

He Kete Kōrero



WELLINGTON

University of Otago, Wellington Newsletter | Autumn 2018

Dean's welcome

Tēnā koutou, Mālō e lelei, Talofa lava, Kia orana, Greetings,

Welcome to the Autumn 2018 edition of the University of Otago, Wellington (UOW) newsletter. We've had a very warm and busy summer in Wellington, and now students and staff are well into the academic year. Our Public Health Summer School was very successful with record numbers of registrations.

I wish to acknowledge the leadership and contribution to the University of Otago and particularly our Wellington campus, of Professor Pete Ellis and Karen Coleman. Pete Ellis officially retired on 6 April 2018, after many years at UOW, as Head of Psychological Medicine and Associate Dean Medical Education. And after 20 years of leading radiation therapy education in New Zealand, Karen Coleman has left her role as Head of Department of Radiation Therapy to be Radiology Manager at the Hutt Valley DHB.

Congratulations to Dr Rebecca Grainger, who has been acting Head of Department of Medicine, and recently appointed to be Chair of the Research Advisory Committee for the Research for Life Foundation. She will also take over as Associate Dean Medical Education at UOW on Professor Ellis' retirement.

We are delighted to have Dr Dianne Sika-Paotonu in the role of Associate Dean (Pacific) to lead our Pacific team in Wellington to support Pacific students, ensuring the successful completion of their selected study courses and programmes, and building on the efforts of Nandika Currey, our previous Associate Dean (Pacific).

Congratulations to many of our staff and students who have received funding and scholarships, too many to name here – you'll find more about our research, teaching and news and events, on our UOW website: otago.ac.nz/wellington

Ngā mihi nui, Malo'aupito, Fa'afetai tele lava



Sunny Collings
Dean and Head of Campus
University of Otago, Wellington

The art of palliative medicine

For many years the University of Otago, Wellington, Mary Potter Hospice and Te Omanga Hospice have offered a joint palliative medicine teaching programme to medical students. This involves teaching by hospice staff, hospice clinical placements and arranging for student-pairs to visit patients and whanau at home.



During the home visit, students ask patients about the experience of illness, the professionals involved in their care and *what matters most* at this time in life says Associate Professor Eileen McKinlay, who is the palliative medicine academic programme leader. "Patients often talk to students about what it is like to be at *end-of-life*."

Students then develop creative works with associated reflections. These may be visual art, music, poetry, cartoon, narrative writing, stitching, clay work and other forms. The University now has a webpage: The Art of Palliative Medicine to display some of this student creative work for more people to see the power of health humanities to unlock learning.

"With student consent and collaboration, we respectfully display these works along with an excerpt of their reflection. We warmly acknowledge and thank the patients-as-teachers, and the teaching staff who provide the palliative medicine programme and helped develop the now integral health humanities element," Associate Professor McKinlay says.



L-R: Dr Brian Ensor, Eileen McKinlay, Clare O'Leary, Jane Sparkes, Midori Takeda:
absent: Dr Sinéad Donnelly and Dr Lynn McBain.

SING - Summer internship for Indigenous peoples in Genomics



In January, UOW researchers were involved in the third SING (Summer internship for Indigenous peoples in Genomics), week-long internship modelled on an existing SING-USA programme (conferences.igb.illinois.edu/sing/home). SING Aotearoa, organised by Maui Hudson, Phil Wilcox and Katharina Ruckstuhl, emerged from the Te Waka o Tama-rereti project and is continuing as a key activity within Genomics Aotearoa.

At UOW this summer we hosted 25 interns who came from all over Aotearoa for two days. Sessions included inheritance, '23andMe' and a laboratory experiment on mitosis from Michelle Thunders and Sara Filoche; Māori research and ethics from Shirley Simmonds at Takapuwahia marae; epigenetics and a practical bioinformatics tutorial by Kirsty Danielson and Donia Macartney (ESR). We look forward to welcoming SING back in Wellington in 2022!



SING participants.

Flowers for prediabetes?

A preliminary clinical study is about to start in Wellington on a potentially game-changing prediabetes treatment – using a natural extract derived from the dahlia plant.



The study is being conducted in the Endocrine, Diabetes and Research Centre at Wellington Hospital, CCDHB. Men keen to take part should contact the research centre, by email on diabetesresearch@ccdhb.org.nz or phone +64 4 806 2458. You can check whether you have prediabetes by completing the risk test on doihaveprediabetes.org.

