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COPACABANA

Pioneering trainee

Doctor set to be first indigenous radiation oncology specialist

Geraldine Cardozo

A Copacabana mum of twins is breaking new ground as the first indigenous radiation oncology trainee in Australia.

Registrar Dr Kelly Needham has started a five-year training program at Gosford Hospital's Central Coast Cancer Centre, which is accredited by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists.

Dr Needham said she was very proud to be the first indigenous doctor to specialise in radiation oncology.

"I was the first person in my family to go to university which was quite a big deal so my family is extremely proud of what I've achieved so far," she said.

Dr Needham said she had always known of her indigenous background but it was confirmed at 15 when a relative traced their family tree and discovered her great grandmother was a Dunghutti woman, from the NSW mid-north coast.

It was at university when Dr Needham developed a real passion for indigenous health and became more involved with community programs to close the gap.

"Cancer is a serious problem for indigenous people with the rates almost three

From my very first day as an intern I have loved being a doctor

Kelly Needham

times higher than the rest of the population so it is something that really drives me," she said.

Dr Needham previously worked as a sonographer for 10 years before deciding to apply to study medicine through an indigenous entry pathway at the age of 30.

She juggled raising young twins, work and study while completing her medical degree. "It was hard at times but I have a very supportive



Registrar Dr Kelly Needham. Picture Mark Scott

partner and parents, and my children are amazing," she said. "It was all worth it because ... from my very first day as an intern I have loved ... being a doctor."

"I feel very privileged to be able to help patients dealing with cancer."

She hopes to inspire more indigenous students to pursue a career in medicine.