



am of New Zealand
a Tongarewa, Wellington – 12th – 14th May 2022

‘Kotahitanga me Manaakitanga’
Celebrating strength in our unity, supporting our community.

Challenges and Solutions in Career Pathways for Women in Medicine

Emeritus Professor Lesley McCowan
University of Auckland

Auckland Medical School 1974- year 4



Mentors- influences on career choices



- Few female O&G specialists in 1980s
- Professors Denys Bonham & Colin Mantell supported O&G career pathway for women
- Facilitated part time clinical training & first part time academic post at Faculty of Medicine



Early career



- Married Stuart orthopedic surgeon
- One in three on call as registrars
- First child after completion of specialist training (1984)
- Part time research fellowship in Toronto
 - Beginning of lifelong excitement and passion for research
- Appointment as Senior lecturer at UoA in 1986
- Second child 1989
- Return to part time work increasing over time





NZ Herald 1987

Contraceptive Choice

- Established in late 1980s
- O&G & family planning doctors
- Aims :
 - To produce reliable information about a range of contraceptive options
 - To provide a balanced perspective in the media
 - To advocate for a range of contraceptive options

Life changing experience 2009-12

e) Family Planning Services

More than 40% of all pregnancies (and perhaps more in the Counties Manukau area) are unplanned (Morton et al., 2010). Teen mothers and mothers with high parity (greater than or equal to 4) are at highest risk of perinatal mortality (PMMRC, 2011; Stacey et al., 2011). Almost 20% of teen parents in CMDHB are having their second or third baby (Jackson, 2011b).

There are widespread barriers to timely and affordable access to contraceptive services, both before and after pregnancy. Immediate consideration needs to be given to ways of making contraception much more accessible, affordable and available to women in the CMDHB region. This will enable them to make choices about when they become pregnant and how many children to have.

Stimulated a big focus on equity in my future career- lobbying ministers and an academic appointment at CMH

External Review of Maternity Care in the Counties Manukau District

Commissioned by
Counties Manukau District Health Board
October 2012



Ongoing advocacy for equitable access to reliable contraception has continued over 30 years

- **2017 budget** : low-income women (Quintile 4 or 5 or with CSC) will have:
 - Access to free or very low-cost contraception consultations;
 - Free insertion and removal of LARCs.
 - Access to LARCS post termination and post partum.
- Building the quality of contraceptive counselling in primary care and increasing prescribing of LARCs through the development of:
 - Contraceptive guidelines
 - Training packages
 - Ongoing advocacy
- Considerable further progress has now been made
 - Mirena funded





Leadership roles

Head of Dept Obstetrics & Gynaecology UoA 2009-2020

- Development & support of junior academics
 - Future proof academic department conducting world class research & teaching
- Leadership roles- Te Kāhui Oranga ō Nuku , NMMG, HRC board member



Highlights from recent research

Stillbirth

- Modifiable risk factors and prevention
- Sleep on side campaign

Academic role at CMH

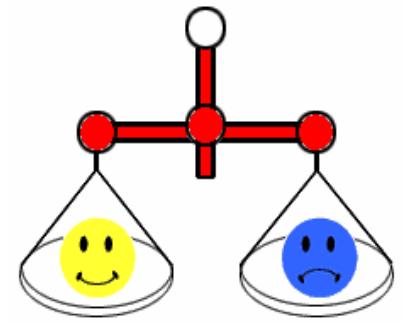
- Nutritional intervention in women with obesity- HUMBA trial
- Possible to carry out research in high deprivation settings!

A career in research is exciting with potential to improve the lives of many people!!



Work life balance

- Advantages of a clinical academic career
 - Flexibility
 - Excitement of research
 - Teaching
- Support at home was essential for my success
 - Nanny – housekeeper
- Have a realistic time frame to climb the medical mountain and achieve your goals



Recently retired in Point Wells

