

PhD: The Psychological and Physical Costs of Litigation

This research project will examine the impact of litigation on the psychological, emotional and physical well-being of those who demand and supply court-based services. Hitherto, most observers of the legal process have focused almost exclusively on the economic barriers to justice and have ignored the psychological costs, both of going to court and avoiding litigation altogether. Through this project we hope to gain a clearer understanding of how litigation impacts on the health of the individual and what factors influence people in their decisions to avoid, settle or pursue legal conflict. The project will critically review psycho-legal and socio-legal literature on disputing and court behaviour. The research will include an empirical investigation of actual and potential court users in order to determine the extent to which civil litigation affects the psychological well-being of litigants. The research will aim to develop practical proposals that should assist litigants and court administrators overcome citizen fears of commencing a civil action.

The research will also examine another area that has been neglected until very recently: stress levels amongst those who supply legal services to litigants, particularly lawyers, judges and court administrators who increasingly are subjected to performance indicators and competition in the market for legal services.

The successful applicant will be based in the new *University of Otago Legal Issues Centre* (UOLIC) and attached to the *Centre for Research on Children and Families* (CRCF).

PhD Application Process

The application process differs depending on whether the applicant is a Domestic or an International student.

Domestic students are required to complete: i) the PhD Direct Application form and ii) the Law Faculty's Supplementary application form.

International students are required to complete: i) the Application Form for International Students; and ii) the Law Faculty's Supplementary application form.

Irrespective of whether you are a Domestic or an International student, details of the application process, requirements and copies of the respective application forms are available at: <http://www.otago.ac.nz/law/postgrad/apply.html>

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