



University
of Otago
ŌTĀKOU WHAKAIHU WAKA

Department of Anatomy
School of Biomedical Sciences



THE INSIDE STORY

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Photo: Royal Society Te Apārangi

Researcher elected a Royal Fellow

Congratulations to Professor David Grattan who has been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society New Zealand Te Apārangi. Dave is one of three researchers from the University of Otago who this year have been recognised by the Society for outstanding contributions to science, technology and the humanities.

Dave receives this recognition for his research into hormone-induced adaptations in the maternal brain during pregnancy.

He was formally inducted into the Royal Society during a ceremony held in Wellington in April. As part of proceedings, he gave a presentation on how his research has progressed from trying to understand the neuroendocrine control of prolactin secretion, to become a much larger hypothesis about widespread actions of prolactin in the brain helping mothers adapt to the demands of pregnancy and lactation.

Dave says the research has been dependent on the students and colleagues that have been part of his research group, some of whom have been around for many years. While it is a personal recognition, Dave says in his mind it is a reflection of a genuine team effort.

(Continued on page 2)

From the HoD's desk



Professor Christine Jasoni

I am extremely happy to be able to look back on my time as Head of the Department of Anatomy and see all the wonderful things that our staff and students have been able to accomplish. These achievements have been both personal and widespread, underscoring our Departmental whānau ethic. We have maintained our research and teaching strengths through incredibly tough financial times - continuing to publish, win grants and awards, and successfully train the next generation of scientists. We have grown the Forensic and Analytical Sciences degree, and even have our first PhD student joining soon. We have developed entirely new space into our Surgical Skills Suite, to support growth in existing and new health professional training courses. We have moved strongly and swiftly in the equity space. We were the first Department at the University to require a Māori-focused paper as part of our major; one of the first to develop committees to tautoko Māori and Pacific staff and students, as well as a broader Equity, Diversity and Belonging committee; and the first to develop an equity entry pathway aimed at attracting more Māori and Pacific students into postgraduate study, alongside undergraduate activities to engage these students early. All of these things are underpinned by our incredibly dedicated and hardworking staff and students.

As I look forward, we have a lot of work ahead of us both to maintain our reputation in all these spaces, but also to grow and lead out strongly on issues of importance to staff, students, and our communities both local and global. I have every confidence that we will continue strongly and whakamana others - this is what it means to be part of the Department of Anatomy at the University of Otago.

Thank you everyone - you have made my time as HoD an unforgettably wonderful and rewarding experience.

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini

My strength is not that of an individual, but that of the collective.

Ngā mihi,
Christine

... Researcher elected a Royal Fellow

"It's a great honour to be nominated and elected by my peers and to join an outstanding group of scientists as Fellows" he says.

"It has been fun to reflect on my pathway, developing research ideas from the first project I started when I joined Anatomy in 1995 through to now. That first project has now evolved into the most recent Marsden grant I have with (Research Fellow) Dr Joe Yip - an on again, off again and now definitely on again research question!"

Dave joins fellow Anatomy researchers Emeritus Professor Hallie Buckley, Distinguished Professor Neil Gemmell, and Professor Lisa Matisoo-Smith as a Fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand Te Apārangi.

"It's an honour to be part of this special group along with my colleagues here in Anatomy."

Visit the [University website](#) to read about the three University recipients.

(Continued from page 1)



Anatomy ranks highly in QS rankings

The QS University subject rankings for 2024 have been released and it's great news for Anatomy! The combined subjects of Anatomy and Physiology at Otago are ranked 30th in the world, scoring 84.4 out of a possible 100 points. Anatomy and Physiology at Otago also ranked fifth highest of all universities in Australasia.

Head of Anatomy Professor Christine Jasoni congratulated staff on the excellent and impactful work being done in both research and teaching. *"This is such a fantastic reflection of our hard work and collegiality, as well as our grit during times of unusual circumstances. Go us!!"*

When deciding on their rankings, QS reviewed 150 universities in the world which offer Anatomy and Physiology as science subjects. QS has been ranking the world's top universities and university subjects for the past twenty years. To learn more about the QS rankings, visit the [QS website](#).

Anatomy in the News

Kōkiri Ki Tua - connecting staff to help enhance learning

An innovative network connecting staff across Otago's main campuses has been launched by the Dean of Learning and Teaching, Professor Tim Cooper. The network, Kōkiri Ki Tua (to move forward as a collective) aims to provide a voice for staff to share and grow thoughts, ideas and knowledge to enhance student learning at Otago.

