From the OAM Flight Deck

We all enjoyed a superb Professional Visits Programme (PVP) in Auckland; Dave Powell has already been to Dubai to look at the next year’s venues and visits. The PVP is a key part of our programme and I would encourage students to attend; participation provides credit against your final marks, as well as being enjoyable and motivating! It is a great opportunity to spend quality time with your student colleagues and staff. The last Dubai Residential School in 2008 was stunning with some outstanding learning experiences, and the 2017 PVP will be one not to miss.

2017 will be our time to celebrate 30 years of distance teaching occupational & aviation medicine (aeromedical retrieval is half the programme’s age), and we have good cause to celebrate. The first course was limited to 11 NZ-based students and now we have over 80 student across the programme. Our staff and students are truly global. In 30 years, we have built a curriculum and a reputation that is the envy of many other Universities, and our courses are accredited with a wide range of Colleges and government agencies. Our graduates, of whom we are extremely proud, hold positions of considerable prominence and responsibility in their specialist areas. And we have done great things! The Aerospace Medical Association has asked us to assist with evidence-based guideline development, one of only four organisations to be approached.

As the newly appointed Foundations Program Director for the American College of Occupational & Environmental Medicine, I am working hard at the as a member of the Council on Education & Academic Affairs. I am fully engaged with the Learning Management System Working Party and the new online course that is the entrée to occupational medicine in the US.

This semester, we are evaluating the use of virtual reality to enable a “virtual site visit” where a group of occupational medicine students can meet with staff as a group to evaluate an occupational health issue in a challenging workplace. And, as we move further away from pen and paper, we are using much more interesting ways to interact with and mentor students through participatory assessments. What is crucial is that learning should be relevant, directly applicable to real-life situations, and helps solve problems and questions that occur in daily professional life. It should also be fun!

Best wishes for a productive and enjoyable year.

- Rob Griffiths
News from the OAMU Research Desk - Julie Myers

Behind the backdrop of our busy teaching programme, our various complimentary research projects are continuing to move along nicely. Some of our focus is more educational, for example examining the use of virtual reality environments in occupational medicine teaching (Rob Griffiths and Mark Newsome-Smith), or the focus Kelli has on the content and organisation of learning management systems and the use of technology platforms to assist with learning in the distance education setting. Earlier this year, Dave Powell, Michael Haney and I published the non-technical skills framework we have adapted from the Anaesthetics setting. This framework is aimed at teaching and evaluating non-technical skills in the critical care air transport setting. We are currently using that framework in a clinical simulation study, which is aimed at evaluating the impact of fatigue in this setting. This research is being undertaken in a high-fidelity fixed wing simulator (complete with turbulence!) and involves flight nurses and flight registrars from the Wellington ICU Flight Service. We’re using a randomised crossover design (so that clinicians act as their own controls), and comparing clinical performance in both a fatigued state (directly after coming off ICU night shift) and also when they are hopefully non-fatigued (eg. after days off).

Auckland Professional Visits Programme 2016 - David Powell

This year’s Professional Visits Programme (PVP) was held in Auckland New Zealand in May this year. The PVP is run each year for students from all three OAMU streams - aviation medicine, occupational medicine and aeromedical retrieval/transport. Most of the programme is taken up with practical visits to relevant worksites. This year the occupational medicine group visited: a steel works; a flight catering establishment; both ends of the dairy industry, namely milking at a dairy farm, and the headquarters of the dairy conglomerate which sells the dairy produce internationally; and relevant areas at the Air Force Base including a look at the safety and training aspects of fuel tank entry.

Aviation medicine visits included air traffic control, cabin crew training, flight simulation, and active Air Force squadrons and flight decks. Aeromedical retrieval and transport visited two very different fixed wing air ambulance operations and two emergency medical helicopter services, as well as an assistance company operation. There were lectures on regulatory medicine and aeromedical operations in the Antarctic as well as practical exercises in assistance medicine.

And as always a good part of the benefit derived was in the network travelling to and from visits, talking during them, and socialising in evenings. Students have a chance to meet each other, and their tutors, face to face which always enhances the value of the webinars and email communications.
David Powell will be passing the PVP Chair position to Ben Johnson. A hearty thank you from all past attendees for the hard yards* DP has put in to keep us all happy and healthy over the past 11 years! Ben and DP will be co-hosting the 2017 PVP in Dubai.

Attendees in 2016: Afshin Nazmi, Alpo Vuorio, Angela Ernst, Ben Johnston, Benjapol Engkaninan, Calum Young, Chan Henry, David Fitzgerald, David Powell, Garth Herrington, Geoff Tothill, Margaret Brown, Elizabeth Barber, Gawnain Peter Fraser, Graham Denyer, Greg van der Hulst, Gregory Stewart, Hardeep Hundal, Hay Tung Lau, Howard Roby, James Pockett, Joanna Foo, Judy Fernando, Julie Myers, Katherine Townend, Kelli Fleming, Koert Jan Schonewille, Michael Haney, Michael Tmbros, Nicholas Ioannides, Peter Fortes, Rob Griffiths, Russell Clark, Rahul Prasad, Richard Hart, Warren Foo, Wolfgang Seckler, Zuhair Mohammed

*kiwi idiom

Group Photo in David Powell’s Hangar

**2017 Key Dates—Enrolment is open!**

22 Feb: Welcome Webinar | 27 Feb: Semester 1 starts.
10 July: Semester 2 starts | Late September: Professional Visits Programme—Dubai
I was employed with Wellington Free Ambulance (NZ) as an intensive care paramedic for just short of twenty years, with my last five years as a degree lecturer for the BHSc Paramedic program.

