

He Kete Kōrero



WELLINGTON

University of Otago, Wellington Newsletter | Autumn 2022

Dean's welcome

Welcome to the Autumn issue of He Kete Kōrero.

It's a huge pleasure to welcome new and returning students to our campus for the start of the academic year. Whether you are in your final year of study for your medical degree, beginning a degree in radiation therapy or embarking on post graduate research we're thrilled to have you join us.

It has been a year of challenges for everyone, as we have worked to find new accommodation spaces for students and staff after the closure of our Academic Building last August, while at the same time navigating the COVID-19 pandemic.

The opening of our new office spaces in the Harbour City Centre is the start of an exciting new beginning for us as we move to working and studying across several campus locations.

I've really enjoyed being able to meet up with colleagues and research students kanohi ki te kanohi again and am looking forward to catching up with more of you as we settle into our new spaces.

We're continuing with our efforts to find longer term teaching and learning spaces and additional office space, and will be working hard to make sure we stay connected while working and studying in different physical locations.

I'm very grateful to everyone for their patience, hard work and collegiality while we've been establishing new homes for our campus.

Ngā mihi nui

PROFESSOR
WILLIAM LEVACK
Manutaki | Dean and
Head of Campus



New spaces

The Wellington campus is taking up new spaces in the central city and in Newtown close to the hospital precinct following the closure of the Academic Block last August.

The University has leased two floors of the Harbour City Centre in the CBD as well as an office building on Hanson Street where a student hub will be established.

Dean and Head of Campus **Professor William Levack** says the new spaces herald new ways of working for staff and students across a range of campus locations.

Rautaki Hononga Māori (Māori Strategic Framework Project Manager) **Toa Waaka** led a takahia waerea blessing ceremony at the Harbour City Centre at the end of March and staff began moving in the following week.

The central city office provides workspace for staff from the Departments of Public Health, Psychological Medicine and Primary Healthcare and General Practice. Staff from the Education Unit, Interprofessional Education and External Engagement will also take up office space there, along with reference librarians and some postgraduate students.

The new spaces complement existing offices the University has taken up in the Ward Support Block at Wellington Hospital, and teaching spaces at Massey University and in prefabs on the Wellington Hospital campus.

Vice-Chancellor **Professor David Murdoch** congratulated staff and students on the new campus facilities.

"The efforts of staff and students to stay on track through the disruption have been exceptional."



Associate Dean Māori Bridget Robson, Professor Levack, Toa Waaka and Associate Dean Pacific Dr Dianne Sika-Paotonu at the takahia waerea blessing ceremony.

New Year Honour

Professor John Hutton was named an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit ONZM for services to women's health and education in the 2022 New Year Honours.

Professor Hutton has contributed to women's health and education over five decades. He graduated in Medicine from Otago in 1968, became a Member of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in 1974 and was awarded a PhD from the University of London in 1979.

In the early 1980s, he was the public advocate for the continued availability of the injectable contraceptive, Depo-Provera, rebutting misinformation of its possible carcinogenesis.

In 1983 he was appointed Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the Wellington School of Medicine, where he introduced secondary obstetrics and gynaecology services to the Kāpiti Coast and ultrasound to Wellington Women's Hospital. He also facilitated more educational experiences in women's health for students, including at Family Planning clinics.

In 1985 he founded the New Zealand Infertility Society (now FertilityNZ), after recognising the importance of improving services for those suffering from infertility.

He became Deputy Dean of the Wellington School of Medicine in 1989 and upgraded the postgraduate education requirements for trainees in obstetrics and gynaecology in the 1990s. He resigned as Head of the O and G department in 1994 to establish a regional tertiary fertility service.

Professor Hutton retired from clinical practice in 2014, but continued teaching students, developing an electronic logbook for trainee interns to monitor their clinical experiences, and an electronic learning resource as an alternative to the undergraduate obstetrics and gynaecology textbook.

"Although I have been honoured for services to women's health and education, I really appreciate all the University of Otago staff who helped develop and deliver the various resources," he said.

Professor Hutton retired in October 2021.



Equitable cancer outcomes grant

Associate Professor Jason Gurney (Ngāpuhi) from the Department of Public Health has been awarded \$800,000 over two years from a new equitable cancer outcomes research fund aimed at addressing the stark inequities in cancer care and survival for Māori and Pacific peoples in New Zealand.