Our very own Dr Rebecca Bird has been appointed Kaikōkiri (person who gathers people together to ensure they move forward) for the Division of Health Sciences (Dunedin). Rebecca is excited about the network. *"The network aims to shine a light and celebrate good teaching practice, and connect those interested in learning more. I welcome any staff, academic or professional, who are interested in learning more to get in touch."*

The network will be active across all Divisions of the University within the Dunedin, Christchurch and Wellington campuses.

To learn more about Kōkiri Ki Tui, visit the [University of Otago](#) website.



Dr Rebecca Bird



Three cheers for Spotty!

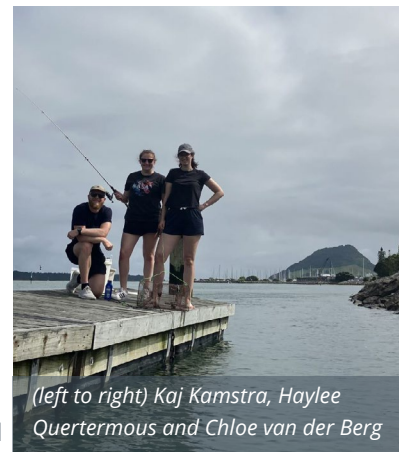
No doubt you have heard of the New Zealander of the Year Awards, Young Farmer of the Year, and the highly contested Bird of the Year competition. But did you know that New Zealand also has a Fish of the Year competition?

You may have noticed the "vote-for-spotty" posters in the hallways around the Anatomy Department, campaigning for the New Zealand Spotty Wrasse (Paketi, Pakirikiri), the little fish that can change sex. The exciting news is that this little fish beat out some of the more well-known fishes, such as the Basking shark, John Dory and the interestingly named Scorpion fish, to be crowned Fish of the Year for 2024!

An expert campaign led by PhD student Haylee Quertermous and postdocs Chloe van den Berg and Kaj Kamstra helped the little fish swim into the hearts of voters. Haylee, Chloe and Kaj, along with members of the Gemmell and Jasoni research labs, study the spotty as part of their research into phenotypic plasticity: how organisms change in response to environmental stimuli.

The Fish of the Year competition was run by Mountain-to-Sea, an organisation that provides programmes and resources to communities to highlight marine and freshwater conservation.

To learn more about the Fish of the Year, visit the [Mountain-to-Sea](#) website.



(left to right) Kaj Kamstra, Haylee Quertermous and Chloe van der Berg

Anatomy graduate's story of perseverance and grit

Graduation day is always a special occasion, full of emotion and celebration for the graduand and their whānau. The recent May graduation was an extra special occasion for one Anatomy undergraduate whose graduation story is one of perseverance, grit, and achievement.

To learn more about Betty's story, visit the university's [Otago Bulletin](#).



Congratulations!

Marine biosecurity programme wins national award

Researchers from Anatomy are contributing to a national biosecurity programme which has been recognised for its groundbreaking work to protect New Zealand's precious marine environment. The Cawthron-led Marine Biosecurity Toolbox Research Programme was recently awarded the 2024 New Zealand Biosecurity Awards Science Prize.

Anatomy members of the toolkit programme, which was funded in 2019, are Professor Neil Gemmell, Associate Professor Jo-Ann Stanton, Jackson Treece, Jonika Edgecombe, Benjamin Durán-Vinet, and Dr Gert-Jan Jeunen.

Their role in the programme is to design and operationalise molecular assays to detect non-native species that pose a threat to New Zealand's precious marine ecosystems. The technologies they use include CRISPR-Cas (DNA sequences which detect and destroy DNA), quantitative real-time PCR, recombinase polymerase amplification (RPA), and loop-mediated isothermal amplifications (LAMP).

The team is involved in designing and testing workflows to ensure their molecular tests can be used as close to the point of sample collection as possible (this is what Jackson and Jo are doing in the photos). Team members are also assisting community outreach programmes at schools, councils, and conservation groups to raise awareness of the threat posed by invading marine organisms, and share technology solutions for lay practitioners to eventually use in-field testing.



Jackson Treece



Assoc Prof Jo-Ann Stanton

The latest threat is the seaweed *Caulerpa*. Very little genomic information exists for *Caulerpa*, and New Zealand has native *Caulerpa* species that the invasive species can be confused with, which makes this particular seaweed challenging to work with. Encouragingly, the team says they have a number of molecular assays in testing which, in time, could help control its spread.

To learn more about the Marine Biosecurity Toolbox Programme, go to the [Cawthron website](#).

Doctoral student receives Emerging Innovator Award

Very exciting news ... PhD student Courteney Westlake has been awarded a KiwiNet Emerging Innovator Award. The award will give her the opportunity to develop and commercially translate her research from the lab to the market place.

