



TINNITUS

The newsletter of the NZMA Doctors-in-Training Council

October 2006

The NZMA Doctors-in-Training Council (DITC) met for the third time this year on 25 August. Issues discussed included the ACE matching scheme, the furore surrounding the Minister of Health's failure to appoint the four highest polling candidates in the recent elections to the Medical Council and, inevitably, the MECA negotiations. We also were briefed on the activities of NZMA National Office, which continues to be busy on our behalf making submissions on such things as obesity and alcohol policy, and also its involvement in the Section 88 maternity review, the provision of laboratory services and the primary care (practice nurse) MECA. NZMSA President-Elect Nick Fancourt attended the meeting for the first time and we look forward to working closely with Nick and the NZMSA over the next 12 months.

Medical Workforce

We were lucky to have Dr Robert Logan, the new Chairman of the Health Workforce Taskforce, attend our meeting and we were able to discuss with him their work programme and the Minister's desire to "streamline" medical education and post-graduate training. We suggested to Dr Logan that the Taskforce might consider co-opting some RMOs as there are currently none involved.

Hard on Dr Logan's heels we heard from Tony Ryall, National's health spokesman. He too was receptive to our input and stated that workforce was a key health priority for National. As with Dr Logan we were able to have a frank and wide-ranging discussion on many health issues and he has asked us for feedback specifically around rural issues and workforce retention policies.

As mentioned in the last edition of *Tinnitus*, we are keen to develop a document looking at practical measures that could help with RMO retention. To this end we are contacting the respective trainee committees of all the colleges and between us we hope to identify some common themes that we can promote to the relevant agencies, for example Government, the Medical Council or the Ministry of Health. As always, if you have any thoughts around this please let us know.

The MECA Negotiations

We remain acutely aware and concerned about the current industrial situation. While the DITC and NZMA have no role in these industrial matters, we agree with a number of the concerns the NZRDA has voiced about the current situation including student debt, the "locum whirlpool", shortages of RMOs, and the dangers of those 70 hour nightshift weeks. We are also concerned about the detrimental effects the protracted nature of these talks is having on relationships with our SMO colleagues and on our training. As always our advice is to get yourself as informed as possible. Read everything, attend relevant meetings and talk amongst yourselves, and don't believe everything you see on TV!

ACE Matching Process

The ACE Match for first year house officer positions occurred on 2 August and was successful in placing all NZ trained, NZ resident trainee interns in the first round. The breakdown is contained in the following table.

Matching Overview Report		
Candidate Preferences	Numbers	
1	233	83.5%
2	14	5.0%
3	13	4.7%
4	8	2.9%
5	3	1.1%
6	3	1.1%
7	2	0.7%
8	3	1.1%
Total	279	

Unfortunately, there were still 30 vacancies following the first match so the ACE Centre proceeded with a second match *prior* to waiting for people to accept their offers from the first round. This upset many DHBs and ACE has been accused of acting outside the agreed process. The NZMA is now involved in the ACE reference group to allow us input into any process improvements and this is an issue that will be discussed at a post-ACE review in October.

Relationship Building

I'm very pleased to report that as recognition of our close relationship over many years with the New Zealand Medical Students' Association (NZMSA), they have invited the Chair of the DITC to sit on the NZMSA Executive as an ex-officio member, in the same way that the President of NZMSA is part of the DITC.

Also, following a successful visit to an Australian Medical Association (AMA) Council of Doctors-in-Training (CDT) meeting in Canberra last year, the NZMA was made an official observer at their regular meetings. Dr Andrew Old will be representing the NZMA at another meeting in Canberra on 7-8 October, which will be a great opportunity to learn more about the Australian environment.

New DITC Members

Since the 'retirement' of two councillors following the last meeting – Dr Richard Pole (who has moved to Boston to pursue a Harvard MBA) and Dr Jess Allen (who has become a Mum) - we have been very fortunate to secure two extremely capable replacements in Dr Brandon Adams, former NZMSA president, currently a surgical registrar in Auckland, and Dr Cindy Towns, also a former NZMSA president, member of HWAC's Medical Reference Group and currently a first year house officer in Dunedin.

The next DITC elections will be held in mid-2007.

New DITC Website

As foreshadowed in the last edition of Tinnitus our new website is now up and running. Check out <http://www.nzma.org.nz/about/ditc.html> for information on who we are, what we do and links to interesting and topical articles, discussion documents and submissions.

As ever, we are keen for feedback, ideas or questions. Please email us at ditc@nzma.org.nz

