

## EDITORIAL

# Editor's welcome

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Welcome to issue 37 of The New Zealand Medical Student Journal (NZMSJ), Te Hautaka o nga Akonga Rongoa. This issue focuses on the topic of work-life balance, an especially poignant concept given the constraints placed upon medical school training.

The increasing complexity of medicine, together with resource constraints, and a progressively stretched workforce means doctors are experiencing immense stress. This was recognised in 2016 when a New Zealand-based cross-sectional study reported that 50% of senior doctors experience high personal burnout.<sup>1</sup> The rate for younger doctors is likely higher, with younger age being associated with increased personal burnout.<sup>1,2</sup> As such, the relevance of 'work-life balance' is being increasingly recognised in New Zealand. Internationally, the importance of 'work-life balance' has also been acknowledged, with the World Health Organisation including 'burnout' in the 11<sup>th</sup> Revision of the International Classification of Diseases in 2019. The issue of burnout is not isolated to doctors. Medical students have been noted to experience deterioration in mental health during their training, and at least half of medical students are affected by burnout during their medical careers.<sup>3-5</sup>

We acknowledge the increasing financial and workforce pressures placed on medical students, together with the continuing impacts of COVID-19 on medical placements. Whilst these pressures are not easily rectified, we hope this issue provides insight into ways students can manage and balance both university (work) and personal (life) commitments. We hope that you, as the reader, find value in the editorial articles published in this issue and find strategies to improve your own work-life balance during medical school and beyond.

## Overview of articles in issue 37

This issue features three editorials from clinicians Dr Art Nahill, Professor Mark Huthwaite and Dr Maple Goh. Each clinician discusses their personal views of work-life balance, offering different outlooks on this topic.

Dr Nahill proposes that we should not look at work and life as opposing dichotomies but alternatively focus on work-life integration. Instead of focusing on recovering from our jobs, we should instead attempt to find work that we enjoy and love.

Professor Huthwaite also stresses the importance of having down-time and hobbies outside of work and provides us with practical instructions on how best we can achieve this with his four Ls: love, learning, laughter, and leisure.

Dr Goh suggests that the elusive 'work-life balance' is a societal concept constructed by social attitudes rather than personal reflection. Factors outside our control mean that we cannot achieve this balance regardless of how hard we try. She also highlights the discrimination faced by many and how the challenge of work-life balance is harder for some more than others.

The academic articles presented in this issue feature a broad range of topics and will appeal to all audiences. Bree-Anna Langton and Professor Huthwaite describe the integration and acceptability of yoga and mindfulness in a New Zealand medical school, while Selin D Jamil et al. discuss the prevalence of somatisation in final-year students of a medical school in Türkiye. Lathan Thomas' prize-winning dermatology essay looks at JAK-STAT inhibitors and their potential future in dermatology, whereas Reuben He presents a case study of anterior ischaemic optic neuropathy. We also have the pleasure of publishing two Letters to the Editor, one from Albert Andrew who discusses the issue of coercive vaccination policies (in response to a previously published article by Dr Yan Ting Alarica Tay),<sup>6</sup> and the other from Dr William Park who discusses medical student accommodation in Wellington (in response to a previously published article by Dr Michaela Walker and Professor Huthwaite).<sup>7</sup> This issue also includes the 2023 BMedSc(Hon) abstracts from the University of Auckland and the University of Otago, and the winning abstracts from the 2024 Australasian Student Surgical Conference in Christchurch. Through the generous support of Dr Ari Samaranayaka, Professor Robin Turner, and A/P Claire Cameron from the University of Otago Statistics Department, we bring to you an article on the topic of 'sampling methods for health-related surveys' in our ongoing Statistics Primer series. Finally, following the theme of this issue, we have a feature article by Dr William Park who discusses the potential for a 48-hour work week for doctors in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the learnings to take from similar changes overseas.

## Acknowledgements and Concluding Remarks

We would like to acknowledge both the 2023 and 2024 NZMSJ committees, as members from both years have contributed towards the publication of this issue. The members of both committees are listed on the previous page.

We are also grateful for the ongoing financial support from the University of Otago and the University of Auckland, as well as from the Medical Assurance Society, The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, and Specialty Trainees of New Zealand. Thank you to Professor Frizelle for his continual sponsorship of the Verrall Award, which is given to the best academic article published in NZMSJ over two issues. We look forward to announcing the winner of this award later this year. We would also like to thank our NZMSJ advisory board members for their support of the NZMSJ, as well as our expert reviewers and our student peer reviewers for their contribution to ensuring all articles are of rigorous academic quality (listed on the previous page).

We hope that our readers will find the articles related to work-life balance insightful. We encourage medical students to consider submitting to NZMSJ in the future and congratulate all those who have contributed to this issue.

## References

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