

## Dr Karina McHardy



Karina graduated from Auckland Medical School in 2005, and was considering a number of specialties within the traditional routes including neurology and endocrinology. At this stage she was clear on a physician's role, and hadn't considered research. Several factors led to a change of path. In her second year as a House Surgeon, she had the opportunity to take time out from clinical medicine. Karina describes it as *"time for a new perspective, a chance to look at a role in health care systems in NZ and around the world."*

*On reflection, I was able to see the power and potential of medical skills training. What else could I do with this? What would give me more satisfaction? There was a lot of knowledge I wasn't using."*

Karina describes hospitals as a mini society, where *"our insights into people's lives are unparalleled. We see how much of their journey is dictated by things that have nothing to do with medicine. Clinicians see preventable disease, the direct consequences of the societies we live in. Ultimately I saw myself as managing symptoms of chronic disease, and I wanted more."*

Karina saw the potential to have a greater impact with public health, and global health training.

At the stage of marrying, and planning overseas trips and experience, Karina applied for international scholarships. She was offered a number of opportunities, including the Master of Global Health degree at Oxford University. She accepted this, and an entirely new world opened up in terms of her options and her learning. It was a one year programme, and having completed it, Karina found this was not enough time to experience and make use of all Oxford had to offer: experiences, travel, and *'the space to do some of the thinking about health and global systems that I wanted to do. . it is about so much more than the degree.'*

Having won a scholarship into the Doctoral Programme in Public Health, Karina is now engaged in research into the utility of population level data and how that contributes to the management of public health issues, using the example of childhood obesity. As well as reviewing global programmes in this field, she has developed a programme in the Channel Islands – a small stable and transferable population – and is monitoring the outcomes produced, how the data are received, and how the programme influences management.

Karina acknowledges the contribution of her training to her progress – *"nothing of this would be possible without the training I had in New Zealand."* She names key broader skills she values from her medical training: communication, multi – tasking, thinking on your feet, taking an evidence based approach, and working in a multidisciplinary way, and says *"medicine hones them well"*.

*“Medicine brings very important knowledge together very quickly. You learn a reflective way of practising, and to integrate knowledge and skills efficiently. I know how much that now contributes to what I do.”*

Karina highlights communication as a skill that has been taught well in the Auckland Medical programme, providing the skills to *“move through different types and groups of people, senior and junior colleagues, and the entire spectrum of patients and families – there is a tremendous skill of communication involved.”*

Karina has a variety of other roles – she tutors in an undergraduate Medical programme, teaches in the Masters in Global Health degree and contributes to the curriculum advisory committee for that programme. She enjoys her connection with teaching, and says she will probably continue to have a teaching role; however at this stage there are many exciting options to explore.

A portfolio career is a possibility for her, providing variation and flexibility. Karina comments that *“we too easily box ourselves, we don’t have to be blinkered and this approach is not going to be sustainable. Instead what is needed is a systems-based approach, and greater integration of care pathways.”*

Karina advocates having your own vision, and not being restricted by certain ways of doing things. *“There are alternatives. I can get where I want to go by making my own path. We forget in medicine how many options and paths there are available to us. There are lots of unexplored options.”*