



# emeis

The newsletter of the New Zealand Medical Students' Association



**nzmsa**

New Zealand Medical Students Association



## Welcome to the new year!

**FROM THE  
PRESIDENT**

ISSUE 8, April 2010

Hi everyone, I hope you have all settled in well to the new year. NZMSA is your students association and we strive to help you make the most of your time at med school.

NZMSA has two key areas to work on this year — developing a sense of clinical leadership in all medical students, and setting up an action plan for improving student wellbeing. Medicine is one of the best careers possible, but at the moment we face a changing role in a changing health system and we want you to be equipped to thrive in that environment on graduation.

Our first event in April relates to developing the leadership skills of your representatives. The National Consultation Workshop will be in Wellington with a keynote address from Dr. John Adams (Chair of the Medical Council). In the morning NZMSA will have a chance to consult with a wide variety of student groups such as your global health group, rural health club, Pacific and Maori health group, surgical interest society, and so on. If you want to pass a message on to us, talk to your local club reps! In the afternoon we will have a series of management and organisational skills workshops to upskill your reps and make sure the local clubs can do their best in providing services and advocacy for you.

At the conference in May we will launch the wellbeing action plan to ensure that the medical school you are learning medicine in is a supportive and positive environment that allows you to thrive rather than just survive. More about that later...

We also have a number of smaller projects to keep us busy. We want you to get involved so if you are interested in talking with us about any of them, helping to bring a project to fruition or being kept in the loop more frequently, please let us know. Our dream list of projects (in no particular order) to work on this year include:

- ✓ Organising a spectacular conference in Queenstown
- ✓ Developing the pharmaceutical company exposure guidelines
- ✓ Reissuing the doctors in debt casebook to look at student poverty and the influence debt has on our decision making
- ✓ Promoting high quality rural education and peripheral site placements
- ✓ Engaging more effectively with the colleges to get you information about your future pathways and opening opportunities for you to do something that really interests you
- ✓ Developing our climate change policy
- ✓ Updating our website
- ✓ Instituting NZMSA awards to recognise excellence in a medical student and identify the best new student initiative for the year
- ✓ Maintaining an open channel of communication with the medical schools, NZMA and the government to ensure that New Zealand continues to be one of the best places in the world to train and work as a doctor.

**I look forward to receiving your emails, talking to you at conference, and hearing about your issues through your local NZMSA reps. Thanks for being a member of NZMSA.**

*Elizabeth Carr*

Liz Carr, NZMSA President 2010

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# So how ARE you, really...?

by Jasveen Kaur, Vice President External

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that being a medical student has its tough days. What is not so obvious is that a lot of us aren't coping as well as we could. There have been numerous studies on the stress levels and mental wellbeing of medical students and trainee doctors in the past, and they all appear to have come to the same conclusion.

The latest article on medical student wellbeing was published earlier this year and studied us, medical students in Australia and New Zealand. Strikingly, we have higher rates of depression and suicidal ideation than our age-matched peers. More information about this study is in this edition of *Emesis*. This study has renewed interest in an issue that seems to be an ongoing, worldwide problem.

Why, you ask? The answer is a complicated because, as usual, no one factor can be attributed to this gap in wellbeing between us and other students. Possible reasons could be the fact that we deal with human life-and-death every day, the high-stakes exams we sit, or the demanding level of knowledge expected of us by our seniors. However, there are reasons related to our attitudes and personalities as medical students that arguably have more of an impact on these poor wellbeing outcomes.

The biggest barrier to achieving optimal wellbeing is the stigma that we as medical students place on mental health issues like depression. Being the Type A personalities most of us are, we can have a tendency to not want to show our weaknesses. In the profession we're being groomed for, asking someone for help when you're supposed to be the go-to person seems not to fit so well. We need to actively change the stereotypes we have around asking for help so our ideas around mental illness actually reflect reality.

In the real world, everyone needs support on varying levels. If you happen to need to reach help further than your immediate support network, there shouldn't be something as arbitrary as stigma stopping you. If we are to change the trends seen in this study, we need to look at: our attitudes, our limits, and most importantly – when to ask for help.