Research on ethics and stigma around obesity

Dr Lesley Gray, within the ARCH group of the Primary Healthcare and General Practice Department has three active research projects around health weight stigma – bias and ethics, Bariatric Management Innovation work (simulation suit), and ways to talk about being overweight and obesity in general practice and health professions, including an upcoming half day workshop on this topic in April with speakers on bias and ethics of health/weight stigma.

New Associate Dean (Pacific)



Welcome to Dr Dianne Sika-Paotonu (pictured at right), the first Tongan and Pacific biomedical scientist to be appointed to this role within the Division of Health Sciences at Otago. Dr Sika-Paotonu is also the scientific lead for penicillin research work based in New Zealand that seeks to support global efforts to reformulate Benzathine Penicillin G for the management of Rheumatic Fever. Read more here otago.ac.nz/wellington/news/otago675709.html and check out our page on Pacific news (otago.ac.nz/wellington/pacific/events/)



Record numbers at this year's Public Health Summer School

Our Public Health Summer School is one of the largest and longest running public health educational events internationally. The 2018 Public Health Summer School was officially opened on 7 February by the new Minister of Health, Hon Dr David Clark. There was a record attendance of close to 1000 registrations across the 30 courses, which included new topics such as big data and taxation. Particular highlights were major symposiums on 'Pandemics', 'Indigenous health' and 'Big Booze', as well as free public lectures from visiting experts:

- Professor Geoff Rice, New Zealand historian: '1918 influenza pandemic'
- Dr Freddie Bray, International Agency for Research on Cancer: 'Global Cancer Patterns'
- Dr David Collingridge, Editor of Lancet Oncology: 'Getting published in a high impact journal'
- Professor Pat Dudgeon, University of Western Australia: 'Indigenous mental health'

A gallery of photos and links to recordings of public talks can be found on Public Health Summer School website.



At the Public Health Summer School Opening, from L to R: Michael Baker, Dianne Kenwright, Minister of Health Hon David Clark, Nick Wilson and Diana Sarfati.

Disease recurrence following surgery for bowel cancer: five-year follow-up

PhD candidate and general surgical registrar Dr Ashok Gunawardene in UOW's Department of Surgery and Anaesthesia, recently published a study in the *NZ Medical Journal* to investigate rates of colorectal cancer recurrence in patients at Wellington Hospital, CCDHB. The study found the results compared well against international standards. Improvements in cancer care are thought to contribute to this including the multi-disciplinary team model, where healthcare professionals including surgeons, oncologists, pathologists and radiologists regularly meet to discuss cases and their management. Other improvements include advances in imaging techniques and the use of adjuvant therapies such as chemotherapy.

Patients often consider their bowel cancer as cured when surgery to remove the tumour is complete, but clinicians consider a person cured only once there is no evidence of the cancer returning after five years. Dr Gunawardene, part of the [surgical cancer research group](#), says "With an overall recurrence rate of approximately 25%, there is still room for improvement and a major challenge remains in predicting which patients are most at risk of recurrence. Accurately predicting high-risk patients would mean they could be offered more aggressive treatment strategies, which low-risk patients could then be safely spared."



Talking about diabetes - improving health, one sentence at a time

Primary care physicians can improve their communication to newly-diagnosed diabetes patients by offering more information specific to the patient's experience, new research from Otago, Auckland and Victoria Universities shows. The study, just published in the international journal *Annals of Family Medicine*, highlights the importance of good and appropriate communication by healthcare professionals to patients. More here: otago.ac.nz/wellington/news/otago672810.html



Some of the research team, from L to R: Rachel Tester, Tony Dowell, Maria Stubbe, from UOW's Applied Research Communication in Health group.

Chair for research foundation's advisory committee

Dr Rebecca Grainger, an academic rheumatologist and senior lecturer in the Department of Medicine at UOW, and a consultant rheumatologist at the Hutt District Health Board, has been appointed new Chair of the Research for Life's



Research Advisory Committee. [Research for Life](#) is a New Zealand medical research foundation, established in 1960, that funds innovative, quality research in the Wellington region undertaken by researchers in early stages of their careers.

Dr Grainger has been a member of the Committee since 2012. Her main research areas include rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, gout, outcome measures and the use of technology in solving problems in rheumatic disease. Extra links: [Research for Life website](#); [More about Dr Rebecca Grainger](#)

Third vaccine dose to protect young Kiwis from mumps outbreak

Infectious diseases physician and researcher Dr Ayesha Verrall (Pathology Department) called for urgent and proactive action from the Ministry of Health and others to protect young people from a recent mumps outbreak.