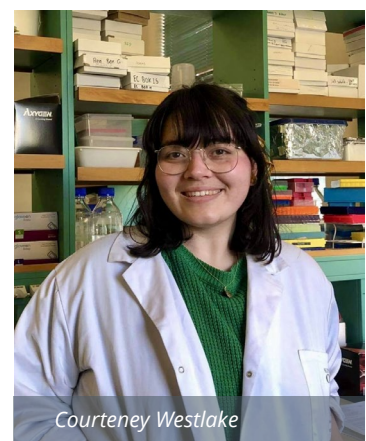
Courteney's research focuses on understanding the molecular mechanisms that underpin how a molecule called sAPP α (secreted amyloid precursor protein alpha) works, specifically looking at receptor synthesis and trafficking in cultured neurons.

Existing research indicates sAPP α may be a prime candidate as a therapy for Alzheimer's disease, so Courteney has now begun to focus on active domains of small peptides derived from sAPP α 's (which have a much higher chance of being able to cross the blood-brain barrier) to see if they can produce the same effects on plasticity. So far she has had some really promising results.

The Emerging Innovator Award will help her develop her research to see how the small peptides can be modified to be a useful peptide therapy for Alzheimer's disease. *"Since this work is still in its very very early stages, I'm using the KiwiNet fund to guide how this project is designed and developed with commercialization in mind from the start"* she says.

She is looking forward to developing her skills as a researcher, which will include learning about market validation and intellectual property which she confesses will be completely new angles for her to look at research from.

"There are so many things I want to do with my career. I have loved my time while doing my PhD and I hope my future research is able to build on the skills I develop with the emerging innovator award. I've also been so fortunate to be involved in neuroscience outreach during the PhD and I hope wherever I go next I can continue to promote neuroscience to the next generation of scientists."



Courteney Westlake

... More Congratulations

Scholarship success for 400-level student

Congratulations to Jenna White who was awarded a Maurice and Phyllis Paykel Honours Scholarship in Medical Sciences for 2024. This award provides a scholarship of \$7,500 to Jenna for the academic year. Jenna is currently completing her BSc Honours coursework papers in neuroscience, as well as her NEUR490 literature review and research project supervised by Professor Dorothy Oorschot in the Department of Anatomy.



Jenna White

In receiving this award, the panel indicated 'that the field was extremely competitive and wished Jenna all the best for her research endeavours'.

The Maurice and Phyllis Paykel Trust funds a number of studentships, scholarships, and fellowships for the research training of students and graduates working in the health science faculties of some New Zealand universities. Visit the [Paykel Trust](#) website to learn more.

Repatriation project complete

A project to repatriate the remains of 142 people excavated from the island of Mangaia in the Cook Islands was successfully completed by University staff and members of the Mangaian community earlier this year.



Mangaian tamariki (school children) from the island participated in the reburial ceremony with song and pure (prayer)

The remains, excavated by Japanese researchers from Kyoto University between

1986 and 1994, had previously been relocated to the care of staff in the Department of Anatomy following the retirement of the Japanese lead researcher.

Anatomy staff involved in the repatriation were (now Emeritus) Professor Hallie Buckley, Dr Charlotte King and medical tauria Cam Young.

Visit the [University website](#) to read more about the repatriation.



Map ref: cookislands.travel/islands

Service will honour donors



The department's thanksgiving service will this year be held in the Glenroy Auditorium in Dunedin on the evening of Wednesday 18 September.

The service will honour and celebrate those people who have donated their body to the department's body donor programme for medical science teaching and research. Family and friends of our donors, along with staff and students are warmly invited to attend the service.

If you would like more information please email [Kathryn McClea, Body Bequest Liaison Officer](#).

Spotlight on ...

Dr Jade De La Paz - Forensic Fellow

Dr Jade De La Paz has already reached a high point in her emerging career as a forensic anthropologist. She was recently promoted to Fellow of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS), the largest forensic anthropology professional organisation in the world. This promotion process requires an application that shows evidence of several years of sustained casework experience, research, and/or teaching in forensic anthropology and service to the field of AAFS. Jade says that this promotion not only shows that she is recognised as an expert in the field by the international forensic community, but it also demonstrates that she is one of the leading forensic anthropologists in New Zealand.

Her interest in forensic anthropology developed during her undergraduate studies in linguistic anthropology back in the United States where she was born (in California) and grew up (in Washington state). Like any optimistic undergrad, she wanted to make a positive difference in the world, but she wanted to avoid the imperialistic attitudes often associated with her country of origin, so she turned her eye to helping people in death by working with skeletal remains.

