

CHANGING LANES

TO A NEW PATHWAY

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KĀI TAHU

I have fibromyalgia which is a chronic pain fatigue type syndrome, so I've spent quite a lot of time as a patient in doctors' offices. I'd always been interested in medicine and health but never had the self-confidence to pursue it. At Marist College in Mt Albert I'd done biology up to 7th form but not chemistry or physics. I focussed more on politics because I was involved with Amnesty International, environmental groups and that kind of thing.

Transition from politics to health

When I went to university, it seemed a natural fit to do a BA in political science and anthropology. Part way through my degree though, I was looking at international aid and development issues and I became interested in policy writing and frontline work.

I was also interested in health policy and it made sense for me to study the health sector. It suited me to work in policy and change things long-term but also to have that kānohi ki te kānohi relationship with patients. But trying to move from doing a BA to health meant there were big gaps in my knowledge of chemistry, physics and maths.

Getting up to speed

I did Hikitia Te Ora, the Certificate in Health Sciences at the University of Auckland which got me up to speed with those subjects. It also grounded me with te ao Māori and how our people are affected by health inequalities.

My family wondered why I went from politics and anthropology to medicine. On paper they seem like they're poles apart but in practice they're interconnected. My dad was supportive, but a little bit sceptical, and when I was offered a place into medicine, he cried because he was so proud of me.

When I did pre-med through the Health Sciences pathway it was the hardest academic year of my life. It was difficult managing my fibromyalgia throughout my studies, but the support of my family and friends really helped get me through.

Kia Ora Hauora

I registered for Kia Ora Hauora online at university and saw a lot of cool information. Many people I know from the Certificate in Health Sciences are now heavily involved. My participation has mainly been around advocacy and attending the wānanga.

Aspirations

I'm interested in pursuing General Practice because it goes well with the work I want to do in Public Health. I also want to see how social issues interact with whānau, how we can provide medical support and take that onto a policy platform.

More Māori in health

Health is a wonderful career for Māori. Whakawhanaungatanga is important if you're a doctor or health worker trying to develop a patient or client relationship. It's important to see the big picture of how things affect whānau and recognise when a patient's symptoms may be a sign of wider social issues. Being a Māori health professional is a huge privilege because we work with people at their most vulnerable. It's also a powerful way to support Māori patients.

