Kia ora koutou katoa and welcome to Issue 31 of Te Hautakoa o Ngā Akongā Rongoā, or the New Zealand Medical Student Journal (NZMSJ). In this issue of NZMSJ we are proud to share a wide range of interesting and high-quality articles by medical students and academics in both Aotearoa and abroad. The theme of Issue 31 is “Social responsibility”, a pertinent topic to both medical students and health care professionals. This theme encompasses a wide range of important issues relevant to society today, and explores our role in these issues as future healthcare professionals. The theme of this issue was decided prior to the unprecedented events of 2020 and the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The pandemic has placed significant strains and challenges on healthcare workers and healthcare systems globally, bringing to light the important roles and responsibilities of health care workers. There have also been incredible displays of solidarity and teamwork as the world has tackled the outbreak. We are privileged to have a number of articles related to the COVID-19 pandemic and considerations related to social responsibility in this issue.

A brief introduction to articles in this issue

We are very fortunate to have a number of invited editorials and features which explore a range of important areas related to the theme of social responsibility. Firstly, Dr Lupe Tauemopeau presents the Pacific Health Perspective, highlighting the failures to date in achieving health equity for Pacific people in Aotearoa, and explores the obligation of the health system and professionals to change this. Dr Tauemopeau emphasises the importance of cultural safety and gives practical tips on how to improve cultural safety when working with Pacific people. Dr Scott Metcalfe and Liz Springfield provide an in-depth overview of climate change, the effect on health, and why we as health professionals must be advocates. They provide a range of practical tips to make constructive change on a personal and professional level. We are very fortunate to have two COVID-19 related editorials exploring some of the ethical issues which have arisen during this pandemic. Associate Professor Angela Ballantyne and Dr Elizabeth Dai explore the ethics of a pandemic from an Aotearoa and global perspective. They highlight the political aspects, effects of healthcare inequities, and the importance of solidarity in these times. From a surgical perspective, Ms Sarah Rennie explored the effects on provision of surgical services on a local and national level as the pandemic unfolded, the challenges faced, and the positives that arose from the difficult situation. She also reflects on the social responsibility of the service and of individual doctors during this exceptional time. We are very grateful to the authors of our editorials for each of their important contributions to this issue and theme.

We are also proud to share a number of interesting feature submissions related to the theme of social responsibility. Firstly, in this issue’s Māori Health Review, Emma Espiner and Nadine Houia-Ashwell explore the effect of the COVID-19 lockdown on gambling, harmful alcohol use, and access to unhealthy food. They highlight how three contributors to poor health outcomes were treated as essentials during lockdown and suggest changes to this which would enable a stronger emergence from the COVID-19 pandemic. Ellie Baxter, the President of the New Zealand Medical Students Association (NZMSA), shares and reflects on NZMSA’s year to date, and their response to support students during the COVID-19 lockdown. We also have two feature articles related to medical education and the hidden curriculum. Firstly, Laura Nunez-Mulder, previous British Journal of Medicine (BMJ) Student Editorial Scholar and Sharp Scratch podcast creator, writes about her experiences in establishing the podcast, its purpose, and how it addresses the hidden curriculum of medical school. We also have Dr Art Nahill sharing his personal journey that led him to establishing IMReasoning with his colleague Dr Nic Szechket, part of an online education revolution. Dr Natalie Bell writes about her elective experience as a “floating doctor” in Bocas Del Toro in Panama. Meghan Scanlan takes us back to the 19th century when there was not one registered female medical practitioner, and then focuses on three of the many women who were pioneers for the women in medicine today. Michaela Rektorysova hosts an informative interview on military medicine, a specialty that may be less familiar to students. We are also fortunate to include our regular statistics primer written by Cameron et al., from the University of Otago Biostatistics Unit. This issue focuses on the often-confused value of the p-value, an important issue for all students and clinicians.

We were impressed at the large number of high-quality academic submissions for this issue. Associate Professor Göktepe et al. describes a case of a subconjunctival haemorrhage secondary to Pilates, a rare cause. Ahmed Sheriff carried out a clinical audit investigating the rates of post-tensorillecetomy haemorrhage at Nelson Hospital. Mustafa Sheriff conducted a clinical audit to assess whether there are significant delays in verifying transthoracic echocardiography reports by the cardiology department at Nelson Hospital. Natalie Allen reviewed the literature surrounding the effectivity of medical management of cataracts. Shehnaz Hussain carried out a survey of inpatients at Mid-dmore Hospital to evaluate patients’ perspectives on having flowers in the ward environment. Last but not least Hussain et al give an overview of the literature into the pathophysiology and treatments of neovascular age-related macular degeneration.

For this issue’s media reviews, Natasha Smyrke gives us her top five podcasts for medical students, and Karen Suresh reviews the Stepwise clinical examination handbook (2nd edition) by Matthew D. Mackey. We also have two book reviews in this issue. Patrick Macaskill-Webb reviews The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma by Bessel van der Kolk; and Uma Sreedhar reviews Also human: The inner lives of doctors by Caroline Elton.
Finally, we would like to congratulate our winners of the Issue 31 Creative Arts Competition: Jocelyn Lim, Harry Di Somma, and Dan Ieremia. This competition is an ongoing collaboration with NZMSA to showcase our fellow medical students’ creative talents. Harry and Dan both submitted poems related to their clinical experiences, while Jocelyn captured a moment from the COVID-19 pandemic in a drawing of two healthcare workers in personal protective equipment, which is showcased on the cover of this issue.

Thanks and conclusion

The Editorial Board would like to thank the Universities of Auckland and Otago for their financial and academic support for the journal. We would like to thank the Medical Assurance Society (MAS), the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP), and the New Zealand Dermatological Society Incorporated for their funding. We would also like to thank Catherine’s Creations, Medisave, Medshop and the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) for sponsoring the prizes for our Researcher Spotlight initiative, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) for sponsoring our new RANZCOG Prize for the best student-authored blog post published this year, and Professor Frank Frizelle for his financial support for the Verrall Award. The winner of this year’s Verrall award will be chosen from the academic articles included in the NZMSJ issues published this year, and will be announced at the end of the year. We would like to acknowledge the NZMSA for their ongoing support, and our Advisory Board members for their advice and guidance. Finally, the authors would like to thank the Editorial and Commercial Boards and our reviewers, as they have worked hard behind the scenes to enable this issue to be published.

We hope NZMSJ readers will enjoy the wide variety of interesting articles included in Issue 31. We would like to congratulate all of the authors who have contributed and encourage all readers to submit their work to NZMSJ in the future.