

22 June 2026

To the Taranaki Medical Foundation committee, members, and supporters,

I am writing to thank you for your sponsorship to attend the 2026 New Zealand Medical Students' Association conference – Toiora – in Tāmaki Makaurau. Your support provided me with an invaluable opportunity to engage with a diverse range of speakers, perspectives, and experiences that have strengthened my understanding of holistic healthcare.

The foundations of Toiora lie within the meaning of “the origin of health”, centred on the factors that enable individuals, communities, and healthcare professionals to thrive. Throughout the conference, I was encouraged to reflect not only on the clinical knowledge and skills required in medicine, but also on the broader social, cultural, and systemic influences that shape health outcomes and wellbeing.

One of the most impactful presentations was delivered by Dr Timoti Te Moke. Through sharing his experiences of discrimination, adversity, and resilience, he highlighted the influence that societal structures can have on an individual's opportunities and outcomes. His story reinforced the importance of recognising the barriers faced by those living in areas of socioeconomic deprivation and by communities that continue to experience discrimination and inequity. Dr Timoti's message that “failure is inevitable; it is not a choice” resonated strongly with me. As I progress through medical training and into my future career, I hope to approach challenges with this mindset, viewing setbacks as opportunities to learn, adapt, and ultimately become a more capable and compassionate clinician.

Dame Ranjna Patel, founder of Gandhi Nivas family violence prevention service and co-founder of Tamaki health spoke about challenging traditional models of primary care. Extended operating hours and investing in some of the first printers and computers helped to improve continuity and accessibility of care within their clinics, making a substantial impact to their community. What stood out to me was the philosophy behind this innovation. Rather than expecting patients to fit within the constraints of the healthcare system, they designed services around the needs of the community they served. This presentation highlighted the importance of listening to patients and communities, understanding their lived experiences, and developing services that genuinely meet their needs. It reminded me that meaningful improvements in healthcare often begin with asking how systems can better support people, rather than asking people to adapt to systems.

I was also fortunate to attend a session led by Rachel Foxell, Registered Music Therapist and Clinical Services Manager at the Raukauri Music Therapy Trust. Rachel illustrated

how music can be used as a powerful therapeutic tool to support emotional regulation, rehabilitation, and wellbeing across a diverse range of populations, including people with disabilities and individuals living with conditions such as Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease. This session reinforced the value of holistic approaches to patient care whilst showing that meaningful therapeutic connections can be formed through many different avenues.

A further highlight was a presentation by Professor Katie Groom during the Te Tima Ora Lightning Talks. Her discussion developed my understanding of the inequities that persist within obstetric and gynaecological care, and the role healthcare professionals can play in addressing them. Learning about her work with the Carosika Collaboration illustrated to me the impact that interdisciplinary collaboration can have on improving outcomes for whānau experiencing preterm birth. My main take away was the importance of advocacy and partnership in creating equitable healthcare systems and how collective effort and shared expertise is integral in achieving meaningful change.

While these presentations were particularly memorable, they represent only a small portion of the many valuable experiences and conversations that occurred throughout the conference. Reflecting on the event, my greatest takeaway was the recognition that adversity, uncertainty, and failure are not obstacles, but often the catalysts for growth. Meaningful growth in healthcare is driven by individuals and communities who are willing to identify challenges and work collaboratively towards solutions.

Thank you once again for your generous support. Attending Toiora was an enriching and inspiring experience that has contributed significantly to my personal and professional development.

Nāku noa,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Oliver Salisbury". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nā Oliver Salisbury