That's where NZMSA comes in. While reading around the issue, we found that student-led support systems can be a great deal more effective in combating these problems than a good relationship with the faculty alone. As our members' wellbeing is a top priority, we've come up with a wellbeing action plan to implement this year. Our overarching goal is to get people thinking about the wellbeing of themselves and those around them. We're planning a range of events to:

- increase awareness of stress management techniques
- paint a more accurate picture of what it means to seek help
- increase awareness of support services in each area
- encourage responsibility for one's own wellbeing
- increase awareness of strategies to help friends who may be struggling

Look out for the "Wellbeing Month" later on in the year where we will be hosting these events in your centre. We encourage you to get thinking about issues around medical student wellbeing and talk about it with your friends to see what their ideas are. If you want to read the wellbeing policy or have any questions, suggestions, or comments around this, please contact your local NZMSA rep or email [vpe@nzmsa.org.nz](mailto:vpe@nzmsa.org.nz) anytime. If you'd like to read a bit more about our position on wellbeing, go to

[www.nzmsa.org.nz/wellbeing](http://www.nzmsa.org.nz/wellbeing)

We hope you'll find this year one where you become more aware of your own mental health as well as those around you, and that you'll be more of a well-balanced and effective doctor for it.

## Student WELLBEING

In February, the results of a study on the wellbeing of Australian and New Zealand medical students, lead by James Hill from AMSA (Australian Medical Students' Association) and Will Parry from NZMSA (New Zealand Medical Students' Association), was published in the *Medical Journal of Australia* (MJA).

Entitled, "Painting the Picture: Australasian medical student views on wellbeing teaching and support services", the study surveyed medical student views on: wellbeing teaching, the provision of support services, the uptake of such services, and attitudes to stress and mental illness. Medical students of all year groups were included in the study and were sourced from five universities across Australia and New Zealand. In total 1328 students completed the survey, corresponding to a response rate of 26%. The findings from these students are summarised below:

- We have higher rates of depression and suicidal ideation than our age-matched peers.
- 56% of the medical students surveyed believed that they had received formal teaching on medical student stress and distress – of those, only 55% agreed or strongly agreed that sufficient time was dedicated to such teaching, and 54% thought it was approached appropriately.
- When asked which topics of medical student stress and distress they would benefit most from learning about, "helping somebody cope", "recognising signs in others", and "methods of coping" were identified as the most beneficial. The "medical background of stress and distress" was the identified as the least beneficial.
- Of the 71% of the medical students surveyed who were aware of the support services available at their university, only 46% thought they were adequately promoted. Of the 49% of people who had used or known someone who had used such services, only 67% were satisfied with them.
- In total, 70% of medical students have a GP. Of concern, only 45% of international medical students have a GP, in comparison to 73-75% for local students.
- 55% of medical students agreed or strongly agreed that there was a stigma attached to a medical student being under "stress or distress". 72% agreed or strongly agreed that there was a stigma attached to being a medical student diagnosed with a mental health condition.

Given these results and the growing body of evidence to suggest that medical students face disproportionate amounts of stress-related impairments (in comparison to their aged matched peers and the general population), it is clear that the needs of medical students in terms of wellbeing are not being met adequately.

For more information, here's the reference to the article below.

Mills JM, Parry WRG, Carroll EY, Hibble BA, Davies MJ, Yousef J, **Painting the Picture: Australasian medical student views on wellbeing teaching and support services.** *MJA* 2010; 192: 188–190



## While you study and party are your belongings safe?

*When you moved into your flat, chances are you didn't give contents insurance a second thought. After all, you probably only own a few things and might have figured they weren't really worth insuring.*

### How much are your possessions worth?

You might feel that it's better to risk having to replace your possessions if something happened than to pay the cost of insurance premiums. But you'd be surprised at how much your things are really worth. For instance, add up the cost of replacing your bed, bedding, books and CDs, clothes, jewellery, watch, TV and DVD player, kitchen things, other furniture and anything else you own. Could you really find the money?

And have you thought about cover for your belongings outside your flat – things like your laptop, cell phone, iPod, glasses, sunnies, and sports equipment. Student contents insurance from Medical Insurance Society (MAS's subsidiary company) automatically covers these, and even protects you in Australia or the South Pacific.

### What if you accidentally cause damage to your flat?

Who would pay if your flat suffered damage due to a flood caused by a running tap or because of a fire? If the damage happened due to negligence by you or one of your flatmates, under the Residential Tenancies Act 1986, you could all be collectively liable to pay for it.

MAS's contents insurance includes legal liability cover. But it doesn't cover your flatmates' negligence – so to keep yourself safer, you should make sure that your flatmates are insured too.

