

He Kete Kōrero



WELLINGTON

University of Otago, Wellington Newsletter | Winter 2017

Dean's welcome

Welcome to the Winter 2017 edition of He Kete Kōrero which highlights just some of our recent work.

Over the last two years we have developed a more focused Strategic Direction intended to support our decision making. Divided into four themes, we have developed strategic action plans for:

- Teaching and Learning – to achieve excellence in student learning
- Excellence in Research
- Māori – to honour our obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi and attract, recruit and retain Māori staff and students and educate in Māori health needs and provide appropriate clinical experience
- Pacific – to honour our commitment to the University's Pacific Strategic Framework, and to improve Pacific achievement and development.

The plans come under the umbrella of the overall University of Otago and Division of Health Sciences strategic frameworks, but also have specific, measurable and sustainable goals fit for the Wellington campus.

Last year we finalised the strategy and plans, and this year we have been putting the plans into place. Progress will be reviewed in 2020, and documents updated as needed. We look forward to working towards goals such as enhanced community engagement, even greater research excellence, and promoting growth and development.

Next month we celebrate the official opening of the Centre for Translational Physiology, a unique facility for New Zealand that will enhance our biomedical research.

We invite you to attend Professor Sue Pullon's Inaugural Professorial Lecture on 1 August. rsvp.uow@otago.ac.nz by 27 July.

Ngā mihi nui

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



Geographic and ethnic inequities in stroke outcomes

Associate Professor Anna Ranta, Department of Medicine, has received an HRC grant for a collaborative project to investigate potential geographic and ethnic variation in service provision and stroke outcomes. Stroke is the second most common cause of death and adult disability in New Zealand, and due to ageing and population growth the number of people with stroke continues to rise. Several key interventions can reduce disability after stroke, and much effort has gone into implementing these treatments through NZ hospitals. However, it is unclear whether all hospitals achieve the same patient outcomes given existent variation in service set-up. Also, while we know that stroke occurs at a younger age in some ethnic groups (notably Māori and Pacific people), we do not know whether, once the stroke has occurred, they also face poorer access to optimal services. The research will inform the national stroke programme in its efforts to optimise stroke care delivery to all New Zealanders regardless of domicile or ethnic background. The research team involves co-investigators from Massey, Auckland, and Monash University in Melbourne as well as clinicians from Northland to Christchurch and consumer and Stroke Foundation representatives.

He Tapu Te Whare Tangata

Associate Professor Beverley Lawton has received an HRC grant for a community-based Kaupapa Māori research project to improve access to cervical cancer screening. He Tapu Te Whare Tangata gives Māori ownership of the process of instigating this innovative HPV screening using a community research partnership model rather than responding to future national models that may not suit Māori needs. Māori women are more than twice as likely to be diagnosed with cervical cancer and three times more likely to die of cervical cancer than Pākehā women. The Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is the cause of cervical cancer, and HPV testing is new technology which will replace present cervical cytology screening in the future. Prevention and early detection remain the key interventions for addressing Māori needs and reducing inequalities in cervical cancer in New Zealand. "To improve health outcomes for Māori, it's essential to have input and collaboration. Our project is all about self-testing for the HPV virus for those Māori women that the cervical screening program is not accessing," says Assoc Prof Lawton.



Award-winning research



Research to better manage patients with acute abdominal pain

Congratulations to **Kirsten de Burlet**, a PhD student in the Department of Surgery and Anaesthesia, who has recently

won two prizes for her research work on patients presenting with acute abdominal pain. She won the prize for the best poster presentation at the New Zealand Association of General Surgeons in March in Palmerston North, on one aspect of her study about the appropriateness of CT scans of the abdomen for patients with acute abdominal pain.

She was also awarded 'best research paper' at the Annual Scientific Congress of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) in May in Adelaide. Her presentation and paper in Adelaide was on: *'How accurate is our early differentiation between the urgent and non-urgent patient presenting with abdominal pain?'*

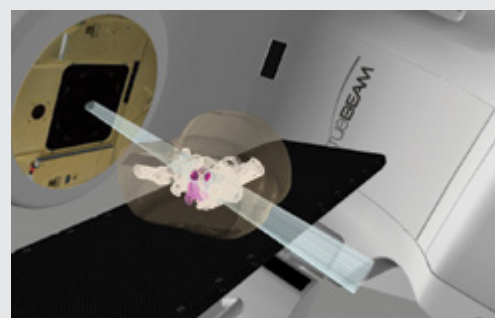
Supervised by UOW Associate Professor Elizabeth Dennett, (who is also a colorectal surgeon at the CCDHB), and Professor Peter Larsen, Head of Dept of Surgery and Anaesthesia, Kirsten's research for her PhD is examining how we look after patients who present with acute abdominal pain.

