

role of psychosocial support from his social contacts, as well as his personal and professional carers.

Furthermore, the role of psychiatric assistance should not be undervalued in palliative care. Aside from the significant effects of his perceived degree of breakthrough pain, Joe's mental and emotional status is key to determining his perceived quality of life. In addition to addressing physical symptoms of anxiety, insomnia and depression, a vital issue that should not be overlooked is the 'existential pain' that terminally ill patients inevitably experience including recurrent thoughts and concerns regarding their death and the dying process. Eventual acceptance and contentment is the elusive ideal that almost every human being seeks when faced with their mortality or that of their loved ones, and psychiatrists are vital in this process.

From a philosophical perspective, accepting one's own mortality and grappling with the dying process is the final, most challenging journey in life. In the words of the writer John Oxenham, "For death begins with life's first breath, and life begins at touch of death." The tragic disempowerment of one's personhood that begins at the very instant one's life is touched by the dying process often causes us to forget the fact that a dying person is nevertheless a living person, every day until their death. There should be no compromise on a dying person's comfort or enjoyment, nor should we in any way relegate their pursuit of personal hopes and dreams. Only then can life truly begin. Only then will the sweetness of quality living counter the bitter self-discovery of mortality.

FEATURE : CONFERENCE REPORT

Clinicians Medical Education Convention Aotearoa

Kerryn Harlow

Fourth Year Medical Student
Christchurch School of Medicine
University of Otago

Kerryns Blurb

The Medical Education Convention Aotearoa (MECA) is an annual weekend-long convention held in Dunedin for medical students. MECA aims to enhance the education of future doctors by exposing them to a wide range of ideas and opinions whilst developing practical skills and strengthening collegiality. MECA relies on the generous support of our sponsors so thanks must be extended to Clinicians, ACC, Best Practice New Zealand, Otago Faculty of Medicine, Otago University Medical Students' Association, Tyco, Syneture, Austin Medical Centre and Mobile Surgical Services.

MECA 2007 went off without a hitch and was by all accounts a huge success. The following report will highlight the key features of the weekend of September 28th to 30th.

The opening ceremony was kicked off with a piped entrance of the official party into Glenroy Auditorium. This was followed by addresses from MECA'07 Convenor Kerryn Harlow, Dunedin Mayor Peter Chin and the Deputy Chair of NZMSA Dr Paul Ockelford. Following this, the Honorable David Benson-Pope officially opened the convention. With formalities concluded, the participants of the Bpac Emergency Medical Challenge took to the stage. The challenge participants included past MECA convenor, Jared Kilday, medical students, lecturers, professors and respected Doctors: a mix which ensured entertainment. Due to the absence of one of our participants, Professor Mike Ardagh was welcomed to the stage only to be defeated by the opposition!

Saturday saw the beginning of the academic content of the weekend. Highlights from Saturday included inspiring presentations from Professor Mike Ardagh (who knew Spice Girls could play a role in medical ethics?),



Rae Lamb, the Deputy HDC Commissioner who spoke on patient-centered care and Professor Des Gorman, the Dean of Auckland University Medical School, who presented the complications of diving and submarine medicine. Saturday also included a presentation by Shawn Riley who had traveled from the Mayo Clinic in America to address the MECA delegates.

Delegates also participated in workshops throughout the weekend. The Tyco Suturing Workshop was the highlight with delegates practicing and mastering their skills on pig skin. Other workshops included an acupuncture demonstration, public health and integrative medicine.

On Saturday night the much anticipated Dinner and Dance took place. The ultimate highlight of the weekend saw delegates and honoured guests enjoying a three course buffet dinner and an energetic dance floor. The food was excellent and the band superb, ingredients sure to produce longtime memories and friendships. Our dinner keynote speaker was Dr Murdoch Herbert who recounted memories of his long-standing and remarkable medical career.

The academic content continued on Sunday with presentations from Dr Stuart Gowland and Dr Tim Ewer. The highlight for the day was a presentation by Dr Glenn Colquhoun, an award-winning New Zealand poet and a highly respected GP working in Maori Health. His presentation consisted of readings and poems from his works and was greatly moving, causing a great number of delegates to 'tear-up'.

MECA'07 was an extremely rewarding experience and an event 'not to be missed'. I look forward to MECA'08 and the development of this fantastic initiative in the future. "Here's to the Future..."