“The times they are a changing”: University of Otago’s new model of student mental health service provision. Hear our journey of transformation
Richard Mooney, Carolyn Walker & Phil Newman, University of Otago

Following a review of student mental health service provision in 2016, Otago University launched a Change Management process. This led to the implementation of a brave new model for mental health service delivery with a switch to a brief intervention approach with a more outward facing responsive service. The new service replaced the existing traditional counselling service typical of that which Universities have historically provided. A new cohort of multidisciplinary clinicians, were appointed with a varied skillset including: experience of robust risk assessment and acute crisis triage work; CEP capability and expertise in group work. Eighteen months on and we have seen the new model bear fruit. We now have excellent capacity to provide a response to acute presentations, offering between 15-20 new assessments each day. We have eliminated counselling waitlists, historically around 4 weeks, and have significantly increased the number of student contacts, with these having risen 40% from 2016 to 2018. Additionally, there has been a 64% reduction in student referrals to our CMHT since 2016. This transformation has allowed the team to develop new health promotion and education modules, running sessions with students around maintaining wellbeing and the fundamentals of good self-care. The aim being that students maintain their wellbeing to the point of not needing to access services. Whilst we can’t claim to be perfect we think we are pretty close to “knockin on heaven’s door!”

Learning outcomes
- Participants will learn about an alternative model of mental health service delivery within a University setting.
- Participants will hear about a cohesive integrated model of primary health care provision.
- Participants will hear about how we have endeavoured to create a contemporary mental health service designed to meet the needs of students in 2019.
Presenters
Caro Walker, Phil Newman & Richard Mooney are 3 experienced mental health clinicians working for Otago Universities Mental Health and Wellbeing Team at Student Health Services. They are keen to share their story of transformation following a change in model of mental health service delivery at Otago University in 2017; The trio are involved in completing initial assessments, crisis resolution, brief intervention and identifying and referring students to appropriate support. There is also a growing focus on delivering education sessions to student groups around self-care and maintaining mental health & wellbeing.

Richard Mooney, University of Otago
Richard Mooney is a Registered Mental Health Nurse. Originally from and trained in England, he has worked extensively within the mental health field in New Zealand and overseas. He has worked for Student Health since 2017 and is involved in completing initial assessments, crisis resolution, brief intervention and identifying and referring students to appropriate support. He is also an ardent Manchester City fan.

Carolyn Walker, University of Otago
Carolyn Walker is a registered Mental Health Occupational Therapist, who has come to Student Health in 2017 after 17 years working in Mental Health in Dunedin. Caro is a Dunedin girl and studied both at Otago Uni and Otago Polytechnic. Caro is a part of the Mental Health support team where her main role is in completing initial assessments, crisis resolution, brief intervention, and identifying and referring students to appropriate supports.

Phil Newman, University of Otago
Phil Newman is a Registered Mental Health Nurse. Originally from, and trained in England, he has worked extensively within the mental health field in New Zealand and overseas. He has worked for Student Health since 2016 and is involved in completing initial assessments, crisis resolution, brief intervention and identifying and referring students to appropriate support.