

## Orthopaedic Surgeon Tackling Weighty Issue



A Christchurch professor is looking for ways to cut surgical waiting lists by helping obese patients with their weight issues.

Surgeon and Professor Gary Hooper is studying whether overweight, arthritic patients can be placed on a diet which eliminates their need for surgery.

The ageing population and increasing numbers of obese individuals are causing an explosion in the requirement for hip and knee replacements.

“We have shown that flagging arthritic patients with a high BMI and placing them in a ‘patient specific’ dietetic programme can be successful in achieving significant weight loss. This weight loss often is permanent and particularly in the case of knee arthritis can reduce pain and the need for knee replacement.”

Professor Hooper and his colleagues have also done research showing outcomes for obese orthopaedic surgical patients are better than once thought.

“Patients with a BMI (body mass index) greater than 35 have often been denied surgery on the basis that they will have poorer outcomes than those with lower BMIs. Our research has shown that even for patients with a high BMI the outcome following joint replacement, as measured by early failure of the implant or poorer functional outcome, is unchanged compared to those with lower BMIs.”



## University of Otago, Christchurch Newsletter



CHRISTCHURCH  
SUMMER 2014

### Dean's Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of the University of Otago, Christchurch newsletter for 2014.

This year we will have 1000 health science students enrolled with us. This includes undergraduate and postgraduate students, and full-time and part-time students.

Undergraduate medical students come to us from Dunedin for their fourth to sixth years of study. This year's intake of more than 100 fourth year undergraduates is the biggest ever. In the past, our class sizes were about 80 students a year.

We recently began our annual Public Health Lecture series for 2014. Lectures in March include subjects such as gynaecological cancer, heart disease and free radical research.

This year we have also started a programme of open days, where community health groups can put on displays or give lectures for the public, in conjunction with our experts. We hope these open days will prove useful. What is offered will evolve over time and we welcome your feedback. In February and March we are teaming up with the New Zealand Organisation for Rare Disorders to mark Rare Disease

Day, as well as putting on a morning of short lectures on gut health in association with Beat Bowel Cancer Aotearoa, Coeliac New Zealand, Crohn's and Colitis New Zealand, and Hepatitis NZ.

Discussions on the detail of the city's 'Health Precinct' continue. We are hopeful plans will be finalised soon and we can proceed with our plan to construct a new University of Otago, Christchurch building. Local architects Warren & Mahoney have won the contract for this exciting job but planning is 'on hold' until decisions on location are finalised.

Regards  
**Peter Joyce**

*If you have feedback or suggestions on events or topics of interest, email [kim.thomas@otago.ac.nz](mailto:kim.thomas@otago.ac.nz)*

### New Heart Treatment Trialled

Christchurch patients with a common form of heart disease are being offered the chance of a simple but potentially life-changing new treatment.

Christchurch Heart Institute Professor Mark Richards and his team are studying the success of a new procedure which 'zaps' overactive nerves causing problems in the heart.

The procedure – called renal denervation – has been used to treat excessively high blood pressure. Professor Richards believes using the procedure in patients with a common kind of heart failure will prove successful.

“In patients with smaller, stiffer hearts that don't relax properly, we don't really have anything that improves survival. I think there is a high chance this (the renal denervation technique) will be effective,” Professor Richards says.

He and collaborators in Auckland, Wellington, Melbourne and Singapore will study the outcomes of more than 140 heart failure patients given renal denervation.



### did you know?

- 1000: the number of health students at University of Otago, Christchurch
- 40+: the number of years we have been the health University in Christchurch city.

## Healthier Future Appeal

### Be part of Christchurch's healthier future

See how to foster some of the best and  
brightest students and researchers.

[www.otago.ac.nz/christchurch/about/appeal](http://www.otago.ac.nz/christchurch/about/appeal)

### The health University in Christchurch city



## Events Calendar

### Gut Health Lecture Morning

Saturday March 1, 10am – 12.30pm

#### A morning of expert updates on gut health issues

Including; Bowel cancer and bacteria, progress on irritable bowel disease, IBS, Coeliac disease, reflux, constipation and incontinence.

### Annual Public Health Lectures

Wednesday February 26, 6–7pm

#### The perennial challenge of infectious diseases

Professor David Murdoch

Wednesday March 5, 6–7pm

#### Unravelling life's secrets: immunity, cancer and vitamin C

Professor Margreet Visser, Centre for Free Radical Research

Wednesday March 12, 6–7pm

#### The cure for cancer and Isaac Newton

Professor John Evans, Gynaecological Oncology Research Group

Wednesday March 19, 6–7pm

#### New ways to monitor heart function and guide treatment

Professor Richard Troughton, Christchurch Heart Institute

Wednesday March 26, 6–7pm

#### Life and death under the microscope

Professor Mark Hampton, Centre for Free Radical Research

### Rare Diseases Day Lecture

Friday February 28, 6–7pm

#### New genetic technologies in rare diseases

Professor Martin Kennedy and speakers from the New Zealand Organisation for Rare Disorders

All lectures held at University of Otago, Christchurch, building at 2 Riccarton Ave, on the Christchurch Hospital campus.