"I felt that, as a forensic anthropologist, I could make a positive difference with limited American imperialism. Through my training in anthropology, I learned about the importance of speaking for the dead in a sensitive and culturally appropriate manner."

She worked for four years as a forensic anthropologist in Hawaii at the Defence POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), a US government Department of Defence agency. She was involved in finding and identifying missing and unidentified service members from past US conflicts by completing forensic recoveries and casework. In her time at DPAA, she assisted in the identification process of over 200 individuals.

A career highlight was the first identification she helped make – [Aubrey Vaughan](#), a POW from the Korean War. *"This is still a really special moment for me"* she says.

In 2018 she decided to leave casework behind, and she embarked on a career in academia, beginning with a PhD in Anatomy.

"I chose to study at Otago, and Anatomy in particular, because it gave me the freedom to explore forensic anthropology questions through interdisciplinary biological anthropology and clinical anatomy research, and I would be supervised by strong female academics in a country that I felt I could eventually call home."

Her thesis looked at sex estimation from the skeleton and how muscle size influences (or doesn't) skeletal size and

shape – something anthropologists use to observe sexual dimorphism and estimate sex. In general, the theory is that larger muscles lead to larger skeletal traits (male characteristics), and vice versa, but Jade found that there was no connection between muscle size and common sex estimation techniques (that observe skeletal size). These findings are currently under review for publication with the American Journal of Biological Anthropology.

Jade graduated in 2022 and is now a Professional Practice Fellow/Professional Forensic Anthropologist in the department, teaching modules in FORS201, FORS301, FORS401, BIOA201, BIOA301 and BIOA401.

"The best thing about teaching is the students, by far. Seeing them actually learn and understand concepts and grow as anthropologists and forensic scientists, it is so rewarding."

"I truly love teaching, research and casework, and I would like to continue to do all three in New Zealand and continue to grow my career as a forensic anthropologist." She hopes that growing connections with the local forensic community will benefit her students and help them succeed as the next generation of forensic scientists.

She says the Fellowship is a nice way to be recognised as a leading expert in her field. *"Forensic anthropology is in its infancy in New Zealand. I feel the Fellowship will open doors to doing more work with the forensic community here in New Zealand, as sometimes it is not always clear how useful forensic anthropology can be in supporting forensic investigations. I hope this promotion brings a bit more attention to the field and its utility in New Zealand."*

Jade also has plans to apply to become a board-certified forensic anthropologist through the American Board of Forensic Anthropology, the only accredited testing programme in the world. This would make her the only board-certified forensic anthropologist in Australia and New Zealand.

"Stay tuned for the coming years," she says. *"We have exciting things ahead!"*



Postgraduate student profile

Andy Stewart - Masters student

Andy's interest in research began when he decided to do a 400-level Honours year majoring in Neuroscience in the Department of Anatomy. His research project looked at the hormone prolactin and its role in suppressing fever during pregnancy.

"I really enjoyed my Honours year and knew that research was something I definitely wanted to do more of. When it came time to look for summer work, an opportunity came up to do a summer research project with my Honours supervisor Dr Teo Georgescu."

The summer project was originally what Andy's Honours project was going to be but at the time the lab team couldn't quite get it to work. So, undertaking it as a summer project gave Andy the opportunity to do some troubleshooting to get it to work.

"My summer project was to establish a viral-induced model of fever suppression during late pregnancy in mice. It's a mechanism that has been seen in several mammalian species where towards the end of pregnancy and approaching birth, febrile temperatures are suppressed."

The reason for this adaptation is not entirely understood but it is believed to be linked to safeguarding the baby from dangerous high temperatures prior to birth.

"My supervisor had already shown that fever induced by bacteria was suppressed in late pregnancy of mice, so my job was to investigate whether a fever induced by a virus could also be suppressed."

At the end of the summer, Andy wasn't ready to part ways with the project and he is now in the early stages of a Masters degree.

"I decided to continue with postgrad study for a few reasons. I really enjoyed my project, had a great supervisor and the CNE and Anatomy department are really encouraging and supportive groups to be part of."

His Masters research follows directly on from his Honours



project, investigating whether prolactin and its placental homolog, placental lactogen, are responsible for mediating suppression of fever during late pregnancy.

"The idea of being able to discover or learn something that no one ever has is really exciting" he says. I'm very aware how important the work we do is for expanding knowledge in the area of pregnancy and maternal health. Getting to be a part of cutting-edge research that could go on to have a tangible, positive impact in someone's life is also really exciting."

Earlier this year he was awarded a Summer Studentship Award from the School of Biomedical Sciences for the report he submitted to the School at the completion of his summer project.

