

New Zealand Medical Students Join the World

Report on the 55th General Assembly of the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA)

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Xaviour is the New Zealand Medical Students' Association President. He recently presented to the IFMSA General Assembly in Serbia, where the NZMSA was voted in as a new candidate member.

"As medical students committed to sharing your knowledge and skills internationally, you are a powerful source of hope for the future. I commend your determination to use your medical training to benefit all members of society."

Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary General, Message to the IFMSA

In August of this year, the NZMSA was officially voted in as a candidate member to the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA), in Zlatibor, Serbia.

All New Zealand medical students are now part of the largest students' body in the world. What will this mean and how we get involved?

This is a brief guide to the "world" of the IFMSA. I have written an extensive report on the IFMSA which can be sent by emailing nzmsa@nzmsa.org.nz or further information is available on the IFMSA website www.ifmsa.org

WHO IS THE IFMSA?

The International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) is an independent, non-governmental and non-political federation of medical students' associations throughout the world. In 2004-2005 IFMSA had 92 members, National Member Organizations from 88 countries on six continents and represented more than one million medical students worldwide. The IFMSA was founded in May 1951 and is run for and by medical students on a non-profit basis. It is officially recognized as a Non Governmental Organization (NGO) within the United Nations' and recognized by the World Health Organization as the International Forum for medical students.

STRUCTURE OF THE IFMSA**Standing Committees**

This is the "core" of IFMSA and where the work is done, using the IFMSA motto - "Think globally and act locally". The work of the IFMSA is divided



into six Standing Committees (SCs), which fall into two main groups; four project and two exchange.

The four project standing committees are; Public Health; Reproductive Health including HIV/AIDS; Refugees, Peace and Human rights; and Medical Education.

Standing Committee on Public Health (SCOPH)

SCOPH is a forum for public health projects. SCOPH have a long list of projects which vary in size from local, national to transnational. SCOPH activities fall under three main headings; community health projects; education projects; and health Campaigns. SCOPH also have publications and supports International days e.g. World No Tobacco Day, World Health Day, African Malaria Day.

Examples of projects (some of many...)

- Calcutta Village Project - Sustainable health clinics and education in Calcutta
- Romanian Orphanage Initiative - Helping orphanage children in Romania
- Teddy bear hospital
- Anti-TB Campaign
- Medical Missions Project
- Anti tobacco
- Fight Childrens Obesity

SCOPH website: www.ifmsa.org/scoph

Standing Committee on Reproductive Health and AIDS (SCORA)

This SC Focuses on HIV/AIDS, access to antiretrovirals, STDs, drugs, needle exchanges, prostitution, Youth friendly services, gender sex issues, family

planning, and neoplasms of the reproductive system. These are mainly based around peer education. A database of all the projects is available. Example events

- World HIV/AIDS day (Dec 1st)
- Peer education
- Youth friendly services

SCORA Website: www.ifmsa.org/scora

Standing Committee on human Rights and Peace (SCORP)

SCORP is committed to promoting Human Rights and Peace. They coordinate health care projects in refugee camps allowing medical students to aid, learn, and experience the problems faced in areas of disaster. At the local level, public awareness is sought through the information campaigns focusing upon issues such as human rights and the problems faced by refugees. SCORP focus its effort through education and awareness of these big issues. They also offer SCORP exchanges.

SCORP Website: www.ifmsa.org/scorp

Standing Committee on Medical Education (SCOME)

SCOME is a discussion forum for medical education. Experience and knowledge is exchanged to allow dissemination of the new educational methods.

SCOME Projects

- Residency Database
- Curriculum Database <http://CurriculumDatabase.osmcluj.ro/>
- Influence of Studying on Students' health
- Implementing the Global Standards in Basic Medical Education (WFME)
- Book-Aid to 3rd world countries

SCOME Website: www.ifmsa.org/scome

SCOME on Wikipedia - ifmsa.org/scome/wiki

IFMSA Exchanges

IFMSA has two student exchange standing committees;

- Standing Committee on Professional Exchange (SCOPE); and the
- Standing Committee on Research Exchange (SCORE)

The IFMSA is the largest student exchange programme in the world, offering about 7000 exchanges each year. There are two types - Professional and Research. Most exchanges are professional, as they are much easier to set up. The main differences are they professional exchanges are only four weeks long and similar to our final year Trainee Intern electives. Research exchanges take a bit more organizing and are of longer duration - 3 to 6 months. Students can be any year at medical school and most exchanges are bilateral - which means students swap from exchange countries.

The NZMSA is going through a transitional period to set these exchanges up with the medical schools and other countries. This will take time to set up properly, but will offer students a chance to become much more integrated experience into overseas medical schools and hospitals.

The IFMSA Regions

To help with the work of the IFMSA it is divided into 5 regions, the same as the WHO; Africa; Asia/Pacific; Eastern Mediterranean, the Americas; Central Europe; and Central Asia. NZ is part of the Asia Pacific region.

External Partners

This is a key strength of the IFMSA as it has links with the largest organizations in the world. These external partners include;

- World Health Organization (WHO);
- UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO);
- and the
- World Medical Association (WMA)

IFMSA General Assembly

The IFMSA meets twice a year in March and August in a General Assembly,

where 500 - 700 medical students from 90 countries gather to discuss the work of the IFMSA. This is a truly amazing week long event that covers training, projects, meetings and official plenary sessions. Most importantly the GA is a chance to meet medical students from across the globe.

Sub-regional Meetings

The IFMSA also meets annually under the 5 regions for a smaller version of the General Assembly. New Zealand is part of the Asia Pacific IFMSA regional meeting.

GETTING INVOLVED

IFMSA is about involvement at all levels. The best way to start is to join one of the many free IFMSA emailing lists (which I strongly advise) and read more about the IFMSA which can be done on the IFMSA website www.ifmsa.org

The NZMSA is going through a transitional stage to get the IFMSA set up across NZ, so keep a watch for opportunities to take part as this will be an exciting time! We are very fortunate that the next General Assembly is quite close in Perth and this will be excellent opportunity for students to attend. The IFMSA is your organization. If you are interested, please feel free to contact us on nzmsa@nzmsa.org.nz

THE 2007 IFMSA CALENDAR

IFMSA March General Assembly

Pre-GA 4 -7 March - Perth, WA Australia
GA 7 - 13 March - Mandurah, WA Australia
Theme - Rural and Indigenous Health
Post GA tours after 13 March

IFMSA Asia/Pacific Regional meeting

18 - 21 March - Osaka, Japan
Theme - Stress and Health

IFMSA August General Assembly

I- 7 August GA - Canterbury, England (Outside London)
Theme - Access to Medicine
Web: www.ukam2007.medsin.org

NEW ZEALAND ATTENDEE SPONSORS

New Zealand Medical Students' Association (NZMSA)
University of Otago School of Medicine

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA)
Mr. Akihito Watabe, (Asia Pacific Regional Coordinator)
Dr. Lawrence Loh, (IFMSA Americas Coordinator)
Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA)