Professor Larsen notes that Kirsten's research represents "a great partnership between Wellington Hospital (CCDHB) and the University, as we work together on ways to improve and optimise clinical care for this group of patients."

Virtual patient education for radiation therapy

Alannah Flockton, Department of Radiation Therapy, recently received high praise when presenting her study on patients' experience of a virtual teaching tool for radiation therapy. She won best oral presentation at conferences in New Zealand and Canada for her work on using Virtual Environment Radiotherapy Training (VERT™) to educate men about to receive radiation treatment for prostate cancer. VERT™ can virtually simulate the environment of a radiation treatment room by using 3D views and life size visualisations. Used for teaching in radiation therapy, it delivers benefits for students, tutors, clinic staff and patients by illustrating theoretical concepts and developing clinical skills in a safe environment.

Alannah qualified at UOW as a Radiation Therapist in 2006 and has worked in a variety of roles in Dunedin, the UK and Wellington. She is a Professional Practice Fellow at UOW and works clinically as a Radiation Therapist at the Wellington Blood and Cancer Centre (WBCC). Keen to continue with her own postgraduate education, she enrolled in the Bachelor of Radiation Therapy Honours programme in 2015. She completed a HASC Health Science Research Methods paper which led to the qualitative, pilot study at the WBCC, using VERT. Alannah's study involved interviewing patients about their experience of VERT. The results were overwhelmingly supportive of visual tools, such as VERT to be included as part of patient education sessions for radiation treatment. She hopes to make the VERT education available for radiation centres to use in the future.



Latest research news highlights

Updated guidance urgently needed for antipsychotic drug clozapine

Drug-safety regulators and manufacturers need to take urgent action over serious adverse effects of the valuable antipsychotic drug clozapine, new UOW/CCDHB research led by Dr Susanna Every-Palmer and Professor Pete Ellis shows. They analysed all the reported cases of serious clozapine-induced 'slow-gut' submitted to New Zealand and Australian pharmacovigilance agencies over a 22 year period, making this the largest international study of these side effects to date.

Cannabidiol effective for a severe form of epilepsy

The first ever Class 1 clinical trial of the drug cannabidiol has shown it is effective at reducing convulsive seizures in a severe type of epilepsy in children. "This study is significant because it is the first scientific clinical evidence we have of an effect of a plant-derived cannabinoid therapeutic medication on epilepsy. Previous reports of effects, widely reported in the media, were of individual children and it was unclear if these reflected a true effect for children in general with this type of epilepsy," says the only New Zealander on the project, Associate Professor Lynette Sadleir epilepsy researcher and paediatric neurologist at the UOW.

Do Community Treatment Orders (CTOs) violate human rights?

Researchers from New Zealand and Australia have claimed that a standard practice used in psychiatry may be ineffective and violate international human rights conventions. Dr Giles Newton-Howes from the Psychological Medicine Department at UOW, and Associate Professor Christopher Ryan from the University of Sydney have recently published an editorial in the **British Journal of Psychiatry** arguing that CTOs should not be used for competent patients.

Research finds flu is a major killer in New Zealand with Māori, Pasifika and low-income earners most vulnerable

Research from Professor Michael Baker and public health researchers shows that influenza kills about 500 New Zealanders each year, and the risk of premature death is much higher for Māori, Pasifika, men and those living in relative poverty.

For more details on these and other research stories, check the news page of our University of Otago, Wellington website:

otago.ac.nz/wellington/news/otago033018.html

Big data for health:



The Virtual Health Information Network (VHIN) has been established and is being used by health researchers all over New Zealand. Researchers at UOW have joined with the University of Auckland, Massey University and the Ministry of Health to establish the VHIN.

This collaborative network aims to support quality research using New Zealand's excellent national health and social big data, using the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) from Statistics NZ, and other administrative health data. Through website posts, online discussions, code sharing, sharing expertise, and meeting together to discuss current IDI research, researchers can obtain a deeper understanding of the IDI and increase awareness of data quality issues.

