



LET'S OPERATE WITH RESPECT



OTAGO MEDICAL SCHOOL  
*Te Kura Hauora o Ōtākou*

## MEDIA RELEASE

### First NZ Respect agreement with College of Surgeons

Wed 21 Sep 2016

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) and the University of Otago Medical School have signed a landmark Letter of Agreement, aimed at building respect and improving patient safety in surgery and strengthening the education of medical students.

This is the first agreement signed between RACS and a university, and the first New Zealand collaboration formed under the Action Plan: Building Respect, Improving Patient Safety.

The collaboration between RACS and the University of Otago Medical School paves the way for a continuous focus on respect as a cornerstone of professionalism, from medical school to specialist surgical training.

RACS Vice President Professor Spencer Beasley said collaborating together would assist in ensuring the next generation of surgeons come from a learning environment that is supportive, promotes greater participation of women in surgery and is free from discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment (DBSH).

"We are delighted that the University of Otago is our first tertiary education partner. They will join a strong line of leading health organisations in Australia and New Zealand committed to dealing more effectively with DBSH in the surgical workplace," Prof. Beasley said.

"The list of early adopters is growing faster than we had imagined, with the University of Otago joining Australia's Ramsay Health, Monash Health, St Vincent's Health and Metro South Health in Queensland in committing to the *Let's Operate With Respect* campaign," Prof. Beasley said.

Professor Peter Crampton, Pro-Vice Chancellor Health Sciences and Dean of the University of Otago Medical School said that the Otago Medical School was committed to actively addressing bullying and harassment.

"I am very happy to partner with RACS in this endeavour - we have developed a comprehensive set of policies to assist us.

"The policies cover for example safe pathways for reporting, processes once reported, how to change culture and help create positive learning environments, and increasing student skills and resilience in the working environment. I look forward to working with RACS as our work progresses," Prof Crampton said.

This Agreement commits both organisations to a shared vision that will provide high quality training, education and experience in the practice of surgery. This commitment is underpinned by the shared

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values of integrity and respect.

Specific initiatives include:

- working together and sharing information to promote respect and deal effectively with discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in surgical practice and teaching
- working together to provide a safe learning environment for all medical students, including supporting the RACS Action Plan: Building Respect, Improving Patient Safety and the University of Otago's CAPLE pilot study
- using the 'Vanderbilt Principles' as a basis for promoting respectful behaviour and dealing with unacceptable behaviour in the workplace (See appendix two in the [RACS Action Plan: Building Respect, Improving Patient Safety](#))
- collaborating on the development of programs and processes to deal with DBSH in the workplace, especially in surgery within the university and teaching hospitals
- supporting diversity in the surgical profession by exploring ways to promote surgery to women in particular and increasing the number of female role models
- ensuring that university professors and other educators in the medical school have the necessary skills and attributes and are supported to provide training, assessment, feedback and support to medical students free of DBSH.

Working together and strengthening surgical education are among RACS' core commitments in its 2015 [Action Plan: Building Respect, Improving Patient Safety](#).

In May 2016, RACS launched [Let's Operate With Respect](#) – a campaign to help deal effectively with discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in surgery. RACS has also published a dedicated new section of its website, [About Respect](#).

### **About RACS**

RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7,000 surgeons and 1,300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery. [www.surgeons.org](http://www.surgeons.org)

### **About the Otago Medical School**

The [Otago Medical School](#) trains doctors, medical laboratory scientists, nurses, and radiation therapists; and promotes health, healthcare, and equitable health outcomes throughout New Zealand. We also offer research-informed biomedical science programmes. Our three campuses have thriving research communities of postgraduate students, clinicians, and experts in the medical and health sciences.

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