



## A CHAT WITH AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

*The NZSA Executive Committee is made up of anaesthetists who volunteer to help the Society be the voice for New Zealand anaesthetists. In this edition we profile Graham Roper a specialist anaesthetist in Christchurch and clinical leader of the anaesthesia service in Greymouth.*

### WHAT LED YOU TO CHOOSING TO STUDY ANAESTHESIA?

Early at medical school the idea of anaesthetics interested me. I think because I enjoyed physiology and pharmacology and anaesthesia seemed to have a very practical hands on role in the hospital setting.

### CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR TRAINING PATH, INCLUDING WHERE YOU STUDIED?

I trained through the University of Otago and Christchurch Clinical School with my first House Surgeon job being at Ashburton and Christchurch Hospitals. After my "OE" in the UK I returned to an SHO job in Hawkes Bay and the following year was accepted onto the anaesthesia training scheme through Hawkes Bay and Wellington. My PFY was spent in Newcastle NSW and from then I went to Oxford for post fellowship experience in cardiothoracics, neuroanaesthesia and plastics. In July 1999 I took up a specialist post at Christchurch Hospital and have been there since.

### WHAT WAS MOST VALUABLE OR INFLUENTIAL DURING YOUR TRAINING?

It has to be the people who taught me and the patients I cared for. A very kind and experienced anaesthetist in Hawkes Bay took a (calculated) risk in supporting me getting into anaesthesia and mentored me through my first year. My Wellington SOT supported me through my exam attempts, and there was also all the ongoing teaching from the many seniors at Wellington and Hutt Hospitals. Professor Cutfield helped me pursue my cardiac interest in the UK. It is easy to forget that patients allow us to gain the skills we need to become a specialist during our apprenticeship. Anaesthesia can be a humbling experience some days and patients put an enormous amount of trust in our abilities.

### CAN YOU DESCRIBE SOME OF THE SETTINGS YOU'VE WORKED IN?

I remember fondly the two and a half years I spent in Oxford at both the Radcliffe Infirmary and John Radcliffe Hospital. The Infirmary was located in the centre of Oxford and

had an impressive sculpture and fountain of Atlas at the main entrance. As a follower of the "Morse" detective series I was able to recognise a few of the landmarks around the city and the Infirmary was used to film the Hospital scenes for the program. The John Radcliffe is a large tertiary hospital and a bit impersonal but I got to know the cardiac team well and the tea room was a good place for gossip. I lived within walking distance of the hospital and the surrounding area with parks, walkways and a river was a real delight.

### HOW DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED IN SUPPORTING GREY BASE HOSPITAL TO ENSURE IT'S KEPT AN ANAESTHETIC SERVICE THERE?

I became involved with the West Coast while I was the Clinical Director of Anaesthesia in Christchurch. There were no vocationally registered anaesthetists to supervise the South African locums, which was a requirement of the Medical Council, and the registration pathway. I had the Durban-based anaesthetists spend time in Christchurch to see them work and then supervised at a distance with intermittent on site visits. With the appointment of a specialist anaesthetist to Greymouth my supervision role reduced, but I still provided distant support to the service until the onsite specialist resigned and returned to Sweden. At that stage I had completed my term as HOD in Christchurch so I took on the role of head of anaesthesia for WCDHB and now spend two days a fortnight on site in Greymouth.

I have managed to staff Greymouth with four permanent fulltime anaesthetists. All are from overseas and two have full vocational registration, while the other two are under supervision on the pathway to full specialist registration. I continue to build on clinical links with the Christchurch anaesthesia department and am forever grateful for the support the Christchurch team provide.

### WHY HAVE YOU VOLUNTEERED TO WORK WITH THE SOCIETY?

My initial involvement with NZSA came about when Health Workforce New Zealand (HWNZ) wanted to look at anaesthesia

staffing and alternative anaesthesia providers. I joined the NZSA subcommittee that worked with NZNC-ANZCA to gather information and engage with anaesthetists around the country to discuss issues and solutions. From this a document was presented to HWNZ describing the anaesthesia workforce, the current problems and way forward. Following this I put myself forward for the executive with the aim of being involved in issues that concern New Zealand anaesthetists.

### WHAT DO YOU ENJOY TO WORK ON AND WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO ACHIEVE WITH THE SOCIETY?

I enjoy working on the things that influence anaesthesia in New Zealand in the broader sense. When you look at anaesthesia care in different countries it's interesting to find out what has driven the development of a particular model of anaesthesia care. Political, financial, social and economic influences can all have an impact. New Zealand healthcare seems to be influenced by financial and political forces in the main, and it is important that we maintain the high standards of anaesthesia and pain management that we have achieved. Whilst it is important to look at what we do and make changes to our model, we need to make sure our voice is heard politically and publicly over safety and standards of care. It's a real team effort at the NZSA executive and I enjoy the support that we all give each other.

### WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO OUTSIDE OF WORK?

I like to cook and especially having friends around for dinner when I can spend time planning and preparing the food. I'm a big fan of Jamie Oliver due to his mix of great recipes and his attempts at improving the quality of what children and adults eat at school and at home. I have a very old and well worn Ken Hom book and still use it weekly. I enjoy reading and my aim this year is to walk the Milford track in November so have started training for that.

### WHAT'S AN IDEAL HOLIDAY FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY?

A beach-based summer holiday in New Zealand is ideal. Hawkes Bay, Bay of Islands, Golden Bay and Mapua have all been great places to spend time with family and friends. I like simple barbecue dinners and plenty of time to swim and read and unwind. Overseas, I have to rate the trip my wife and I did to Barcelona. The atmosphere was so vibrant, the food so fresh and the sights so diverse. We walked all over the city, visited museums and galleries and had a day trip to Monserrat. We were wowed by the architecture and they had the best Diesel shop I had ever seen.

