

A comparison of the orthodontic research published by Bristol and Otago post-graduate students from 2008-2011

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My visit to Dunedin, New Zealand, consisted of a one week rotation through several departments in the dental hospital followed by seven weeks backpacking. I was fortunate enough to shadow specialist trainees in endodontics, restorative and orthodontics. My overall impression of their BDS programme was of a marked similarity to the Bristol course. The only differences lay with how much emphasis is placed on different specialities and the volume of laboratory work students are asked to complete.



Clinical skills lab Otago Dental School.

My elective aimed to compare the research outputs from the post-graduate orthodontic trainees from 2008-2011. I compared Bristol University to Otago University by firstly preparing a critical appraisal protocol that could numerically grade publications on their evidence quality. I decided to use an adapted framework produced by GRADE working group which assessed papers based on four criteria; study design, execution quality, consistency and directness. My results showed that Bristol produced

seven full peer-reviewed publications whereas Otago produced only three. Despite producing less research, Otago showed a higher average score in my quality index. Although my analysis had some pitfalls in its design, I feel it may have some benefit if course organisers would like to view their department's research output at a glance.

My intentions before leaving the UK were to experience New Zealand by living in it, not through conventional tourist attractions. Therefore, I submitted applications for voluntary jobs in return for accommodation and board through an organisation called Willing Worker On Organic Farms (WWOOF). As agriculture is the primary export in New Zealand, I found no difficulty in being accepted for farm-related jobs. My experiences, however, were varied!

In Ngaruawahia a family of Ironman tri-athletes ran a cattle farm with an on-site butchery. My daily work consisted of livestock feeding and, most of the day, processing carcasses. Produce (sausages, pork-pies, black pudding, all beef cuts, bacon) was sold in farmers' markets in Hamilton. In Greytown I stayed with a lovely family with a "lifestyle block" (smallholding) of cattle and various planting programs. I worked as dog trainer as well as an au-pair alongside another German WWOOFer. While hitchhiking I met a veterinarian from Featherston who offered to take me on his mobile equine unit. I performed a post-operative dental assessment for a horse under sedation and assisted in several vaccinations, lambing and spaying operations, all of which were new to me and, therefore, incredible and rare experiences. I had no background in farming, animals or pets prior to my elective which, although outside my comfort zone, gave me a new perspective on all matters relating to farming practices and food/waste production.

In Auckland, my involvement with the Royal Naval Reserves in Bristol afforded me the opportunity to visit the Devonport Naval Base. This marked my first exposure to foreign Armed Forces that support allied operations.

I will remember my experiences for many years to come and recommend WWOOFing for anyone willing to learn something new whilst travelling. The grant awarded by the BDAA contributed to my experiences and I am grateful for their generosity.