



# WITH TONY HAYCOCK

TONY HAYCOCK IS A FORMER GP WITH POST-GRADUATE TRAINING IN OCCUPATIONAL MEDICINE. HE NOW WORKS PART-TIME AS AN ACC CLINICAL ADVISOR BASED IN HAMILTON.

#### WHAT INSPIRED YOUR CAREER IN MEDICINE?

I was surrounded by medical and allied medical people while growing up. My mother was a nurse, my father was a pharmacist and I had two uncles who were specialists. One was Professor John Hunter, who was a professor of medicine at Otago University and then became Dean of Otago's medical school. My other uncle, Tony Hunter, was a surgeon.

I grew up in Waipu, a small country town, and we had quite a lot to do with the local GP. The GP's son was my age and I spent a lot of time at their home. I was quite interested in what being a GP was like.

My mother was very keen for her sons to be doctors, and two of us are - myself, and my older brother, who's a GP in Auckland. I was driven by my mother's interest but I was inclined that way anyway, much more than the arts. As a teenager I spent a lot of my time around farms and riding horses and so Vet science interested me, but I ended up doing medicine and I graduated in 1976 from Otago.

*Looking back, I don't really know why medicine appealed. It was probably the intellectual challenge - I was never scared of being pushed hard. I think it was that feeling of wanting to do something that was both challenging and worthwhile.*

#### WHAT DO YOU ENJOY ABOUT MEDICINE AND WHAT ARE THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECTS?

I like the diagnostic challenge, trying to work out the pieces of the jigsaw and fitting

them together. There's still a lot of art in medicine, as well as the science. I've been lucky to have diversity within my roles. Having a medical degree has given me an opportunity to do lots of different things.

Probably the most difficult thing has been keeping up-to-date and the ongoing medical education requirements. You have to be self-motivated and disciplined. I try to maintain a high standard.

#### YOU WERE PRESIDENT OF THE RESIDENT MEDICAL OFFICERS ASSOCIATION (RMOA) FROM 1978 TO 1979 - WHAT WAS THAT LIKE?

One of the things I learnt very quickly as RMOA President was that doctors are a hard group of professionals to lead! The term 'herding cats' comes to mind.

I became a local representative on the national executive of the RMOA while a house surgeon at Waikato Hospital in 1977. At that time the national president was Gordon Howie, who is now an orthopaedic surgeon in Auckland, and he influenced me greatly. I learned a lot from him in terms of leadership, how to get our colleagues to work as a united group, and I ended up taking over from him as president.

In 1979 when our RMOA negotiations for better working conditions and overtime pay stalled, it got to the point where I had a meeting with Health Minister George Gair in his Beehive office, and I went in there with an ultimatum that we would strike if we didn't get what we needed. At that time, however, the more senior house officers and registrars were not

inclined to be militant as there were concerns this would affect entry into, or progress in their training programmes, so I was unsure of my mandate! George Gair and I talked for a couple of hours. I had organised for a television crew to turn up at a certain time outside his office to put some pressure on. Anyway, at the end of our meeting, George Gair wasn't forthcoming, so I went out and spoke to the press about possible strike action. The Minister and I met again before I left the building, and he I felt reluctantly agreed to put in place a working party to look at the issues I had raised.

#### WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH ASMS?

I've represented ACC branch medical advisers for three years, and I'm also a regular member of the ASMS negotiating team for the ACC agreement.

I'm not someone who is inclined to complain about stuff unless I can do something about it. I like to take an active role rather than a back-seat role.

One thing I feel strongly about is the lack of doctors in health management leadership roles. In the days when a doctor and a nurse pretty much ran our hospitals, things were looking good for health professionals in terms of the health sector hierarchy, and the hospitals seemed to run okay. Now we have a wave of accountants, lawyers and business people with MBAs who have moved in to seize control of management in the sector - are we any better off?