Associate Professor Gurney and his team will draw together information to help improve lung cancer services for Māori, with a view to achieving equity in lung cancer survival for Māori by 2030.

The project will focus on understanding the role of cancer services in perpetuating inequities in lung cancer survival and identifying those factors which could be modified in the short to medium-term.

"At 300 deaths per year, about the same number of Māori die from lung cancer as die from the six next most common causes of cancer death combined," he says.

"Our own research shows strong survival disparities across all stages of lung cancer, suggesting that access to potentially curative treatment is not equal between Māori and non-Māori, regardless of the stage."

The funding is allocated by the Health Research Council, Te Aho o Te Kahu (the Cancer Control Agency) and the Ministry of Health.

Bringing a ministry to life

Associate Professor Tristram Ingham from the Department of Medicine has been appointed co-chair of the Community Steering Group responsible for supporting and guiding the establishment of the new Ministry for Disabled People.

In announcing the make up of the steering committee, the Ministry of Social Development said the ministry would be set up as a 'by-disabled, for-disabled' agency in order to best advance the priorities of the disability community.

Community Steering Group spokespersons said disabled people had contributed decades of hard work to the vision of a Ministry for Disabled People and as a group were humbled to be contributing.

The new ministry is expected to be in operation from 1 July.



Summer of research

It was a summer filled with research for 51 students from across the University who took part in the Summer Studentship research programme on the Wellington campus this year.

The students worked on a diverse range of projects from exploring whether LGBTIQ+ and Takatāpui people experience discrimination in the housing market to assessing vaccination rates during pregnancy.

Associate Dean (Research) **Associate Professor Sara Filoche** says the 10-week annual programme is a great way for students to extend their learning.

The students were supervised by more than 45 academic staff and conducted their research on the University's Wellington campus and at Wellington and Palmerston North Hospitals.

The programme culminated with a poster showcase where 32 of the students presented their work to judges **Dr Filoche**, **Dr Kathryn Hally**, **Dr Aaron Stevens** and **Dr Clint Gray**.

The overall winner was **Katie Reed** for her work on HIV care, supervised by **Dr Olivia Bupha-Intr**.

Three students were highly commended by the judges: **Emily Paterson**, who researched the use of Mirena in early-stage endometrial cancer (supervisor **Dr Claire Henry**), **Rachel Ngan Kee**, for her work on patient perspectives in rheumatology (supervisor **Professor Rebecca Grainger**) and **Hugo Cordue** for research on LGBTIQ+ and Takatāpui experiences of housing (supervisor **Dr Brodie Fraser**).



Katie Reed talks to Dr Hally about her research.

BBC spotlight on housing

The work of housing and health researchers is being showcased in a BBC mini-documentary, *The Science of a Healthier Home*.

The documentary, hosted on the BBC website, focuses on the work of the Department of Public Health's He Kāinga Oranga/Housing and Health Research programme.

It features the programme's Co-Directors, **Distinguished Professor Philippa Howden-Chapman** and **Associate Professor Nevil Pierse**, and researcher **Cheryl Davies**, Manager of the Tū Kotahi Māori Asthma Trust and Secretary of the Wainuiōmata Marae Trust Board.

The documentary focuses on the 20-year-long collaboration between He Kāinga Oranga and the Wainuiōmata marae and demonstrates the real-world difference the long-standing partnership has made to the creation of knowledge and the health of families in the community.

Watch the documentary here:

<https://www.bbc.com/storyworks/unlocking-science/the-science-of-a-healthier-home>

Cancer research scholarship

Postgraduate student **Helena Abolins-Thompson** (Ngāti Toa Rangitira, Ngāi Tahu) has been awarded a three-year \$160,000 Māori Early Career Development in Cancer Research scholarship.

Helena, who begins her PhD on the Wellington campus this year, will use advanced genetic sequencing technologies to analyse tumour samples in partnership with Māori patients and local iwi.

She will work under the supervision of Department of Surgery and Anaesthesia Senior Lecturer **Dr Kirsty Danielson** and in collaboration with the Broad Institute in Boston, USA.

Helena is one of three New Zealand researchers to be granted a scholarship this year as part of a new collaboration between the Māori Cancer Research Leadership Group Hei Āhuru Mōwai and the Cancer Society Te Kāhui Matepukupuku o Aotearoa to address health inequities.