He was also awarded an Otago Medical School Research Society Award for his abstract and presentation at one of the Society's recent scientific meetings.

"I really enjoy the work I am doing and I can definitely see myself doing a PhD and further research. For as long as I can remember I've been really keen on the idea of teaching in some way, especially relating to neuroscience and neuroendocrinology."

It looks like an exciting future is on the horizon for Andy.

Meet our postgrads ... on Facebook!



Throughout the year we are posting bios on Facebook of some of our postgraduate students to learn a little bit more about them and the incredible research they are doing.

To meet our postgrads, go to our [Facebook](#) page. And don't forget to follow us to keep up-to-date with everything that is happening in Anatomy!

The end of many eras as staff retire

The department recently farewelled three long-serving members of staff who together have given nearly seventy years of combined service to the University of Otago.

Professor Hallie Buckley

Professor Hallie Buckley arrived in the Department of Anatomy in 1996 to complete a Postgraduate Diploma of Science with Honours in Biological Anthropology under the expert supervision of Dr Nancy Tayles. Twenty eight years later, she leaves the department a world-leading bioarchaeology researcher and lecturer in her own right.

Over those twenty eight years, Hallie experienced many roles within the department, starting from Research Assistant curating and cataloguing Polynesian skeletal material held in the department, through to Assistant Lecturer and Lecturer positions, developing and running her own research programme, becoming Deputy Head of Department (Teaching) in 2013-2014, and eventual promotion to Professor in 2016.

Hallie's area of research focused on patterns of prehistoric health and disease in the Asia-Pacific region as evidence of adaptation to the environment. Her Pacific research transformed the way we conceptualise the biomedical history of the ancestors of modern Polynesians, the Lapita, and she made ground-breaking discoveries of ancient disease in Asia.

She applied multi-disciplinary techniques to pioneer foundational knowledge around the quality of the lives of ancient Asian and Pacific people, and first generation European and Chinese immigrants to Aotearoa. She worked closely with descendant communities in all stages of her research and facilitated large-scale repatriation projects of kōiwi tangata (human remains) to mana whenua and also engaged with various government agencies on forensic identification projects.

Hallie published multiple papers in top international journals in her field throughout her career, and received many grants and awards including a BMS Distinguished Research Award in 2019, James Cook Research Fellowship in 2020, the Mason Durie Medal in 2022, and elected a Fellow by the Te Apārangi Royal Society of New Zealand in 2023.

She was an active primary supervisor or co-supervisor for 14 PhD students, 11 Master's students and a considerable number of Honours, PGDipSci and PGDipArts students.

Hallie's early retirement commenced in April, and she is no doubt now enjoying all the good things in life that a relaxed lifestyle in the countryside provides.

(Thank you to Aven Drayson for providing much of this information.)



Aven Drayson, Administrator (Divisional Services & Administration)

Aven Drayson's recent retirement has signalled a significant 'changing of the guard' for the Department of Anatomy, and in particular, for the office of the Head of Department. While Aven wore many hats during her nineteen years service to the department, it was in her most recent role providing administrative support to the Head of Department that most will remember her for.

Aven joined the department in August 2005 in a teaching support role for the then Head of Department (HoD), Professor Helen Nicholson. She picked up some additional postgraduate admin duties and in 2007 stepped across to a new role providing admin support for the changes in 200-level Anatomy teaching - the development of the new ANAT241, 242 and 243 papers. In 2009 she started to provide more support to the HoD as well as HR support, and in 2010 she moved into a new role providing full support to the HoD, who at that time was Associate



Past and Present HoDs ... Prof Christine Jasoni, Prof Neil Gemmell, Prof Lisa Matisoo-Smith, Aven Drayson, Prof Dave Grattan

(Continued from page 8)

Professor (now Professor) Dorothy Oorschot. Since then she has provided full support to successive Heads - Professor Dave Grattan; Professor Neil Gemmell; Professor Lisa Matisoo-Smith; and most recently Professor Christine Jasoni.

During her time in the department she helped train several new admin staff in the roles she handed over. You may remember Samantha; Julia; Joanna; Linda; and Amy who have all come and gone over the years.

Aven's role survived the Shared Services Review but, like all admin roles in the university, the role transferred to the Client Services Division, now Divisional Services & Administration. While technically no longer Anatomy, she remained in "the control room" beside the Head of Department's office.

Aven was held in high regard, especially by those who stepped into the role of HoD; and she was very loyal and committed to supporting them all. She took great pride in her work, setting herself a very high standard of workmanship - always giving 110%. She was known to pay great attention to detail and may have been called a "grammar queen" once or twice! She was awarded a Rotary Pride of Workmanship Award in 2016. Always courteous and professional, Aven had a "can-do" attitude.

