

Thinking outside the medical school box

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As a Trainee Intern, I am on the cusp of ending my time as a student and starting work as a doctor. This transition period has offered me and my colleagues a chance to think about and reflect on our six years of medical school. Being at medical school is an amazing opportunity and can be described as a roller-coaster ride of emotions – from the excitement of being accepted into medical school in second year; to the stress of exams in fifth year; to the elation of graduating and becoming a doctor.

Medicine is an intensely academic course. However, for all of us, I hope that the time we spend at medical school consists of more than just textbooks, assessments and learning scientific facts. Medicine is an art and it cannot be memorised solely from a book. Our time at medical school also presents us with an opportunity to explore and learn more about the world around us. For second and third year medical students, I urge you to participate in some of the various extracurricular activities offered at medical school, and at the wider university. It may seem like you are too busy studying to have spare time for such activities, but, in hindsight, I can say that you do indeed have the spare time. Play some social sport, join an interest group or learn a language. Or perhaps consider the opportunities offered through medical school, such as joining one of the various rural and global health groups, or even becoming part of the Editorial Board of this Journal!

As you continue further into medical school, continue with those activities, as they will help keep you sane through the stressors of the clinical years. Not only will extracurricular activities be good for your mental and social wellbeing, they will provide you with invaluable real-life experiences that will ultimately help you become a better doctor.

The theme of this issue of the New Zealand Medical Student Journal (NZMSJ) is Medical Humanities. This is an interdisciplinary area where medicine intersects with aspects of the humanities, such as politics, literature, ethics, history, film, sociology, philosophy and the visual arts. The field provides insight into humans as social creatures, and gives medical practitioners a chance to develop and critique our skills in observation, empathy and analysis. The University of Auckland's website on Medical Humanities adds that:

"Humanities can present an additional and important context, not only for the practice of medicine, but also for thinking about the nature of medical problems."¹

Medicine is not just about treating the patient in front of us, but thinking about the wider issues that led the patient to present in front of us in the first place. Further developing our critical and analytical skills, through reading and learning beyond the science, can help us become more holistic and better doctors.

In third year, students have the opportunity to do a short course in Medical Humanities; and in this issue of the Journal, we have three articles that students wrote as part of that course. The articles explore various themes; from the legality of assisted suicide, to the methodology of obtaining knowledge, to how medicine is depicted in art. The Editorial Board hopes that the diversity of articles and views contained within them encourages the readers to think critically and creatively themselves.

The Journal continues in its ethos to publish quality academic articles, which are of educational interest to New Zealand medical students. In this issue Kaihan Yao and Tasneen Haque present a case report on peri-prosthetic fractures. We also have an elective report on David Short's time in Nepal and two book reviews that we hope students will find helpful.

The New Zealand Medical Student Journal was started in 2003, to give students the opportunity to gain experience in submitting articles to an academic journal; and to also be an educational tool for those students involved in Editorial Board of the Journal. We publish articles from New Zealand medical students, and also from others around the world, provided they are relevant to our readers. We encourage you to think outside the medical school box and do something different in 2013. For instance, write an article for us, join our Editorial Board, or contribute in some other meaningful way to the medical student community.

REFERENCE

1. The University of Auckland.
MBChB 311A – Medical Humanities.
<http://www.fmhs.auckland.ac.nz/faculty/teaching/mbchb311a/>