

Medical Leadership

No longer an “Accident”, but a Conscious Part of our Education

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What makes a good doctor?

Comprehensive knowledge of the body and its pathology, good clinical skills and excellent communication, are all appropriate descriptors that normally spring to mind. What about good leadership however? Doctors are expected to play key leadership roles within our community, whether it is as leaders of a hospital's surgical team, of a community practice, of a humanitarian group, or at a national level as a political advocate. This role is rarely consciously acknowledged by the public or the profession itself, especially in our medical education. Often, doctors are expected to learn these leadership roles incidentally without training or conscious thought. The inaugural New Zealand Medical Students' Association Medical Leadership Development Seminar (MLDS), held in Wellington from the 21-23rd of July this year, took a proactive step to change this.

In 2005, three New Zealand medical students attended a Leadership Development Seminar run by the Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA) in Canberra. Inspired to create a similar event for New Zealand students, NZMSA formed an eleven-strong organizing committee, headed

by Rosemary Wyber. It aimed to bring together people who had already been successful medical leaders to share their knowledge and advice with students who were potential medical leaders of the future.

Over 200 applications were received, and seventy students were selected. Clinical and preclinical students from the University of Auckland and the University of Otago were represented. MLDS was only the third time that students from all of New Zealand's medical schools have an opportunity to meet.

The event began with a cocktail function, opened by the Honourable Pete Hodgson, the Minister of Health. The weekend consisted of keynote lectures and breakout sessions with a formal dinner on the Saturday evening. Speakers included Jackie Blue, New Zealand's first Breast Physician, Dr Jonathon Fox, Chair of the Royal New Zealand College of GPs, Sue Kedgely, Green MP and Chair of the Health Select Committee, Health and Disability Commissioner Ron Paterson, former Cook Island Prime Minister Sir Thomas Davies, expert in Pacific Islander health, Associate Professor Paparaangi Reid, Maori Health expert, and the Chair of NZMA, Dr Ross Boswell. It is difficult to concisely summarise what this myriad of current leaders expressed, my favourite key messages included:

-Remain politically astute, and always show how the patients and public would benefit from a change as well as the profession (Dr Jonathon Fox)

