



# Land of the Long White Coat

## by Dr Joshua Smith

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> Iain Miller is a fourth-year medical student at the University of Auckland, based currently in Counties Manukau District Health Board. Outside of medicine, Iain enjoys listening to podcasts such as *EM Cases*, *99% Invisible*, and *White Coat, Black Art*, as well as being an armchair cricket pundit.

*Land of the Long White Coat* is a six-part, three-topic podcast series produced by Dr Joshua Smith,<sup>1</sup> which aims to equip medical students with the knowledge and skills needed in clinical attachments – particularly those aspects that Smith felt, while completing his final year of medical school, needed more attention. *Land of the Long White Coat* starts cautiously with two very brief episodes, 'Mihimihi' and 'Introduction', tending toward a highly-structured approach. Over the course of the four subsequent episodes, the listener is initially told of basic clinical logistics in 'How Hospitals Work', then is provided with details needed for planning a long-term medical career in 'The Road Ahead: Doctor Jobs and the Training Pathway' (part one and two), and finally learns about the wider medical workforce in 'Nurses and Doctors'.

As a first foray into the world of medical podcasting, *Land of the Long White Coat* is a respectable effort. It fulfils many of the conventions of medical podcasts: guitar riffs separating segments, an interview with an expert in the field, and frequent summaries to recap new information. Smith's relative inexperience does, however, show. There are some understandable teething issues with production like volume fluctuations and editing that leave room for improvement. That being said, the initial production quality was good and further improved with upgraded equipment funded in part by the New Zealand Medical Students' Association Student Innovation Fund.

A particular strength of *Land of the Long White Coat* is the two-part exploration of medical careers in 'The Road Ahead'. In these episodes, Smith explores the pathways from graduation to specialisation, stopping at each of the stages and titles in between. By covering each of these roles and how they train, Smith does incidentally cover some of the same material as the earlier episode, 'How Hospitals Work', but does so in a more succinct manner. This double up in content matters little – soon Smith manages to uncover a section of wider medical education that remains largely hidden for undergraduates. Even experience in a hospital does not necessarily reveal how the training schemes work for various specialities. If a medical student wants to learn about speciality training schemes, then these episodes are a good place to start.

A striking trait of *Land of the Long White Coat* is that it maintains remarkable cultural sensitivity throughout the six episodes. After beginning with a Mihimihi, Smith continues with elements of Te Ao Māori incorporated seamlessly into the podcast. Of particular note is the Te Reo name for the podcast, Te Whenua Korowai Kōtuku. This takes on a greater metaphorical meaning than its English counterpart, expressing the rare and precious knowledge that physicians possess while still retaining an allusion to the coat pun of the English title.

The single largest downfall of *Land of the Long White Coat*, however, is that Smith struggles to define a target audience. In the introductory episode Smith suggests the content will be of most use to New Zealand medical students in their 'fourth and fifth years' of training,<sup>1</sup> but also suggests pre-clinical and even high school students would find it useful. The content of the subsequent episodes, however, does tend toward this earlier end of the medical education spectrum, since much of it can be learned rapidly with clinical experience. As a result, much of the podcast may not be especially relevant to students in their clinical years, with the exception of 'The Road Ahead'.

Overall, *Land of the Long White Coat* is very much what one expects of a new medical podcast and proves that there is capacity in the medical-podcast market for an informative, student-led podcast. The listener will recognise the podcasting conventions and rigid structure that befit the genre of medical podcasting as a whole, while also acknowledging some of the flaws stemming from a novice producer. Sadly, no new episodes have been released since May 2017. However, if new episodes were released they would certainly be both informative and enjoyable.

### References

1. Smith J, Land of the Long White Coat [Podcast] May 26, 2017 [cited March 28, 2018]. Available from: <https://soundcloud.com/landofthelongwhitecoat>