Prior to leaving NZ for Qatar, one of my previous students had commenced studies with OAM and had recently visited Dubai as part of the Professional Visits Program (a neighboring country of Qatar). Although a Kiwi, my previous postgrad studies were through an Australian university.

I was originally employed as an educator in Qatar and soon become absorbed into the LifeFlight helicopter emergency medical program (HEMS) and eventually held the position of LifeFlight manager. As all my previous flight experience was limited to rotary-wing rescue work and a little fixed wing transport, I decided that I would like to broaden my knowledge in all areas of aeromedical retrieval and transport and so therefore made contact with OAM. Even before that I also spent time reviewing Otago as a university and the OAM program, both which proved to have worldwide academic credibility. The associated Otago Medical School also appealed.

In 2010, I commenced study extramurally with the Post Graduate Certificate and finally completed my Master in Health Science-Aeromedical Retrieval and Transport in July of this year.

It’s been a long haul but a great journey, made even more enjoyable by the huge range of experience and diversity of students and tutors I have met along the way.

The PVP I experienced in Portugal was phenomenal-what a fantastic ideal. Not only was it an amazing opportunity to meet fellow students from all around the world, and with different fields of expertise but the opportunities to explore aviation in Portugal was also a treat. As the only paramedic on the PVP I was a little concerned that I may not fit in so well but my fears were unfounded.

Throughout my study I have been fortunate to have very knowledgeable tutors who are passionate about what they teach. Every tutor and admin staff have been approachable and helpful which I have been very grateful for when trying to sort problems from the other side of the world an in different time zones.

My studies have enabled me greater opportunities than I would otherwise have experienced and included being the clinical lead for ambulance services on 3 missions to retrieve injured Libyans during the initial conflict, the opportunity to remain as part of a small team at LifeFlight and more recently being selected to move into international patient retrievals.

I am proud to say that I am a graduate of Otago.
Recent Publications and Presentations

Publications


Conference presentations


Fiona Stuart & Kelli Fleming. DEANZ [Distance Education Association of New Zealand] Conference April 2016: Embark Otago: Orientation for distance students in an on-campus world!


Research Opportunities - Julie Myers

There are a number of opportunities for current or potential OAMU students to undertake some research with us, as part of your qualification. Most masters degrees require some degree of research focused activity and many qualifications allow the substitution of research focused papers such as the research methods paper (AVME785), the single semester research paper (AVME 780), or even a full thesis.

Current OAMU student projects include the management of residual bypass circuit blood during cardiac surgery, why advanced care paramedics stay in their jobs, and the impact of aging on pilot performance. Check out our past research projects on our website.

If you have an interest in doing some research, or would like to discuss the opportunity to do some research as part of your qualification, please don’t hesitate to contact Rob Griffiths (rob.griffiths@otago.ac.nz) or me (julie.myers@otago.ac.nz).

“Have you thought about doing a PhD in the world’s “coolest little capital?”
Winner of the Nomy Ahmed Prize — Gawain Fraser

Where do you live and work?
I live and work in Gisborne New Zealand with my wife Elmari and our three children. I have been working for our District Health Board since October 2003.

How did you hear about OAMU?
I did an online search re Aeromedical courses and found the programme online. I initially only wanted to know a little more about the aeromedical industry and did not set out to do a specific Diploma course.

[Editors note: Gawain completed the PGDipAeroRT in 2015.]

What have you enjoyed about our programme?
I have enjoyed the course tremendously. The info provided was very good, but the friends made was even better.

What has been your motivation for “sticking with it” even when things got tough?
I have really enjoyed being part of a positive and proactive group of people. I stuck with the program because of the people doing the program. I really felt a connection with the participants and did not want to let them down.

What was your favourite part of Professional Visits Programme?
I have been to three now and had enjoyed them tremendously. I have learned a lot and feel privileged to be able to spend time with the course participants and providers. It is the people that make me come back for more.

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@OtagoOAMU
@DrDFitzgerald
@dpDavidPowell
@avmed_doc
@Robingriffiths
@Docjohnb74
@Julie_myers

Presented with the prize at the final dinner

At home with the family
Next year's Professional Visits Programme (PVP) is planned for UAE (Dubai and Abu Dhabi) in September 2017.

This is your chance to meet your fellow OAMU students and tutors, and to experience a range of site visits relevant to your course of study. The UAE is rich with suitable sites to visit, being an aerospace hub as well as offering occupational visits in the oil, gas and construction industries; tentative plans are already in place with a number of visit hosts.

The possibility of a brief side visit to Doha, Qatar will also be explored. We have scheduled the PVP for later in the year in 2017, to provide more time for planning for your attendance. We do strongly encourage you to attend a PVP at least every second year of your study, and your participation in PVP activities can earn some marks towards your assessment. More importantly, it is a way to bring your distance learning to life, and offers unique visits and unparalleled networking opportunities. Please put the PVP into your calendar for late September next year.