Aven was always willing to assist wherever she could and was committed to the department and it's staff and students, whether it be through baking fundraisers (oh those cheese puffs and hazelnut caramel slices!!), climbing stairs at Forstyth Barr Stadium, or providing chocolate fish awards, she will long be remember for her generous, caring, humble and selfless nature.

To quote Professor Neil Gemmell, a past HoD ... *"Aven is quite simply a taonga. Someone we have all come to value and admire. She is, and always will be a treasured part of our whānau."*

(Thank you to Professor Neil Gemmell and Sally-Ann Howard for providing this information.)



The combined Anatomy/Physiology Client Services team got together for one last morning tea together to farewell Aven ... Back row (left to right): Michelle Langham, Aven Drayson, Anna Johnson, Shona Paterson, Maureen Lloyd. Front row (left to right): Clare Dangerfield, Laura Bennison, Chelsea Johnston, Duminda Karunaratne

Maureen Lloyd, Administrator (Divisional Services & Administration)

Maureen Lloyd is retiring after twenty-one years service to the University of Otago.

Maureen's first job in the University was in the office of the Otago MBA programme. Other than studying part-time on and off, she says she didn't really know much about how the University functioned, but working in the MBA office was a great opportunity to learn alongside some true characters, both staff and students. In 2010 she moved to the role of Department Administrator in the Department of Media, Film and Communication.

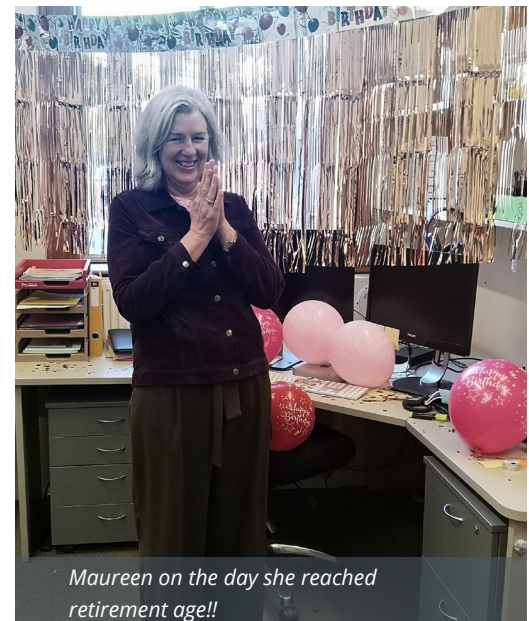
Sparked by the Shared Services Review shakeup, Maureen took the opportunity to "move to the other side" as she puts it (aka Health Sciences), and in 2019 she joined the Client Services team (now Divisional & Services Administration) in Anatomy.

During her time with Anatomy, Maureen predominantly worked with HR, providing admin support around the appointment of staff, and managing the recruitment and payment of demonstrators. She also supported the departments Research Committee along with providing administrative support to some of the Anatomy papers.

Maureen's wealth of knowledge and her attention to detail will be sorely missed as will her understated wit!! Her favourite catchphrase (which apparently she threatened on numerous occasions to add to her email signature) is "Lack of planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part." One of her favourite memories in Anatomy is the day a pigeon flew into the Anatomy office. You can imagine the ensuing hilarity while the three admin staff (Maureen, Annette McCormack and Ann Stansfield) tried to persuade it to fly back outside!

Maureen plans to travel overseas and spend some time with her family. We will all miss Maureen, but we wish her all the best for her travels overseas and her well-deserved retirement! Bon Voyage Maureen!

(Thank you to Maureen and Clare Dangerfield for providing this information.)



Maureen on the day she reached retirement age!!

Academic heads for the bright lights

The department also farewelled Senior Lecturer Dr Erik Wibowo in February. Erik joined the department in June 2018 and quickly became well known for his collegiality amongst staff and students, and the wider University, and for his high level of pastoral care, particularly with Pacific students. He was a member of the Pacific Strategic Framework Group, representing Anatomy for four years.

During his time with us, Erik contributed to teaching in 200- and 300-level Anatomy papers and the 300-level Medical regional and clinical anatomy module. His ability to academically connect with students was reflected in the well-deserved Education Awards from medical students which he received for three consecutive years.

The primary focus of Erik's research is on the advancement of men's health, particularly how hormone manipulation, androgen deprivation therapy, affects the quality of life in men. His peer-reviewed papers have been published in *Critical Reviews in Oncology/Hematology*, *Aging Male*, and *Support Care Cancer* to name only a few. In 2019, Erik received an Innovation Award from the International Psycho-oncology Society for his postdoctoral research on prostate cancer survivorship.

