

born TO BE A doctor



Dr Jayden Ball

TE ATIAWA

I was born prematurely and was quite unwell. When I understood about being unwell as a kid, it piqued my interest in medicine. I've wanted to do medicine since I was about five or six. I couldn't think of anything else that I wanted to do and my enjoyment of sciences followed me through to high school.

Developing a love for science

I grew up in Christchurch the eldest of two boys and went to Shirley Boys' High School. They had quite an extensive science programme which gave me a good grounding in core chemistry, biology and physics. It was taught in a fun way and later made university that much easier.

My grandmother has worked for St John's since she was about thirteen as a cadet and she's now 77 years old. So she's worked with St John's for about 60 odd years and has always played a big part in my life.

Student life

I started studying at Otago Medical School and did my clinical years back home in Christchurch. My first year studying at university was tough. Being away from the family, particularly around the time of the Christchurch earthquakes was tough. But I stayed in a hall of residence for that first year which provided tutorials. I also got support from the Māori Centre and had a good group of friends. My main coping mechanism though was having my mum on speed dial.

The health science exam is a lot harder than a typical NCEA exam, but if you've put in the work and you're into health and science it's quite fun. My results were pretty decent. I got no less than an A- on any paper.

Kia Ora Hauora

I came into contact with Kia Ora Hauora in my first year of medical school. Otago and Auckland Universities have a combined Māori Students Association and an annual reo wānanga. Students from both universities catch-up, get to know one another and learn about tikanga and the reo. I signed up to be on the Kia Ora Hauora mentoring database.

Later a friend of mine who's involved with the organisation coerced me to go on a health roadshow to five schools around Christchurch. They were Year 9 and 10 kids who got to learn about the basics of anatomy and CPR. For some of them I think it was the first time they'd heard a heartbeat. We showed them what science can lead to in the health setting. It was also cool because my mum was a teacher aide at one of the schools.

Career options

I'm now a House Officer at Waikato Hospital. At the moment I am looking at specialising in either paediatric surgery or some other flavour of surgery as I prefer it over community based medicine. All up, I'm looking at another ten years to be able to fully qualify.

Health is probably the best career for Māori to think about. Our people are over represented in every negative category there is. I know Māori...if you see a Māori face in the hospital, you instantly bring a more of a smile to their face and they bring a smile to yours.