

THE 2016 WAIMATE PROJECT: A REFLECTION ON COMMUNITY BASED LEARNING WITH UNDERGRADUATE MASSAGE STUDENTS

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Background

The 2016 Waimate Project was born out of a philanthropic willingness to share life-long learning regarding massage and fitness expertise, and fostering collaborative community engagement. Waimate Harriers Toc H Club successful application to Waimate District Council Sports Grant for funds to provide room hire, resources and advertising launched the 2015 school holiday pilot workshop and set the community based learning project in motion. Residents Jacky Keen – a Remedial Massage therapist and Otago Polytechnic Massage Programme lecturer - teamed her skills with Geoff Lienert - a Masters' athlete and Waimate Civic Awardee (acknowledged in 2015 for his lifelong Harriers, Cycling and Athletics clubs volunteering mentoring and coaching).

The Waimate Project was underpinned by a case-based approach to learning, which engages students in discussion of specific scenarios that resemble or typically are real-world examples. This approach is learner-centred, typically with intense interaction between students and other participants (e.g. community, peers) as they build their knowledge and work together as a group to examine the case. Benefits of CBL include the development of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; self-evaluation and critical reflection; use of scientific inquiry; integration of knowledge and practice, and the development of learning skills (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980; Schmidt, 2000)

Workshop

The project team developed and ran a school holiday pilot workshop in 2015, targeting local senior school students and community members. The two-hour experiential workshop demonstrated the benefits of combining foundation skills massage and stretch.



Figure 1. Identified the target muscles. Photo credit: Jacky Keen

Before demonstrating, Jacky and Geoff identified the target muscle by drawing its location onto Geoff's thigh. The stretch technique, Facilitated Stretching, a step-by-step method accessible to everyone, can improve flexibility and reduce overuse injuries that result from muscle fatigue. Using the science behind PNF stretching, assessment of muscle function is made easy. (McAtee, Robert E. 2014)

On-going development for the 2016 Waimate Project was inspired by reflection on participant engagement and the positive feedback received:

'It was a really enjoyable, informative afternoon. Would be very interested in future workshops'

'It was good because I liked how we worked out the muscles and it could go on a bit longer to really get the gist of it.'

'Amazing, I learned a lot. It's going to be great to use the techniques in the future. Thanks heaps!'

'Really good I learnt a lot of new things about stretching my body and keeping fit.'

'Awesome!'

'It was a fantastic course, informative and useful. I will be putting it into practice before I do any sport. Thank you.'

'Self-Massage and Facilitated Stretch' module

Following the success of the workshop, the 20-hour 'Self Massage and Facilitated Stretch' module was developed, quality assured through Aoraki Polytechnic. Support from the 2016 Aoraki Foundation Endowment Fund (www.aorakifoundation.co.nz) enabled the delivery of two day Waimate-based workshops. Otago Polytechnic Undergraduate Massage students were recruited to host and participate as facilitators.

The project brought people together in a way that modelled the Mental Health Foundation's 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' framework, which is built on the following principals: *Give; Connect; Take notice; Keep Learning; and Be Active* (www.mentalhealth.org.nz).

The interaction with the community and positive feedback was highly validating and empowering for Massage students. As project Coordinator, it was empowering to see the reciprocity between campus and community. The undergraduate massage students shone in their roles, making new connections and reporting sense of belonging and a feeling of having made a genuine contribution to the community.

Moving forward

The success of these pilot projects, has led to further plans to increase student involvement in the future. One idea is to enable students to deliver short training modules in their own communities, such as the 'Self Massage and Facilitated Stretch' level 2 workshops. This would help students to continue to build emotional connections, and inspire others in their own communities.

The project coordinators - Jacky and Geoff - believe there are many new project-based rich learning experiences and insights to be created for students and from which case-based learning will inspire case reports, influence future case studies and research. This could include:

- Fostering health, fitness and companionship;
- Raising awareness of the benefits of massage and stretching; and
- Improving physical condition and renew a sense of well-being.

Otago Polytechnic Massage Programme students experienced case based massage learning at Waimate Therapeutic. Clients were most willing for students to observe their treatment sessions, for students to practice under supervision and to give rich and insightful feedback. One such elderly gent said, "I'm happy you can learn from what is happening for me." as he walked away from the trainee moving more freely, stronger, eased from pain, and much less anxious about losing his independence just yet.

On the back of the success of the 2016 Waimate Project, the project coordinators have secured a further pilot project within the community - entitled 'student self-managed project' - for second year undergraduate massage students' to deliver on-site chair massage for Dunedin MSD office staff. Student employment opportunity was created and on-going potential for future student work experience 'Case Reports' and 'Client Feedback Surveys'.

Jacky Keen is a lecturer in the Department of Physical Activity & Wellbeing at Otago Polytechnic. In 1990 and 1991, Child Cancer Foundation Scholarships helped Jacky to step aside from tertiary teaching at Auckland Technical Institute and retrain in counselling, shiatsu, aromatherapy, reflexology and massage. Jacky founded remedial massage therapy clinic Waimate Therapeutic. She specialises in resolving clients' chronic myofascial pain and dysfunction, bringing hands-on experience to her teaching. Jacky strives to broaden her student's critical thinking skills, in part through involvement in their own communities. In 2016, Jacky received the Otago Polytechnic Student Council Staff Awards' Excellent Support Award.

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