Watch Helena talk about her research here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1WSbRwbHDM>





The dragon boating team with coach and sweep Jacob de Feijter and student paddlers from Samuel Marsden Collegiate School who helped paddle on race day on 5 March.

Taking it to the water

A boat full of paddlers was a recipe for happiness when 17 students and staff (plus two of their partners) came together to compete in this year's Dragon Boat Festival on Wellington Harbour.

The event brought together medical and postgraduate students, and professional and academic staff from many different departments, including Medicine, Primary Health Care and General Practice, Psychological Medicine, Public Health, Surgery and Anaesthesia, and the Pacific Office.

Organiser **Sophie Petelaud** from the U-Owls social club says with most staff working from home after the closure of the Academic Block, the event offered a great opportunity for everyone to get together.

"The pandemic and our extended working-from-home situation are certainly very challenging but staff and students showed great team spirit and collegiality through the weeks of training and on race day. Everyone worked really hard, but there were heaps of smiles as well."

Long COVID symposium

National and international experts will come together to discuss the best ways of supporting those who experience ongoing symptoms after a COVID-19 infection, including those with Post-Acute COVID Syndrome (PACS) or 'Long COVID', at an online symposium in May.

Convenor **Dr Rob Griffiths**, the Director of Occupational & Aviation Medicine, says the symposium, which will be hosted by Te Whare Whakamātūtū, the Rehabilitation Teaching and Research Unit, will be of interest to clinicians, health system planners, members of the general public and those recovering from COVID-19.

"Sharing our knowledge will help us identify those at risk of Long COVID and learn how best to support them initially and in the longer term with ongoing rehabilitation."

The speakers include: Long-COVID expert Professor Trish Greenhalgh from the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences at the University of Oxford; Dr Martin Chadwick, physiotherapist and Chief Allied Health Professions Officer at the Ministry of Health; Professor John Potter, from the Research Centre for Hauora and Health at Massey University, Wellington; Jenene Crossan, long-COVID sufferer and advocate; Professor Nicola Kayes, Director of the Centre for Person Centred Research and Professor of Rehabilitation in the AUT School of Clinical Sciences; **Dr Paul Skirrow**, clinical psychologist and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychological Medicine at the University of Otago, Wellington; and Drs Lynne Russell, Marianna Churchward and Mona Jeffreys, leaders of the major Victoria University of Wellington study on the impact of COVID-19 in Aotearoa.

The Zoom webinar, *Long COVID: Journeying together through the fog*, is on Wednesday 25 May from 9.30am-4pm.

To register, visit: <https://events.otago.ac.nz/longcovid2022>



Dr Sika-Paotonu (front left) and Pacific Community Liaison Adviser Selafi Tagi (front right) with students at Te Papa.

Learning our history

The Wellington campus has been collaborating with senior curators and leaders at Te Papa to support the training of fourth and fifth year medical students.

As part of the programme, medical students work with UOW staff and senior Pacific leaders at the museum to learn about the history of Aotearoa New Zealand and its Pacific neighbours.

The visits have been coordinated by Associate Dean Pacific **Dr Dianne Sika-Paotonu**, who says the programme helps students gain a better understanding of our history and region and provides an important context for addressing health inequities.

"This learning and teaching experience gives students a better appreciation of the diversity within Pacific communities and the need to consider different contexts and perspectives that support health and wellbeing and equitable health outcomes."

Honing your skills as an educator

The next in a series of monthly online Otago Medical School staff professional development sessions will focus on practical tips for maximising learning in large groups, whether teaching is being done online or in person.

The session will be presented by **Dr Jon Cornwall**, the Education Adviser in the Centre for Early Learning in Medicine, and will be held over Zoom on Wednesday 18 May from 12 midday to 1pm.

Register at <https://corpapp.otago.ac.nz/training/edssu/course/21376/course/0/>.

All staff are welcome to attend and a certificate of attendance for continuing professional development purposes will be provided.

The provisional schedule for the lunchtime sessions this year is:

15 June: Challenges presented by students

20 July: Fostering a positive learning environment

17 August: Teaching practical skills

21 September: Engaging in feedback in clinical settings

10 October: Cultural competence

16 November: Turning teaching innovation into research

Any changes will be posted by email ahead of the session and on the website <https://www.otago.ac.nz/oms/education/mbchb/staff/support/pd/#online-professional-development>. For more information, contact EDSSU@otago.ac.nz.