



Calling obituary writers

Obituaries do not write themselves, oddly enough. They require organisation, time, and respect for our departed colleagues.

Many decades ago, our medical practitioners were Otago graduates with a sprinkling of Brits. Things have changed. With the Auckland Medical School and our overseas-trained colleagues coming from a wide variety of medical schools, it is no longer a tight little club where everyone knows everyone else.

Thus we need a network to tell us who has died and who amongst family and colleagues can best give the rest of us some overview of the life, both professional and social, of our dead colleague.

For several years I have tried to rejuvenate this part of the *Journal*. I have been greatly helped in this task by colleagues in Auckland, Wellington, and Dunedin who scan the local newspapers. Anyone whose death notice does not appear in one of the four main dailies is liable to miss out.

Who is to write the obituary? Someone who cares. It need not be a literary masterpiece but should give something of the texture of the person's life. Most funerals have a eulogy and the eulogist is often in the best position to help with an obituary.

About 400 words is usual but, with the electronic journal, space is no longer the problem it was in the days of hard copy.

The next time a colleague dies, ask yourself: "Who is going to do the obituary?" It could be you or someone whose arm may need only a gentle twist.

Most of the *Journal* belongs to the younger and brighter of us but the obituaries belong to us all. Even the old and cranky.

Roy Holmes
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Note: See <http://www.nzma.org.nz/journal/obituaries.html> for further details and instructions.