Led by an executive comprising of University of Auckland, Massey University, University of Otago, Māori, Ministry of Health, and Stats NZ representatives. the network is currently sponsored by the *Healthier Lives* National Science Challenge.

To find out more about VHIN resources go to vhin.co.nz or join the network on the VHIN Facebook group.



Keeping up with the latest in Public Health research

The Department of Public Health continues its extensive outreach via the Public Health expert blog [<https://blogs.otago.ac.nz/pubhealthexpert/>] and Public Health seminars continue on Fridays at lunchtime, with a variety of speakers through the winter months, including Dr Mike Joy speaking on nitrogen and Wellington Mayor Justin Lester speaking on Health and our Cities. It is now possible to view these seminars as they happen remotely, direct from your computer. Our events page has upcoming seminars and details of how to log in:

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

Setting the world on a course toward sustainable development



Professor Philippa Howden-Chapman and Dr Elinor Chisholm from Public Health have co-authored with others a chapter in a major new International Council for Science (ICSU) report, which addresses the challenge of achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The authors considered interactions between different goals and targets, determining to what extent they reinforce or conflict with one another. The report, *A Guide to SDG Interactions: from Science to Implementation*, includes detailed analyses of four of the UN's 17 SDGs to help illustrate the value of this integrated approach. A major finding was that not all good policies, in isolation, lead to an overall good outcome. It is the interactions and linkages between policies that will lead us towards a more sustainable world.

See more here: [Setting the world on a course toward sustainable development \(otago.ac.nz/wellington/news/otago652630.html\)](http://Setting the world on a course toward sustainable development (otago.ac.nz/wellington/news/otago652630.html)

For more public health research highlights go to otago.ac.nz/wellington/departments/publichealth/index.html



Professor Philippa Howden-Chapman



Dr Elinor Chisholm



New appointment for the University of Otago in Tairāwhiti

Dr Diana Kopua has been appointed to the new part-time role of Associate Dean (Tairāwhiti). Her role is to provide support for all Otago students in the Tairāwhiti (Gisborne) region including Wairoa, and making links within the community. Dr Kopua is currently Head of the Psychiatry Department at Hauora Tairāwhiti. She began her career working in mental health in the Porirua region, before studying medicine at Otago.

Read more information about this appointment on our website:

otago.ac.nz/wellington/news/otago648078.html

Gisborne doctor in new role supporting health students (Gisborne Herald)





Matariki 2017 at UOW

We celebrated Matariki with a range of activities in June. Staff, students and whānau had the opportunity to join into a programme of activities including star-gazing, talks on Māori astronomy, waiata and a shared dinner.



Photo credit Mailyn Feehan

On a lighter note Professor Dawn Elder sings jazz

In contrast to her daily work as Head of the Paediatrics Department, paediatrician and child health researcher Professor Dawn Elder has just released her second jazz CD/album, called 'As Prescribed'.

She sings a variety of traditional jazz covers performed with many talented Wellington musicians on the new album, and hopes the prescription of relaxing, smooth numbers will "go down well – take liberally at night daily," she suggests.

The album is available from several places including Spotify and i-Tunes or direct from dawn.elder@otago.ac.nz

Diary: Events coming up

Tuesday, 1 August

Inaugural Professorial Lecture by Sue Pullon, public event to celebrate Professor Pullon's appointment: *Competence, respect and trust: hallmarks of collaborative practice?* Sue will talk about "interprofessionality," and how powerful collaborative practice can be. She will also share her own journey as a clinician, an educator, a researcher, and a New Zealander. 5pm Nordmeyer Lecture Theatre | University of Otago, Wellington.



Please reply to rsvp.uow@otago.ac.nz by Thursday 27 July 2017.

Tuesday, 1 August

Official Opening of the Centre for Translational Physiology

12 September

Otago Spotlight Series: Child Health Research, 9am–3.30pm Tuesday, 12 September 2017, Nordmeyer Theatre, University of Otago, Wellington. A full day symposium where more than a dozen University of Otago researchers will be in the spotlight providing short, easy-to-understand outlines of their research in child health.

For more info and to attend, check **Otago Spotlight Series: Child Health Research**.

For upcoming events: otago.ac.nz/wellington/news/events/index.html

For more detail on these stories or other UOW news and research, go to:

otago.ac.nz/wellington

or contact Fleur.templeton@otago.ac.nz

Follow us on Twitter [@otagowellington](https://twitter.com/otagowellington)