"This mumps outbreak, New Zealand's worst in decades, is the result of a perfect storm of low childhood vaccination in today's young adults, and waning vaccine protection over time in those who were vaccinated in childhood,"

With more than 1000 cases in the Auckland region, and some spreading to other centres around the country, Dr Verrall suggested a third dose of the Measles Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine to those aged between 10 and 29 during the outbreak, as well as stronger efforts on the Ministry's 'catchup campaign', for those who did not complete two doses in childhood. For more information read the full release and Dr Verrall's blog on Sciblogs: otago.ac.nz/wellington/news/otago676071.html

'In case you missed it' Snippets

- ▶ Congratulations to 5th year medical student Chayce Glass who has been accepted to represent the University of Otago as a delegate for the 9th University Scholars Leadership Symposium at the United Nations, in August in Bangkok, Thailand.
- ▶ Dr Stephanie Manning has been awarded the University of Otago Richard Stewart Scholarship for 2018, and joined our Department of Surgery and Anaesthesia for a Masters in Medical Science. She is looking at using microRNA as blood-based biomarkers to predict patient response to neo-adjuvant radiotherapy treatment for colorectal cancer, using banked blood samples from patients with colorectal cancer at Wellington Hospital that have been collected as a part of ongoing research by the [Surgical Cancer Research Group \(SCRG\)](#). Read more about it here: otago.ac.nz/wellington/departments/surgeryanaesthesia/otago679902.html
- ▶ Jonathan Kennedy and Serena Moran (Primary Health Care and General Practice & Dept) recently held a hui to report back to the community about a research project looking at the health and social needs of refugee-like migrants (*Post-Settlement Quota Refugees & Refugee-like Migrants: A Comparative Health Analysis*).
- ▶ Several bake sales have been organised on the UOW campus at the start of the year. One was organised by the Pacific team to help with the relief effort in Tonga in response to Cyclone GITA and raised a total of \$2,378.50 NZD which will be donated to the RedCross and Tearfund agencies who are actively working on the ground at present. Our Radiation Therapy students also had a bake sale and raised more than \$500 towards the Cancer Society Relay for Life 2018 everydayhero.co.nz/event/Relay-For-Life-Wellington

In the news

Over the summer, the University of Otago, Wellington featured often in the news media:

- [Probiotics to slow progression from prediabetes to diabetes](#)
- [Shade shortage in Wellington playgrounds](#)
- [Predator Free 2050 has major benefits on human health](#)
- [Few drinking fountains in New Zealand playgrounds](#)



A poorly maintained fountain with grass growing in the drainage sink.

Events

Upcoming Public Health seminars: April 2018, all on Fridays at 12.30, in Newtown or via web:

6 April	<i>Maternal Mental Health: the landscape in Canada and beyond...</i> Professor Angela Bowen, College of Nursing, College of Medicine, Psychiatry University of Saskatchewan
12 April	Obesity stigma workshop – Dr Lesley Gray
13 April	<i>Endgames for smoking – what is happening internationally, and how does Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 compare?</i> Professor Richard Edwards, and Louise Thornley, Department of Public Health, University of Otago, Wellington
20 April	<i>Community-Based Participatory Research: A partnership approach to promoting health equity in Detroit, Michigan</i> Professor Barbara Israel, Department of Health Behavior and Health Education, School of Public Health, University of Michigan, and Director, Detroit Community-Academic Urban Research Center
27 April	<i>Assessing the health and environmental impacts of current and alternative diets in Europe</i> Dr Linda Cobiac, Research Fellow, Department of Public Health, University of Otago, Wellington

Out of prison and back to smoking?

A pilot study published in the NZ Medical Journal by a team of medical students supervised by Public Health Professor Richard Edwards, found that there's a lack of support for prisoners wanting to continue being smoke-free once released from prison.

"In health terms, prisoners are a very vulnerable group, and with the introduction of Smokefree Prisons in 2011, there is a real opportunity to help people quit smoking long term, bringing health and financial benefits to them and their families. The findings of this study are in line with international research, which shows that relapse rates are very high when prisoners leave smokefree prisons," says Professor Edwards. Full media release here: otago.ac.nz/wellington/news/otago677438.html



Professor Richard Edwards,
Department of Public Health, UOW.



Sarah Twine,
5th year medical student at UOW
and part of the study team.

For upcoming events at the University of Otago, Wellington, check our events page

otago.ac.nz/wellington/news/events/index.html

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