

Tinnitus – the newsletter of the NZMA Doctors-in-Training Council

The Doctors-in-Training Council began their meetings for 2006 on 10 February. They were joined by Xaviour Walker, the new president of the New Zealand Medical Students' Association (NZMSA). The meeting discussed a number of issues that have been topical for doctors in training over recent weeks.

The DITC and other NZMA representatives have been busy attending meetings of new medical students throughout the country for the start of the new year. The visiting schedule to main centres will continue with presentations on the ACE scheme coming up in May & June for trainee interns.

The NZMSA reported being busy in the run-up to the meeting in regards issues with the fees maxima (both Otago and Auckland tried to ignore that their exemptions that let them raise fees over recent years beyond the government policy maximum were temporary and that they should be reducing fees for this year– Otago recanted with some gentle suggestion, however Auckland required sustained lobbying from NZMSA to put their fees down to \$10,500 per annum). Whilst there are some great improvements for the modern medical student in terms of the new interest free loan policy, improved TI grants and the possibility of Step Up scholarships, these gains will quickly be eroded if fees and costs are allowed to continue to increase. There were a number of other matters regarding rural curriculum and looking in to the pros and cons of a later start date for first year house surgeons that the NZMSA is approaching this year.

The DITC discussed the ethical issues and benefits and drawbacks in the possibility of domestic full fee paying medical students entering our medical schools. In brief, the suggestion coming in part from the medical schools is if we top our classes up with some international full fee paying students, why not offer those places to [wealthy] domestic students. The benefits are they may be more culturally suitable for New Zealand and they may be more likely to stay in the longer term than international students. But the flipside is it kind of goes against some basic kiwi values in terms of everyone being fairly equal, not defined on ability to pay. If you have any views on this please feel free to let us know.

The DITC briefly discussed UK registration, and anecdotal suggestions that now getting registration is only the first of hurdles, and that jobs for kiwi grads are now hard to get over there. We are keen to hear of any experiences members have had (or their friends) in terms of gaining UK registration and then gaining work in the UK. Please contact us on the email below if you have anything to share.

We also discussed the matter of the drinking age, as a member's bill being considered in Parliament suggests returning the drinking age to 20. The NZMA is keen to balance its submission between health benefits of alcohol control and a sensible response. Obviously people in the DIT group are often those nearest to the drinking age, hence our interest.

Since the meeting you may be aware there has been some very significant media interest in a number of issues pertaining to RMOs.

This has in the main been kicked off by the NZMJ edition for 17 February. You may have seen the discussion in the media on a paper on the procedural skills of junior doctors (one article written by our Chair, Dr Andrew Old), and the resulting comment on that and a paper published earlier in the year on RMO resuscitation skills by Mike Ardagh. Also, the part-NZMA sponsored study of first year house officer debt and career intentions done last year by our summer student James Moore was published in this edition. If you are a member of the NZMA you get access to the NZMJ – so check it out for yourself online. Any issues with getting hold of the journal please contact the NZMA National Office – if you're paying your subs this is a definite benefit you should be able to access.

The hot topic in RMO-land over coming weeks certainly looks to be the MECA and we wait with interest to see where that goes.

The DITC will meet again on April 28 – please contact us as below if you have anything you think we should be discussing in that meeting, any issues for RMOs, or any feedback on the above topics.

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