THE DOCTOR-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP
A BALINT WEEKEND WORKSHOP

Christchurch
August 1st and 2nd, 2009

The Goodfellow Unit of the Department of General Practice & Primary Health Care, University of Auckland, is delighted to offer a weekend workshop for GPs, GP Registrars and other health professionals, to experience a Balint group.

What is Balint work?
Balint groups are named after Hungarian born psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, Michael Balint who, with his wife Enid Balint, developed a unique method for understanding the doctor-patient relationship in London in the 1950s. This method has been refined over the past fifty years and there are now many groups in UK, Europe (for GPs, Obstetricians and Psychiatrists) and USA (in about one third of GP training programs) and a growing number in NZ and Australia.

Workshop Description
This workshop offers the opportunity for GPs to reflect upon difficult or intriguing cases, with a focus on the doctor-patient relationship. The clear structure of a Balint group provides a safe and supportive setting.

The participants will be invited to present cases where they have experienced a strong reaction, such as: distress, delight, frustration or uncertainty. The case is presented briefly and informally, emphasising the nature of the doctor–patient interaction and including the doctor's feelings and reactions. The group members then discuss the case with emphasis on the doctor-patient relationship.

The group is asked to empathize with both the doctor's and the patient's experience and to speculate about what thoughts and feelings each might be having. Diverse views often emerge, reflecting the group members' varied personalities and experiences . All ideas are allowed to "exist in the room" and there is no attempt to reach a "right" answer. The leaders facilitate this process and do not act as experts. The underlying assumption is that "the knowledge is in the group".

A Balint group is very different from the usual medical case presentation in that the members are strongly discouraged from making judgements, giving advice, or offering solutions and no attempt is made to reach a conclusion. Discussion of clinical management is actively discouraged. We assume that all the doctors present are competent and know how to manage their patients. This structure creates a place of safety where the GPs can feel comfortable discussing the uncomfortable moments in the consultation.

This way of working can be difficult at first, but once learnt is a liberating experience, stimulating deeper thought and understanding.

Common presentations are: Patients with psychosomatic symptoms; patients whom specialists can't help; patients who don't comply with treatment; patients who make unreasonable demands; consultations with more than one person, eg, parent and teenager; patients from a different culture; and the dying patient.

Another aspect of the learning is that feelings and responses to patients become tools in understanding patients better, rather than sources of stress or unhelpful behaviours. GPs become able to treat difficult patients more effectively and with less personal stress. The boring patients may become interesting and the difficult patients a welcome challenge!

This workshop is for General Practitioners and GP Registrars who are clinically active.

Leaders:

Dr John Barton, FRACGP, GP/psychotherapist and Balint leader practising in Melbourne since 1997. GP in Taihape and then Huntly 1983 to 1997.

Dr Adrienne Ackermann, General Practitioner.

Timetable:

Saturday 1st August: 10:00 am to 4:30 pm
Sunday 2nd August: 9:00 am to 1:00 pm

Cost: $260.00 inclusive GST. **The workshop is limited to nine participants.**

Important note

It is important to participate in the entire program. The success of this workshop depends on group cohesiveness. Please do not plan to arrive late, leave early or miss sessions. Please do not apply if you cannot commit to the whole workshop.

Venue: Seminar room, Presbyterian Support, 44 Bealey Avenue, Christchurch

Morning and afternoon teas

These will be provided. Lunch is not included. The venue is near a number of food outlets.

Enquiries

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Registration

1) Email Cecile Pilkington at c.pilkington@auckland.ac.nz stating you wish to attend.
2) We will then send you a registration form which confirms your attendance and payment details.

CME/CPD points

This Balint workshop has been endorsed by The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners (RNZCGP), and has been approved for 9 hours CME for General Practice Educational Programme Stage 2 (formerly AVE) and Maintenance of Professional Standards (MOPS) purposes).