### Talk to us

MAS has been looking after professional people's financial needs since 1921. Many of our 22,000 Members joined us when they were studying to become a doctor, dentist or vet. And many have stayed with us right throughout their careers.

To find out more or insure your contents today, call us on **0800 800 MAS (627)** or email **society@medicals.co.nz**.

*\*A standard excess of \$100 will apply to each claim. Items worth more than \$2,000 must be specified in your policy schedule, as must bikes worth more than \$1,000 and any contact lenses, wind surfers and surfboards. The information provided is a summary only; please refer to policy wordings for full details of cover, available by phoning 0800 800 MAS (627).*



## Free financial advice

**MAS is with you...**  
while you're studying,  
when you graduate  
and throughout your career.

So, whether you need student credit,  
contents insurance or a savings plan, **we can help.**

Get in touch for a chat.  
No pressure.

**0800 800 MAS (627)**

Email **society@medicals.co.nz**  
or visit us online at **medicals.co.nz**



## We're here to help you with...

- Contents insurance
- Vehicle insurance
- Life insurance
- Student CreditLine – no fees, no repayments while you study
- Personal loans
- Savings plan
- KiwiSaver
- Term investments

Medical Assurance Society's normal lending criteria apply. Applications are subject to acceptance. Student CreditLine is unsecured.





Outside the Box – not only the theme for the speakers at Conference this year but for the conference as a whole.

A team of 6 Christchurch students have been working for over 6 months on NZMSA's largest annual event. For the first time ever, Conference will be held outside of one of the clinical schools in what is arguably New Zealand's most exciting destination — Queenstown.

Over the 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> of May around 160 students will descend upon the small South Island town for a weekend full of inspiring speakers, exciting activities and great social events for mingling and networking. With speakers we already know and love, such as Professor Mark Stringer from Otago, and some from further abroad, including Dr Simon O'Connor (well known for his and Talley's Clinical Examination book), the delegates are sure to inspire with their "Outside the Box" ideas and lives. Another change to this year's program is the inclusion of practical activities for more interactive sessions.

Applications have now closed and we have received an overwhelming response with twice as many applicants as last year; almost three times as many applicants as places available. Whilst this means there will be a number of disappointed students out there, we hope this response will encourage an increase in delegate places in the coming years as Conference continues to grow.

The fee to students has again been kept exceptionally low due to the generous contributions from sponsors who make the weekend possible year after year. In 2010 we have support from Southlink Education Trust, Medical Assurance Society, Hutt Valley DHB and many more.

Please check the website for more information on Conference <http://conference.nzmsa.org.nz>

**We look forward to seeing you in Queenstown for the most exciting NZMSA Conference yet!**

Sylvia Ross, Conference Convener 2010

## DHB Roadshow and ACE INFO evening

NZMSA is excited to invite all Trainee Interns and 5th year medical students to the DHB Roadshow and ACE Information Evening. For those of you unfamiliar with the jargon ACE stands for *Advanced Choice of Employment* and it is the job application process for first year House Officer positions in New Zealand. The DHB Roadshow is the annual job fair that brings all the DHBs from across the country together to showcase their respective hospitals.

Traditionally two separate events, this year they will be taking place together on one great night. The DHB Roadshow & ACE Information Evening will be running in each of the four main centres in the last week of April so be on the look out for our posters detailing dates and venues, reminder emails, and/or get in touch with your local NZMSA rep.

And an insider's tip: for those of you who can't make it (especially trainee interns) ask a classmate friend to check out the DHBs you're considering on your behalf. Remember, the ACE Scheme is still a competitive job application process, so if you're keen for a particular DHB make an effort to express this to their Recruitment Officer to find out what you can do to increase your chances – whether that be through a visit, an interview or, quite possibly, some home-baking! Also, the ACE Information Session will be filmed again this year, so keep an eye out for further information on this from your NZMSA rep.

Otherwise, hopefully we'll see you all there!

Anna Choi, Vice President Internal



**Two exciting events.  
One great night.  
All YOU need to know  
about getting a job.**

Auckland: Monday 26 April  
Wellington: Tuesday 27 April  
Christchurch: Wednesday 28 April  
Dunedin: Thursday 29 April

Roadshow: 4:30pm start  
ACE Information Session: 5:30-6:30pm  
Food provided

**Questions?** Contact [anna\\_c@nzmsa.org.nz](mailto:anna_c@nzmsa.org.nz)



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*We make it easy*

