

**NEWS RELEASE BY
THE AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL COUNCIL
AND
THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND**

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AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL COUNCIL ACCREDITS AUCKLAND MEDICAL SCHOOL

Australia's national accreditation and standards body for basic medical education, the Australian Medical Council (AMC) has awarded the maximum period of accreditation, 10 years, to the Auckland Medical School. The decision is based on a detailed assessment of the undergraduate medical curriculum and the resources and facilities supporting the course, undertaken by an assessment team which spent a week at the School in July 1995 ⁽¹⁾.

The AMC assesses the two New Zealand medical schools for the purposes of accreditation by agreement with the Medical Council of New Zealand. AMC President, Professor John Horvath, said: "The AMC uses the same criteria to assess the New Zealand medical schools as it uses to assess the Australian ones. AMC accreditation confirms the graduates' eligibility for registration as medical practitioners in any state or territory of Australia. The Medical Council of New Zealand makes its own decisions about registration of the graduates in New Zealand, but takes account of the AMC accreditation reports in making those decisions."

Professor Ross Kalucy of Flinders University of South Australia, who chaired the visiting assessment team, commented: "This is a Medical School of high quality which is producing good doctors. It has good staff and good facilities, its research performance is outstanding, and it attracts students of high calibre. At the time of our assessment, the School was confronting a series of major challenges, such as the reform of the New Zealand health care system, changes in the higher education sector, significant growth in student numbers in non-medical and postgraduate programs, and the reform of the curriculum. The School's response to all these challenges has been positive, and characterised by excellent strategic planning."

The report particularly commends the strength of the relationships between the School and the hospitals (Crown Health Enterprises). This is attributed to the School's anticipation of the changes in the health care system and its effort to ensure that the School's needs were considered during the changes, and to the commitment of the hospitals and the purchasers of health services (Regional Health Authorities) to building an effective and mutually beneficial relationship with the School. In terms of the clinical experience available to students, the report describes the diversity of experience in all aspects of clinical medicine as excellent and in excess of most Australasian medical schools.

The School's close ties with its community are also seen as a strength. Particular endeavours which are commended are the establishment of a Community Network of almost 200 health-related organisations which advises the School on the requirements of future doctors, and which provide the resources for the students' community-based experiences, and the expansion of the students' community-based experience (15% of the marks in each year of the medical course are assigned to community experience components).

The report comments in depth on the School's efforts to meet Treaty of Waitangi obligations by attracting and nurturing Maori and Pacific Island students, and by preparing its graduates to work with Maori and Pacific Islanders, and on the work of the School's Maori and Pacific Island Health Unit. It concludes that there is abundant goodwill throughout the School to achieve an excellent academic record in Maori and Pacific Island health.

In addition to the School's strengths, the report also identifies areas where further work is required. Professor Kalucy said: "All medical schools have areas of relative weakness. The Auckland School was aware of most of the issues raised in the report and is working towards their resolution. Issues such as the further reform of the curriculum, the availability of study space in the library, efforts to further increase student involvement in School processes, and the clearer definition of the needs of the Maori and Pacific Island Health Unit can all be resolved. As with all accredited medical schools, the Auckland School will be asked to report annually to the AMC on its progress in relations to these and other issues raised in the report."

The Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor Carson, and the Dean of the School, Professor Peter Gluckman, have received the AMC's detailed report on the assessment visit. In response, Professor Gluckman said: "We are delighted with the outcome of what has been an extremely rigorous review process. To receive full accreditation, without reservation, is a tribute to our Faculty and to the support given by university and hospital administrators.

We are grateful for constructive recommendations on how we can continue to improve - the areas identified by the reviewers match our own assessment.

The last five years have been a period of dramatic change in health and education in New Zealand and it is, therefore, extremely gratifying that the School's strengths and achievements have been recognised and that our teaching and research have been ranked with the best in Australasia.

The public can have enormous confidence in the graduates of our school and in the quality of our faculty and teaching.

The School will continue its constant processes of self evaluation and improvement so that the achievement to date can further be built upon."

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- (1) Members of the team were Professor Ross Kalucy of The Flinders University of South Australia (Chairman), Professor Gordon Clunie of the University of Melbourne, Professor Mason Durie of Massey University, Professor Terry Dwyer and Professor Don Marsden of the University of Tasmania, Professor Laurie Geffen of the University of Queensland, Associate Professor Pauline Hall of The Flinders University of South Australia , Professor David Stewart of the University of Otago, and Dr Elizabeth Tancred of the University of New South Wales.