Concerned about the welfare of students, Erik also began contributing to research on students' well-being. One of his projects contributed to the University's Pacific development goals in research, investigating factors which influence academic stress of Pasifika students.

During his time in the department, Erik supervised three Honours students, three PGDipSci students and two Master's students. He was one of three founding chairs of the department's Equity, Diversity and Belonging Committee, supporting the department's commitment to provide a culturally respectful, accessible and inclusive space for staff and students.

Erik has taken up an appointment as Associate Professor in anatomy at the University of Sydney. His presence in the department is very much missed, but we wish him the very best in with his new appointment and new life in the bright lights of Sydney.

(Thank you to Aven Drayson for providing much of this information.)



Welcome to new staff

Priya Aravazhi, Professional Practice Fellow

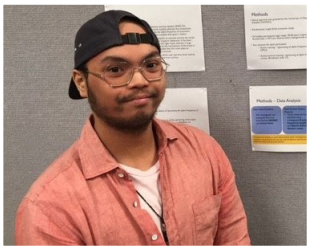


The lovely Priya joins the department in the role of Professional Practice Fellow (PPF). She is a member of the PPF team teaching gross anatomy practical labs to our health professional and undergraduate science courses.

Before coming to New Zealand to undertake a PhD in Anatomy, Priya was an Ayurvedic Physician (Ayurveda encourages certain lifestyle interventions and natural therapies to regain a balance between the body, mind, spirit and the environment). She has taught anatomy and neuroscience at colleges in India and Oman. She arrived in this department in 2020 as a PhD student and she also demonstrated in some of our health science modules.

Priya is the proud mother of two lovely daughters. She enjoys cooking and trying new recipes. She identifies herself as a part of nature and whenever possible goes on treks and nature walks. *"New Zealand is the perfect place for this. I love to travel and have travelled through the beautiful landscapes of India, Oman, Scotland and Australia. Above all, I love spending time with my children. We love to draw, paint, make crafts and play together."*

... Welcome to new staff (Continued from page 10)



Jacob Galacgac, Gross Anatomy Technician

I guess you could almost call Jacob Mr Anatomy ... Anatomy was his undergraduate Major subject, he completed an Honours degree in Anatomy, and now he is working in Anatomy. As he puts it ... *"Before Anatomy, I was in high school!"*

As a Gross Anatomy Technician, Jacob is one of the gross anatomy technicians responsible for setting up classes in the dissection room, and making sure they run smoothly. He is also keen to keep learning new skills (embalming being one of them!) and polishing his knowledge of Anatomy.

Jacob says he has an eclectic mix of hobbies outside of work. *"I'm an avid gamer, I play the bass guitar, and I regularly go to the gym. However, I am quite literally interested in everything. So, if anybody wants to talk about the Northrop YF-23 or maintenance of cast iron skillet or anything else, hit me up, I guess."*



Kevin Hill, Gross Anatomy Technician

Kevin joins the gross anatomy team providing undergraduate teaching support in the Dissection Room. A key focus of his role is to manage and coordinate the selection, display and maintenance of cadaveric material for use in undergraduate classes. He will also, in time, become one of the department's embalmers. He is looking forward to developing new skills and becoming efficient and knowledgeable in the role, to become a valued team member.

Kevin has academic and research backgrounds in Quarternary Palaeoecology and Restorative Neuroscience, and is a UK qualified Occupational Therapist. He has worked clinically in stroke rehabilitation, and has an interest in hand therapy.

He is a keen climber and cyclist, and has been enjoying traversing New Zealand's back country with his young children.



Hannah Powell, Administrator (Divisional Services & Administration)

It's probably fair to say that Hannah is the new face of the department - in her role as Administrator, she sits in the "hot seat" at the front of the Anatomy enquiries office and is the first port-of-call for anyone calling in to the Office with an enquiry. She provides general administration support for the department as well as helping with undergraduate teaching paper support.

Before arriving at Anatomy, Hannah worked at Uniprint as an Administrator for the Operations Group - quite a different area of the University compared with the hustle and bustle of students in a busy academic department. She says she is looking forward to the challenges her new role will bring, working on the academic side of the University.

Outside of work Hannah is a keen reader, and enjoys swimming, and outdoor walks, and spending time with friends and family.



Amanda Still, Teaching Fellow

Amanda joins the department as a Teaching Fellow. She is a qualified Physiotherapist and has previously worked in private practice, aged care, and neurological settings. Over the past few years she has taken on various part-time teaching and research assistant roles, and is now enjoying the challenge of acquiring new knowledge and skills outside of her degree.

