

New Zealand Medical Students' Association Conference 2017 - Ignite

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The authors were part of the organising team for the New Zealand Medical Students' Association Conference 2017 - Ignite which was held in Tauranga from the 3rd-5th June. Karen and Anita were co-conveners, and are currently 5th year medical students at the University of Auckland, whilst Apurva was the Academics Convener and is currently completing the BMedSc(Hons) programme after her 4th year of medical school.

Over Queen's birthday weekend, 230 medical students from across New Zealand arrived bright-eyed in Tauranga, ready to ignite their interests and spark their passion at the New Zealand Medical Students' Associations (NZMSA) Conference 2017. The theme of the conference was Ignite and the aim was to provide an opportunity to reflect on ways to rekindle the inner flames of the attending delegates. With the beauty of Mount Maunganui in the background, Tauranga was the perfect host city for this year's conference.

The conference began (as was only fitting for coastal Tauranga) on the beach. There, delegates were greeted by the famous Mount Maunganui and glittering surf as they waited for the aMASing Race to begin. Delegates were invited to meet the members of their teams, with whom they then embarked on the aMASing Race across Tauranga, which ranged from challenges set by the New Zealand Defence Force to rock climbing and other beach activities. As the sun set and the race drew to a close, delegates made their way back to their accommodation venues and began preparing for the first social event of the conference. The Cocktail Evening, held at the Mauao Performing Arts Centre on Totara Street, one of Tauranga's premiere music destinations, was perfect for relaxing after the race and for mingling with the other delegates.

The academic programme began on Sunday morning with an inspiring talk from one of our keynote speakers, Dr Swee Tan. Dr Tan is a plastic surgeon and world renowned researcher. He spoke about his work in the field of cancer research and his remarkable personal journey towards becoming a pioneer in his field. Dr Tan's talk was closely followed by the breakout session Rekindle Your Heart, which was focused on burnout and reigniting the inner flames of the delegates. Next was the much-anticipated Health and Well-being Panel, which was chaired by Dr Tony Fernando. Medical students shared their own experiences, and highlighted the burden of mental illness amongst our colleagues. The panel was immensely moving and emphasised the importance of caring for each other's health and well-being as well as our own.

The rest of the day was spent learning from Professor Shanthi Ameratunga, a paediatrician and public health physician, who spoke on global health issues and opportunities at medical school and beyond. The next breakout session, Build the Flame, revolved around building practical skills, with sessions on managing airways, robotic surgery, rural emergencies and clinical skills. The day ended with the Gala Dinner where the delegates celebrated in style at the stunning Eagle Ridge Estate.

Connections were strengthened and conversations were continued over a delectable buffet meal.

The final day of the conference further developed on the health and well-being theme with two poignant presentations by Dr Glenn Colquhoun and Dr Robin Youngson, who spoke on the art of medicine and the importance of compassion in healthcare. Delegates were greatly moved by the poetry of their words and by the notion of preserving our humanity while working in medicine. In particular, the talks emphasised the impact of having compassion for our patients as well as each other. It reiterated the importance of bringing humanity back into medicine and realising that looking after ourselves helps us look after others better. Between these talks, students had a chance to explore a range of medical and surgical specialities at the Spark Your Passion breakout. Finally, delegates were given the opportunity to ask questions to political representatives from National, Labour, Green, NZ First and ACT in a wide-ranged and highly engaging discussion.

As the weekend drew to an end and students boarded their buses, we as an organising team had the opportunity to reflect on the weekend. Through the whirlwind of logistics, communication and administration, we observed new friendships forming, delegates gleaning new knowledge, and renewed commitments of our fellow delegates towards supporting one another in their journey through medicine. Although exhausted, we felt our efforts had been worth it and as though we had been part of something bigger than ourselves. We hope that everyone who attended Ignite 2017 enjoyed the experience as much as we enjoyed creating it.

We would like to thank the NZMSA Conference Team, the NZMSA Executive, all our sponsors, speakers, and delegates for making this conference possible.

Conflict of Interest: Members of the 2017 NZMSA Conference organising team.

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