



Dear Colleague

what's new at braemar?

Win Meyer-Rochow's patients are in good hands.



In medical circles, there is an old adage that says, "The only localisation necessary for a parathyroid tumour is the localisation of an experienced parathyroid surgeon".

Translated, that means the more experienced the surgeon, the more likely the patient will be cured. If that is true, Win Meyer-Rochow's patients are in good hands.

With a PhD in his area of expertise, Win is the most specialised endocrine (thyroid, parathyroid and adrenal) surgeon in New Zealand and one of the busiest. He does more than 150 endocrine operations a year; in international terms, 100 is considered high volume.

There is recognition among GPs and other specialists that patient outcomes are better with high volume surgeons compared to low volume surgeons, particularly for uncommon surgical procedures. "The more you do in one area, the better your results will be," he says. "This applies to any profession including medicine or surgery."

Evidence of his skill is the size of the incision for a parathyroidectomy (the surgical removal of the parathyroid gland in the neck). This operation is carried out when a parathyroid gland produces excessive hormone leading to abnormally high blood levels of calcium, which can lead to kidney stones, abdominal pain, fatigue, depression and thinning of the bones.

Win Meyer-Rochow uses a lateral technique using an incision the size of a buttonhole (1.0 to 2.5cm). Almost all his patients after a parathyroidectomy with this technique return to normal activities the following day. Most other surgeons use a central or more traditional approach, which usually means a larger incision from 4 to 8cm.

Apart from the benefits to patients, there are benefits to the wider community in treating hyperparathyroidism. "If you don't address the problem, the patient will be at high risk of fractures. Even for older patients, with treatment, bone density can improve and reduce the progression of osteoporosis."

Win honed his skills at the side of Denis Whittle, former head of Waikato Hospital's Endocrine Surgical team. He says, at the time, Mr Whittle was 10 years ahead of others in his field. Win joined him after completing his training as a Specialist General Surgeon and a further four years of sub-specialty training in Sydney with the University of Sydney Endocrine Surgical Department. During that time, he also completed his PhD. He also pays tribute to another Waikato mentor, Endocrinologist John Conaglen.

The opportunity to work alongside these men in his field of interest, plus family and lifestyle considerations led him to settle in the Waikato after a nomadic career that took him to hospitals throughout New Zealand and overseas. He calculates he and his wife, Marianne Elston, have moved a dozen times since they completed their medical studies at Otago University.

The couple shares the same field of interest: the study of hormones and the glands that produce them. Marianne is an Endocrinologist, specialising in the medical side. Win says there are benefits in working in the same area but they try not to bring too much work home with them.

The couple's return to the Waikato completes a full circle for Win. He lived in the region from the age of three when his father – a marine biologist – took up a

position at the University of Waikato. Win completed his schooling in Hamilton and did his medical intermediate year at the University of Waikato.

He ranks the skills in the Waikato as very good. "Waikato is extremely lucky with the surgical expertise we have. Most of our surgeons have done further specialist training overseas and brought those skills back to New Zealand". He also believes New Zealand surgeons make more "appropriate medical decisions" for their patients than surgeons in the US and Australia. "The threat of litigation overseas means patients are sometimes subjected to unnecessary investigations or procedures. One example is with CT and x-ray imaging, where there is an increased risk of radiation-induced cancer if these are over-used."

At Braemar and Waikato Hospital (where he is the principal endocrine surgeon), he does a range of surgical procedures including operations for thyroid lumps or cancer, thyroid goitres, over-active thyroid and parathyroid glands and adrenal gland tumours.

He also relishes his research work and ongoing links with the University of Auckland where he has a role as a senior lecturer. His PhD, awarded last year, was in the area of adrenal gland tumours (phaeochromocytomas) which may cause problems with high blood pressure, headaches, strokes, heart attacks and occasionally sudden death. The research, which he says produced

“Waikato is extremely lucky with the surgical expertise we have. Most of our surgeons have done further specialist training overseas and brought those skills back to New Zealand”

some promising results, looked for molecular markers to help determine which tumours are malignant and which benign.

He says there have been rapid changes in his field over the past decade. He believes the most significant future advances will be in the pharmacological management of endocrine disease and more sophisticated diagnostic techniques.

He is also hopeful that the Government's move in 2009 to add iodised salt to commercially produced bread will reduce the incidence of thyroid goitres. "When the government introduced iodised salt (from 1938), the incidence (of goitre) dropped, but they have started to creep up again as people use more refined or non-iodised salts. It is hoped that this trend might again be reversed."

Outside work, life is devoted to his family. He and Marianne have two children aged 3½ and nearly two. At the moment, the family enjoys the garden at their property at Tamahere and trips to the parks, the beach and the lakes. "That's the benefit of living and working in the Waikato. We have the population and resources to do our work and research at the highest level but also have a good lifestyle."

Braemar Hospital accepts all medical health insurance policies including Southern Cross, Sovereign and Tower.

why choose a braemar hospital?

“Choice and Flexibility”

An ageing population, increasing demands and expectations, and the cost of new technologies provide challenges for both the private and public health sectors.

Medical and technological advancements have increased our ability to treat disease and injury. This has led to a greater expectation as to what should be achieved by the health sector. In the public sector the increase in complex surgery has come at the expense of lower cost surgery such as hernias and varicose veins, and the rationing system of waiting lists has led to these, and more complex procedures, being completed in the private sector.

Private healthcare offers choice and flexibility. It also offers access to some of the best Specialists in a timely manner without the restrictions of a waiting list.

At Braemar patients can be assured of a quality service at competitive rates and the very latest of modern medical technology.

Visit our website for more details: www.braemarhospital.co.nz



Dr Rob Cameron
Chairman

“Quality care costs less
at Braemar hospitals”

www.braemarhospital.co.nz



24 Ohaupo Road, Hamilton
PO Box 972, Waikato Mail Centre 3240
Phone: 07 839 2166 | Fax: 07 834 3944



Knox Street, Hamilton
PO Box 972, Waikato Mail Centre 3240
Phone: 07 858 0760 | Fax: 07 838 0368