As a Teaching Fellow, Amanda supports the teaching of anatomy in the PHTY250 paper and 200-level medicine. *"As an ex-PHTY250 student, the highlight of my week was always attending the Anatomy lectures and labs. And now as a Teaching Fellow, I look forward to passing on my enthusiasm and creating positive learning experiences for the students, just as I had."*

She loves the outdoors and exploring new places on the weekends. *"I have been enjoying tramping and camping recently. Aside from that, I have several grandma hobbies like knitting, crocheting and baking."*

Pink Shirt Day celebrated

The department got into the spirit of Pink Shirt Day on Friday 17 May with some staff sharing a morning tea while others wore pink and other brightly coloured clothes to show their support and commitment to stand up to bullying and harassment.

Pink Shirt Day is about working together to stop bullying by celebrating diversity and promoting kindness and inclusiveness. It's about creating a community where all people can feel safe, valued and respected, regardless of gender, identity, sexual orientation, age, ability, religion or cultural background.

These days, Pink Shirt Day is celebrated globally, but it originated in Canada back in 2007 when two students took a stand against homophobic bullying after a new student was harassed for wearing pink. The students bought a few pink shirts for their classmates to wear at school the next day, but when word got out, hundreds of students showed up to school wearing pink. A good example of the power of people!

In New Zealand the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand (MHFNZ) has run a Pink Shirt Day awareness campaign against bullying since 2012. Pink Shirt Day is entirely funded by donations with all funds raised supporting the work of MHFNZ.

A range of downloadable resources, support, and advice about bullying prevention is available on the [Pink Shirt Day](#) website. You can also donate to the campaign through the website.

May 17 is also International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia. It is recognised worldwide to fight discrimination and violence towards 2SLGBTQI+ people. The theme this year was "No one left behind: Equality, freedom and justice for all."

Need help?

If you need to talk to someone, there are people who can listen. Please reach out to one of the following organisations:

Youthline 0800 37 66 33, free text 234; Webchat at [youthline.co.nz](#); Email chat [talk@youthline.co.nz](#)

Need to talk? Free call or text 1737

Lifeline 0800 543 354 or free text 4357 (HELP)

What's Up 0800 942 8787 (0800 WHATSUP) (available Mon - Sun 11am-11pm)

Samaritans 0800 726 666 (available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year)

Suicide Crisis Helpline 0508 828 865 (0508 TAUTOKO)

Support around sexuality or gender identity:

InsideOUT [insideout.org.nz](#), email [hello@insideout.org.nz](#), or [www.facebook.com/insideoutkoaro](#)

OUTLine NZ 0800 688 5463 (0800 OUTLINE), [www.outline.org.nz](#)

RainbowYOUTH [ry.org.nz](#), email [info@ry.org.nz](#), or [www.facebook.com/rainbowyouth](#)



Staff gather by the Intersex-Inclusive Progress Pride flag hanging in the department



Administration staff gathered to share a morning tea



The last words go to ...

Dr Viraj De Silva - Professional Practice Fellow

Viraj is one of our Professional Practice Fellows. Along with others in the team, he spends many hours in the dissection room each semester teaching anatomy to our professional health science students. Viraj always has a smile on his face and a cheery greeting when he sees you.

We asked him to share a little bit more about himself ...

What is your role in the department?

I am a Professional Practice Fellow primarily tasked with teaching professional courses within the department, focusing on medical, dental and postgraduate students. Additionally, I provide my services to the department whenever required.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in the central part of Sri Lanka, surrounded by hills and a vibe quite similar to Dunedin's

Do you play sport or a musical instrument?

Yes, I play cricket and proudly represent the Carisbrook Cricket Club in Dunedin.

What are your hobbies and interests?

My hobbies include portrait painting, mobile photography, and, above all, enjoying a good sleep!

What book/movie/activity can you recommend?

For movies, I recommend "The Pursuit of Happiness," "Gifted Hands," and "Wolf of Wall Street."

What type of music do you enjoy listening to?

I enjoy classics.

Vegemite or Marmite?

Definitely Marmite.

Peanut butter ... smooth or crunchy?

Crunchy all the way.



Cat or dog?

Dogs are my preference.

You're hosting a dinner party. Name three people (dead or alive) you would like to invite and why.

I would invite my mother, who passed away when I was 15, as I have much to share with her about what she's missed in my life. I'd also invite my father to surprise him with my mother's presence at the dinner table. Lastly, I'd invite my wife because I'm sure she'd love to hear about my mischievous childhood antics!



Department of Anatomy
School of Biomedical Sciences



www.otago.ac.nz/anatomy

