen cyclists.

Haematologist **Prof David Joske** helped establish Solaris Care, a charity for people afflicted with cancer. One of the charity's main supporters is the Red Sky Ride, now in its fourth year. The week-long ride sees a team of up to 30 cyclists complete a gruelling 800km loop between Perth, York, Katanning, Narrogin and Bridgetown, before heading back towards Perth via Bunbury.

Before he participated in the event, David was fairly new to two wheels and had to work hard to turn himself into a seasoned road cyclist. "I was pretty much starting from scratch. I did about six months of training with the group, working up to riding 250km a week," he said. Training for the event was one thing, but once the ride was underway, David's group was covering up to 150km a day.

This year the ride aims to be even more ambitious with a total distance approaching 1000km, and a donation target of \$400,000.

Another charity rider, GP Dr Gavin Marsh has been a keen cyclist for over a decade and was part of the group that helped set up the Hawaiian Ride for Youth nine years ago. For the event, cyclists ride from Albany to Perth in aid of Youth Focus, a charity that helps prevent

youth suicide. This year's ride (28 March-2 April) hopes to raise an impressive \$800,000, which is up from \$150,000 when the ride began.

The successful event has not been without incident. Gavin recalled that in 2006 an emu almost brought one of the riders unstuck, when it suddenly raced into the road and hit the rear wheel of the bike ahead of him.

"The rider managed to stay upright, but the emu did a cartwheel and landed in a ditch next to us on the side of the road. Luckily, the emu and rider were ok, and the emu just stopped and looked at us as we went past," he recalled.

Another doctor no stranger to the bike is Dr Melvyn Kuan, whose passion for cycling has seen him travel to a number of national and international events. These include Melbourne's Round the Bay in a Day event, where cyclists ride around the picturesque Port Phillip Bay, and the Tour Downunder in South Australia.



Dr Melvyn Kuan

Melvyn has also participated in the prestigious L'Etape du Tour in France. "It's a public event that's basically one of the stages of the Tour de France, where the organisers block off all the roads and thousands of people go down," he explained. The event brings riders from

around the world to travel in the tyre marks of cycling's greatest athletes.

Perth might not present the challenge of the Tour de France, but all of the doctors *Medical Forum* spoke to agreed that it has a lot to offer cyclists. The winning combination of great weather, flat terrain and abundant cycle paths mean the city is a good one to travel on two wheels.

"I think the cycle paths in Perth are great, just because there are so many of them, they're quite picturesque and they're quite easily accessible," said Dr Harsha Chandraratna, a surgeon who specialises in obesity management.



Dr Harsha Chandraratna

Although cycling may be difficult for patients who are very overweight, Harsha said riding is a good way for those seeking extra fitness, and he is hoping to establish a cycle tour

as an incentive for his patients to stay active. The event will be a short tour of Cambodia and Vietnam in June and Harsha invites others to get in touch if they are interested in joining in. "We have lots of patients who are enjoying cycling and enjoying losing weight and getting fit, but it's just kind of a bit of a bonus if they can come with us for a week or so."