

EDITORIAL

Editor's welcome

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Introduction

Tēnā koutou katoa and welcome to Issue 35 of Te Hautaka o ngā Akongā Rongoā, the New Zealand Medical Student Journal (NZMSJ). The theme of this issue is "Health Literacy", which has become an increasingly important topic for medical professionals and the general public alike. It is our great privilege to share with our readers the insightful and high-quality articles by authors both domestic and abroad.

The health literacy of both the medical workforce and the general public is crucial to successful patient-centred healthcare. Health literacy is not solely understanding the pathophysiology of a disease, but also the changing dynamics of one's health amongst other biopsychosocial factors.¹ Health professionals are not by nature more "health-literate" than patients, and it is dangerous for the patient-doctor relationship to assume the patient knows less. Health literacy has been associated with a myriad of factors, however, new frameworks of patient-centred care now focus on the role of health professionals in accommodating for and traversing the range of patient health understanding that they encounter.² Clear communication between the two parties is arguably more important than the knowledge either holds.

In light of the ongoing SARS-Cov-2 pandemic, the discrepancies between the public's appetite for certain health measures and what experts expect the public to accept have widened the rift between members of the public and health professionals. This disconnect has been further worsened by political beliefs and industry lobbyists, and has sowed a rapidly blooming seed of distrust against the fundamentals of modern medicine. We are in the midst of a health literacy crisis where patients have access to unfiltered health information that may see them diametrically opposed to their doctor.

We believe a cooperative approach to health literacy is necessary for maintaining a healthy doctor-patient relationship, and this negotiation of information should occur constantly in the changing health care landscape. We are hopeful that this issue of the NZMSJ will provide insight and practical tips to those who wish to navigate the health literacy of their patients and themselves.

A brief overview of articles within this issue

This issue features two editorials from leading health literacy advocates in New Zealand.

The joint-authored editorial by Carla White (Ngāti Tama, Ngāti Toarangatira), Susan Reid (Te Rarawa), and Professor Papaarangi Reid (Te Rarawa), provides a culturally safe and evidence based process for establishing and maintaining the health literacy of patients in a doctor-patient relationship. Carla and Susan are the directors of Health Literacy NZ, a not for profit organisation dedicated to improving the health literacy of our country by working with both clinicians and patients. Professor Reid is a passionate advocate for indigenous health and has published extensively in the field.

Professor Doug Sellman shares his experiences as a leading expert in addiction medicine working in the public eye against powerful corporate interests. He describes his path entering this field and the challenges he has faced and since overcome. His story is an ongoing one and we look forward to seeing more of his work come to fruition.

The academic articles presented in this issue are of interest to medical and allied health professionals alike. Aideen Farragher et al. join us from Dublin and examine the quality of health information available on YouTube in the field of dysphagia. Dr Alarica Tay presents a poignant and topical piece on the ethics of coercive vaccination policies in the pandemic. Dr Andrew Heaps describes the upstream social determinants of asthma in New Zealand in a public health essay. Michaela Walker et al. demonstrate the challenges faced by our colleagues with their research on accommodation for Wellington medical students. Dr Michaela Rektorysova reviews the research around the effect of visible plants, art, and nature in post-operative care.

The journal is pleased to continue our ongoing series of feature articles in issue 35 with the addition of an academic pearl. Our new academic pearl section has been written by Dr Rajan Ramji and Associate Professor Andy Wearn, and describes the barriers faced by medical students with dyslexia and the techniques and services available to aid them. This issue also includes a succinct and helpful guide to the management of abdominal stab wounds by Mr Viktor Kong as the clinical pearl. The Māori Health Review is authored by Isaac Samuels and describes the inequities Māori still face in ocular health while offering important advice on enacting culturally safe improvements in this field. Finally, the statistics primer on academic review from a biostatistics perspective by Associate Professor Claire Cameron, Dr Ari Samaranayaka, and Professor Robin Turner is an invaluable resource for our readers building their critical appraisal tool box.

Acknowledgements and concluding remarks

The Editorial Board is incredibly grateful to the University of Auckland and the University of Otago for their ongoing academic and financial support of the NZMSJ. We would like to further extend our gratitude to the Medical Assurance Society, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, Specialty Trainees of New Zealand, and DermNet for their generous funding of the NZMSJ. Our sincere thanks to Catherine's Creations and Medisave for sponsoring the prizes for our monthly Researcher Spotlight initiative, and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) for their continuing sponsorship of our annual RANZCOG Blog Post Award for the best student-authored blog post published on our NZMSJ Blog each year. We would also like to thank Professor Frank Frizelle for his generous financial support of the Verrall Award, which will be awarded to the best academic article published in the NZMSJ this year. Our 2022 Verrall Award winner

will be selected and announced in the new year. As always, we would like to acknowledge our New Zealand Medical Students' Association colleagues for their ongoing support and our Advisory Board members who continue to support the NZMSJ and share their immense wisdom and experience. Finally, on behalf of the authors, we would like to thank the Editorial and Commercial boards, the expert reviewers, and the student peer reviewers for their tireless commitment to getting this issue to publication.

We hope NZMSJ readers will enjoy the array of thought-provoking articles included in Issue 35. We would like to congratulate all the authors who have contributed to this issue and encourage our readers to submit their work to the NZMSJ in the future.

References

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2. Jansen T, Rademakers J, Waverijn G, Verheij R, Osborne R, Heijmans M. The role of health literacy in explaining the association between educational attainment and the use of out-of-hours primary care services in chronically ill people: a survey study. *BMC Health Serv. Res*. 2018;18(1):394.