

# Health

## A JOB FOR life

### Dr Zanazir Alexander MBChB

NGĀTI HINE | TE ARAWA | TAINUI | MANIAPOTO

Dr Zanazir Ao Aranui Alexander – He wishes there was a cool story behind his name, but says his parents just had funky imaginations.

#### High School

I went to a small rural high school in the Far North called Okaihau College. Nothing ever seemed to come easy for me, it always seemed like I had to work hard at everything to do well. I wasn't the smartest kid in school, that's for sure. I failed a few tests like many of us do from time to time but learnt from mistakes and kept going. I enjoyed school and was always keen to give everything school life had to offer a go.

#### Choosing Medicine

I didn't consider medicine until I was about 14 or 15. One of my schoolmates (Dr) Tamara Birchall was a couple of years ahead of me got into medical school —. When I saw her achieve this I thought to myself, you know what? I might give this a crack as well. Prior to that I thought only the really smart kids could go to Uni, let alone get into medical school. So, from then on, I geared everything towards being accepted.

#### Preparation for Med School

Each year at NCEA Level 1, 2 and 3 there are certain criteria you have to meet. I found out what was expected and what you had to do to get a merit or an excellence. I made sure I studied everything that was needed to meet the requirements. It was hard but it worked - I got into pre-med and later medical school.

**“ Knowing where to start is daunting KOH is there to point you in the right direction ”**



#### Biggest Challenge at University

Probably the volume of work, and balancing that with life and other commitments – finding time for family, church, friends and sports can be difficult but you learn to manage. You do what you have to in order to get through – its only for a short while.

#### Managing the Tough Times

Having family reasonably close was really helpful. If I was coming up to a big exam and I felt overwhelmed, I could just pop out and visit and they'd give me a pep talk and help keep me motivated. It was helpful also talking to mates going through similar challenges and others who were further ahead of me at Uni.

#### Kia Ora Hauora (KOH)

I was at Uni and looking for scholarships. Kia Ora Hauora advertise the scholarships that are available to Māori, and if you're eligible they'll help you apply. Knowing where to start is daunting and KOH is there to point you in the right direction. I'd recommend that if you've chosen health as a career, check out KOH in your region. It'll save you heaps of time and energy and they run events and offer help with resources.

#### Connecting with Other Māori

When I got to Uni and saw a whole lot of other Māori doing medicine and studying other things – not to sound cliché, but I found it hugely inspirational. It was awesome to see Maori doing well.

#### Future Plans

I'm heading toward a career in orthopaedics. I grew up on a farm where you're whacking in posts and fixing fences and wires, so the hands-on aspect of the speciality really excites me.