

This month's meeting

Felix Mariano: Healing our wounds



Felix, nurse specialist from ORL, wishes he could help his patients with the emotional shock they experience when they get a head and neck cancer diagnosis. There is nothing he can do, he says, but to do his job and make sure patients' wounds heal quickly so they can go home sooner.

Felix presented us with three advances in recent years in the management of head and neck cancer wounds. Two of them are complex but one staggeringly simple.

The three treatments are:

Integra DRT (Dermal Regeneration Template) is a two-layer dressing, made from collagen and silicone that grows new skin and can prevent the need for a free flap. Flaps make a long stay in hospital necessary and are very expensive. With Integra DRT, a patient might spend one day in hospital for a serious wound. This treatment might cost \$12,000 whereas free flap surgery costs \$48,000.

An example is a skin cancer on the top of the head where the wound is right down to the bone. Felix has been able to help the patient grow new tissue on top of the bone and then place a thin skin flap from the thigh on top. He showed us photographs which gave evidence of a very acceptable appearance: nice smooth skin that can be covered by a wig.

Microdaycin is like a real snake oil. It's anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, anti-inflammatory, anti- everything nasty. What is it? It's just electrocuted water. This does something very scientific (which I don't understand) to the hydrogen ions. It destabilizes them. They want to **re**stabilize and in doing so punch holes in single cell organisms like bacteria.

It is very good for infections, donor sites and radiation burns. It comes in a gel form or in a solution and can be purchased by the public.



<https://www.pharmacydirect.co.nz/Microdacyn-Wound-Care-250ml.html>

Felix has finished a trial on 26 patients and the results are looking good. His research on Microdaycin was the topic he presented at the recent head and neck cancer surgeons' conference in Auckland.

dHACM Therapy (Dehydrated Human Amnion/Chorion Membrane) is a sort of stem cell therapy in which the product, called Epifix, is acquired from mothers who have had a Caesarian sections and decided in advance to donate the placenta. The amniotic material from the placenta is then ground up so that it can be used as skin grafts or injections. The skin graft can be repopulated by the patient's own cells to heal hard-to-heal wounds.

Felix is looking into this technology this year. He networks worldwide to keep up with wound healing advances. In this case, even hard to heal venous ulcers on the leg can be cured.

Finally, Felix talked about preventive or prophylactic measures and nutritional fortification so that the chance of infection is reduced and the immune system fights hard. Thank you for the talk, Felix. What you describe is a positive set of measures for patients entering treatment!

You can see a link to Felix's full Powerpoint on our website under News/Felix ...

Ideas for running our support group

The Auckland Support Group has a long history of listening to invited speakers. We discussed how we would like to run the group in future. Overall, people said they liked having a speaker but also time for a chat and for mixing with other members. In other words, a more informal meeting with time to offer each other mutual information and support as well as listening to an expert.

CHARITIES SERVICES
Ngā Rātonga Kaupapa Atawhai

We discussed the issue of charitable status. This had been one of our initial aims but on second thoughts, it seems impossible right now. We don't have a treasurer, we don't have many "officers"; we need a larger committee before anyone can go down the path of registering us as a charity. New rules suggest to me that we must have a treasurer to make this happen.

To see what we mean, please look at the following website for clarification:

<https://www.charities.govt.nz/>

Because of speaker bookings, we cannot have our AGM until May. And now that we are an online entity, we will need to draw nominations and votes from across New Zealand. This will have to worked out!

Review of the Head and Neck Standards of Service Provision

The Ministry of Health is undertaking a review of the standards developed in 2013 for the treatment, support and care of people affected by head and neck cancer. Ahead of the national review, some regions are undertaking reviews this year. In Auckland the Northland, Auckland, Waitemata, and Counties Manukau District Health Boards are combining their review.

The review is headed by Cassandra Luckwell of the Northern Regional Alliance Limited. The scope and purpose is to identify the current services offered, and to find ways to address current issues, and ensure there is collaboration and engagement in continuous improvement.

The Network is involved in the review process. We are very keen to ensure the patient and family/whanau experiences and perspectives are included in the review. To that end we are very happy to collate an overview of experiences and thoughts on your treatment, care and support. We will present these to the panel in a format that does not identify any individual. As always, we will keep you fully informed of the process and the outcome.

Please email us: headandnecknetwork@gmail.com

Special meeting in June

As you can imagine, it is difficult to tie specialists down to a speaking time, especially if they are out of Auckland. We were given the opportunity to have Dr Swee Tan talk to us on 27 June, a Tuesday, and way outside our normal schedule. Dr Tan's current roles are:

- Executive Director, Gillies McIndoe Research Institute, since 2009
- Consultant Plastic and Cranio-Maxillofacial Surgeon, Hutt Valley DHB, since 1995
- Founder and Director, Centre for the Study & Treatment of Vascular Birthmarks, since 1996



Dr Tan's team has been studying the role of cancer stem cells in tongue cancer amongst many other fields of research. Some of our members have been treated by Dr Tan at Hutt Valley Hospital.

We hope to have his talk at 10 am at Domain Lodge on 27 June but will get back to you with further details nearer to the time. Please mark this day on your social calendar!

Order Stoma Covers



We have taken over sales of stoma covers from the Cancer Society. You can now order from us. We have a range of colours and weaves available.

You can order here by clicking on our web page or emailing us. \$20 each plus postage.

You can email us at headandneck@gmail.com

Next Meeting

2 March, 9.30 to 11.30, Domain Lodge

We have two stunning speakers for you:

Mr John M. Chaplin is an FRACS qualified Head and Neck, Endocrine and Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon, internationally fellowship trained in Head and Neck Surgery and Facial Plastic and Reconstructive surgery.

John works in private practice at Mauranui Clinic, Epsom and also at the Auckland Regional Head and Neck Service at Auckland City Hospital.



Professor Ron Paterson is a former Health and Disabilities commissioner and Professor of Law at Auckland University. With law degrees from Auckland and Oxford Universities, Ron has held Fulbright and Harkness Fellowships, in biomedical ethics and health policy and is an international expert on complaints, healthcare quality and the regulation of health professions. Ron is co-editor of the textbook Medical Law in New Zealand (2006) and author of The Good Doctor: What Patients Want (2012).



Our network

We are here for all head and neck people in New Zealand and beyond. Notes are made at our Auckland meetings and placed on the website and in a newsletter.

www.headandneck.network

Thought for the month: *The good physician treats the disease; the great physician treats the patient who has the disease.* William Osler