Physiotherapy plays an essential role in helping people to achieve optimal physical function and healthy lifestyles. Physiotherapists treat people of all ages and from all sorts of backgrounds — they might have a painful back, occupational overuse syndrome, cystic fibrosis, or have recently given birth. They could be recovering from an accident, a sporting injury or maybe they have undergone heart surgery. Physiotherapists are educated to assess, treat and prevent this vast range of physical limitations and dysfunction. By using therapy such as exercises and manual and electrotherapeutic techniques, physiotherapists are able to assist their patients to lead independent, healthy and fulfilling lives.

“The range of physiotherapy is so broad it covers every spectrum of healing the body and I think that everyone eventually finds their own niche. With a physiotherapy qualification you can travel anywhere and find work.”

Emma Ferris BPhty
What is a Physiotherapist?
Physiotherapists are people who are educated to assess, treat and prevent a vast range of physical limitations and bodily dysfunction. By using therapy such as exercises and manual and electrotherapeutic techniques, physiotherapists help their patients to lead independent, healthy and fulfilling lives. This makes physiotherapy an extremely rewarding career. The best physiotherapists are those with exceptional communication skills, a genuine desire to improve the well-being and quality of life of others and who have a good level of physical fitness.

What will I study?
The Otago Bachelor of Physiotherapy (BPhty) is a prestigious four year programme. It is internationally renowned for excellence, because its graduates are among the best, and because it ensures its clinical teaching and research programmes are continually refined and improved, to keep in step with modern physiotherapy practice, the latest research, and current thinking on teaching methodologies.

The first year is the University of Otago Health Science First Year programme. This is a prescribed set of papers designed to provide a broad understanding of the scientific principles and communication skills which will underpin your further studies in health science.

In the second year, the course focuses on the scientific knowledge you will need as a physiotherapist, including Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology, and an introduction to Physiotherapy Science and Clinical Practice.

The third year builds on your understanding of the human body and introduces Pathology and Clinical Requirements in practice, including management skills, and engagement with the community. Clinical Practice is also a key element of third year.

In the fourth and final year, you will be based at one of the School’s clinical centres or hubs, located in Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington, Invercargill, Nelson, Lower Hutt and Palmerston North. You will spend the majority of the year undertaking supervised clinical practice in a variety of rotations around the city as well as in other towns and cities in the surrounding province. This means you will be able to sample many of the different fields of physiotherapy practice, to help you make decisions about your future career. You will also have the opportunity to undertake a research project.

Postgraduate Study
The School of Physiotherapy also has a comprehensive postgraduate programme, enabling physiotherapists who wish to further their study to pursue independent research and specialised clinical skills to the highest level. Postgraduate students perform an important role in advancing the field of physiotherapy, and many move into teaching physiotherapy at a tertiary level and research.

Background Required
There are no subject requirements for entry into the Health Sciences First Year programme, but we strongly recommend you take chemistry, physics and biology at Year 13. HSFY must be your first year of university study. If you are considering tertiary study before enrolling, you are strongly advised to contact the Health Sciences Admissions Office beforehand.

Admission to the programme
Admission to Physiotherapy is competitive. Selection is based on your grades in the HSFY papers, results in the Undergraduate Medical and Health Sciences Admission Test (UMAT) and an interview. The minimum grade point average requirement is a B-, and no compulsory paper grade can be less than a C. The UMAT is a test which measures non-academic attributes, for more information go to www.acereduau/umat. Following submission of the application for entry into Year 2, and the UMAT scores, applicants will be invited to attend an interview at the School of Physiotherapy.

Applications are also considered in the second year of University Study category, the Competitive Graduate category (UMAT required) and Other category (allied health professionals, and mature graduates). Additional places are available for international students who return to their home country after graduating. Applicants who are of Maori or Pacific Island (Polynesian) descent may request this be taken into account as part of their application.

How do I apply for admission to Physiotherapy?
Application information for admission into the Health Science professional programmes from all categories is available online, at www.otago.ac.nz/healthsciences.

Clinical Requirements
Some aspects of teaching in the Health Sciences professional programmes require students to partially disrobe and take part in activities that include physical contact between students. This training is closely supervised and all students are required to participate. Students who anticipate situations sensitive to their culture or beliefs should contact the school for advice.

Immunity status
Students seeking admission to Physiotherapy must provide evidence of their serology status to the following infections: Hepatitis B and C, measles, mumps, rubella and varicella.

International Applications
Persons who do not hold New Zealand citizenship or permanent residence should address their enquiries to the University’s International Office, PO Box 56, Dunedin, 9054, New Zealand.

For questions about Physiotherapy
Tel 0800 80 80 98
Email university@otago.ac.nz
www.otago.ac.nz/physiotherapy

Matt Dick works as a physiotherapist at the University of Otago’s School of Physiotherapy Clinic. But, you wouldn’t call him just a physiotherapist, he is also an Occupational Health Physiotherapist, a lab tutor and clinical educator for the School and is studying for his Masters degree.

The variety of his job is only one of the things that Matt enjoys. He also finds the application of human science really interesting.

As a student “physiotherapy made all the sense,” he explains; “and I really enjoyed the clinical aspect.”

“I enjoy figuring out a complex scenario and implementing treatment that I’ve thought through using clinical reasoning. And as physiotherapists are primary care givers, we need to be aware of other possible causes for pain, discomfort or movement limitation,” Matt adds.

“If you are considering physiotherapy you should keep your mind open, it’s much more than sports teams.

“There are big rewards working in Neurorehabilitation and Cardiopulmonary physiotherapy,” he says.

In fact, the rewards are so great that Matt reckons the future will hold more of the same for him.