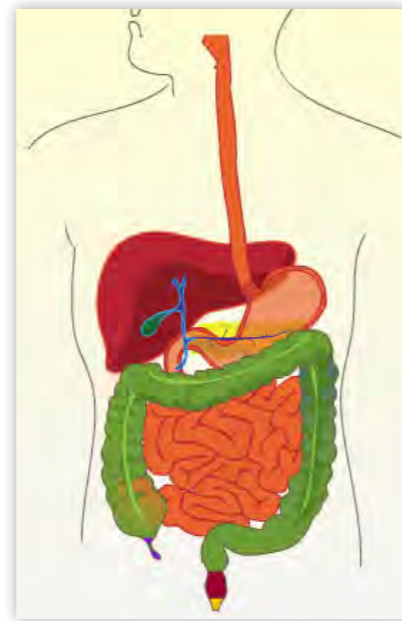
## Easing Symptoms of Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Current treatments for Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) are less than ideal. Which is why Christchurch researchers are investigating whether cutting out certain foods can ease symptoms.

Gastroenterologist Associate Professor Richard Geary and his colleagues have found that following a diet low in fructose and lactose – called a low FODMAPs diet – can have significant effects.

The term FODMAPs describes a collection of short-chain carbohydrates found in many common foods, such as onions, apples and pears. The theory is that consuming foods high in FODMAPs results in increased volumes of liquid and gas in the small and large intestines, and symptoms such as pain and bloating.

Associate Professor Geary and his team tested this theory by following 90 patients on the diet for more than a year. They found most patients experienced a lessening of symptoms. Most patients adhered to the diet and Associate Professor Geary says the diet is easily explained, making it a good option for those wanting to ease the often very uncomfortable symptoms of IBS.



## Brief

### New Professors Appointed

Two long-standing staff members were recently promoted to Professor. They will both give lectures on their work as part of the Public Health Lecture series.

Professor Richard Troughton is a cardiologist and researcher with the Christchurch Heart Institute. His research interests include heart failure, echocardiography and new devices to monitor heart failure.

Professor Mark Hampton is a member of the Centre for Free Radical Research. His research focuses on how cells respond to oxidative stress, and how it might be possible to kill cancer cells better by targeting their antioxidant systems. Some of the compounds he is studying come from cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli.

## Bugs and Bowel Cancer



The team working on bowel cancer research: From left, back row: Professor Frank Frizelle, Dr Jacqui Keenan, Dr Bruce Dobbs. From left (seated) Dr Chris Wakeman, Assoc Prof Tim Eglinton, Rebecca Pascoe.

New Zealand has the highest rate of bowel cancer in the world, yet we don't know why bowel cancer develops in most cases. A small number of people have a predisposing condition such as an inherited genetic disorder but for over 90 per cent of patients the cause of the cancer is unknown. Professor Frank Frizelle says researchers have historically focused on inherited aspects of bowel cancer. With a number of cancers, including cervical, anal, throat and gastric cancer bacteria and virus are the cause. Professor Frizelle and his team suspect this may also be the case with bowel cancer and are investigating.

Professor Frizelle is one of the country's foremost bowel cancer surgeons. He heads the Department of Surgery at the University of Otago, Christchurch, and is also a dedicated researcher. He was recently awarded a Gold Medal from the University for his long and productive research career.

Another of Professor Frizelle's current research projects is looking at outcomes of patients with bowel cancer in terms of survival and quality of life. He and his team are studying data on bowel and colon cancer surgical patients from Canterbury and comparing their outcomes with patients in Sydney, Melbourne, Leeds and London.

"We have more cases of cancer here than any of the other sites (in the study), we see so much bowel cancer. We are really trying to work out what is behind this."

## New Head of Postgraduate Nursing Centre

The University of Otago, Christchurch, is a leading institution in the South Island for nurses to study at a postgraduate level. More than 300 nurses are enrolled with its Centre for Postgraduate Nursing Studies. These nurses are developing advanced knowledge and skills to help improve the level of healthcare provided to the community.

Dr Philippa Seaton has recently joined the Centre as its director. She worked previously at CPIT and Griffith University in Australia. Dr Seaton grew up and trained as a nurse in Christchurch and says she is excited about contributing to health professionals' education in Canterbury and in the wider South Island region and growing the quality and number of programmes the Centre offers.

The Centre offers courses to nurses undertaking masters or PhD courses, many fitting in part-time study around their work and family life.

Dr Seaton says the papers offered by the Centre are developed with health sector needs in mind and have a clinical focus. This means the qualifications are directly relevant to nurses, their employers and meet the ever-changing needs of the health care sector.

There is a strong research team at the Centre that focuses on long term condition management: an important area for New Zealand health care. Researchers at the Centre are exploring the ways individuals and families can be supported to manage their conditions and the impact of these chronic conditions.

Dr Seaton has an interest in researching how to best utilise the health workforce for quality care, as well as how technology can enhance health professionals' learning.

