

Conference report – RANZCP congress 2010

A shared endeavour Tātau Tātau e

Annika Sjoeholm

5th Year Medical Student
Dunedin School of Medicine
University of Otago

Annika is currently a 5th year Medical student at the Dunedin School of Medicine. She has completed a BMedSci(Hons) in the Centre for Neuroendocrinology, University of Otago, in 2008 and is interested in combining both clinical and academic work in the future.

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists 2010 Congress, Auckland, entitled: *A shared endeavour Tātau Tātau e* was held at the Sky City Convention Centre from the second to the sixth of May. I was but one of a group of Otago Medical students from the three clinical schools who were kindly sponsored by the Department of Psychological Medicine of Dunedin to attend this fascinating conference. It should also be noted that the RANZCP waived the registration fees for over 50 University of Otago and Auckland Medical students to participate in the conference, and I am sure this was greatly appreciated by all who attended.

This year's RANZCP congress was a four day event with over 800 registered delegates. The conference boasted a diverse range of presentations. Daily keynote presentations were delivered from leading psychiatrists from both clinical, research and teaching perspectives. These focused not only on the mental health issues faced in New Zealand and Australia, but also on the issues faced by developing countries. A particularly memorable presentation by Jim Crowe outlined the advocacy work that had been occurring throughout Asia to aid the mentally ill who are often left to wander the streets uncared for.

Throughout the day, a vast array of workshops and symposiums were on offer such that it was often difficult to choose which presentations to attend. In particular, I found the symposiums on neuropsychiatry most interesting as they gave some insight into the biology of personality and

how the mind works – an area of medicine that is largely still unknown. Other symposium themes included social and cultural psychiatry, child psychiatry, psychopharmacology, and addiction medicine to name a few. All the sessions I attended gave me an appreciation for how vast the field of psychological medicine truly is, and how much research occurs.

The attendees of the conference were not only psychiatrists, but also psychologists, nurses, GPs and students. As a result, break times provided an excellent opportunity to interact with people involved in mental health care and to draw upon their experiences. As with most conferences, a social program was also in place with many delegates attending the formal conference dinner. Apart from the great food available in between presentations and the student-friendly environment, there was also plenty of free merchandise from the pharmaceutical exhibition to test one's moral fibre!

In summary, the RANZCP conference was a great chance to learn a little more about the field of Psychological Medicine. This conference made me aware of the integral role that we have as future doctors in reducing the stigma associated with mental health as well as providing advocacy and support for our patients with mental health problems - and this role does not depend on which branch of medical specialisation we aspire to pursue in the future.

