



Dear Colleague

what's new at braemar?

Braemar welcomes Orthopaedic Surgeon Steve McChesney



Orthopaedic surgeon Steve McChesney loves flying. But he also loves giving other people the chance to pursue their passions on the sports field and as they get older.

If Steve McChesney had followed in his father's footsteps, he would have been a pilot. If he had followed through on his career choice in his final year at Auckland's Kings College, he would have become an accountant. Fortuitously, he had a last-minute change of heart and chose medicine.

"My dad was a pilot and I love flying, but the idea of flying internationally didn't appeal. At school, I won a scholarship to do accounting and economics at university. But when I was on holiday at the beach before the start of the university term, I got talking to an accountant and realised it wasn't what I wanted to do."

He says many of his classmates had applied for medical school, so he did the same thing. "Fortunately, I got in because I didn't have a Plan B."

His first thought was that he would become a rural GP with an airstrip close by where he could indulge his love of flying, allowing for a "reasonably good" lifestyle. But that idea, too, was turned on its head when he came to the Waikato as a trainee intern and house surgeon, and discovered a passion for orthopaedics. "I was fortunate to have some very good mentors."

Over the next few years, he completed fellowships in orthopaedic trauma surgery in Canada; limb reconstruction in England, and sports and knee surgery in Auckland and Brisbane.

Today, he regards the Waikato as home and works as a consultant orthopaedic surgeon at Waikato Hospital and an orthopaedic surgeon at Braemar Hospital.

In the public sector, he works with trauma cases and limb reconstruction. At Braemar his focus is on sports injuries and lower limb arthroplasty such as knee and hip replacements. He says the hospital's new facilities give patients the best options available for treatment and care.

Orthopaedics appeals as a specialty, he says, because "most of your patients get better." You can make a positive difference to their lives. That includes getting back on the sports field for as long as they want to participate."

The future is also exciting. "Today there is a more scientific approach to orthopaedic surgery. We are getting a lot better at preserving limbs and preserving function. There is more evidence focused on how we treat our injuries. There have also been huge changes in equipment since I graduated more than 12 years ago, for instance locking plate technology which has revolutionised the way we do fractures around joints. In the old days we would get poorer results."

Sports injuries such as ligament reconstruction, surgery, and meniscal repair (torn cartilage), are a growing field. He says the demographics will change as people stay active longer and that will change the threshold for operating on those people. For example an anterior cruciate ligament (knee ligament) reconstruction used to be solely for athletes in the younger age group. "Now with more and more people aged in their 40s and beyond are doing recreational activities we will see a greater percentage of those people come forward for those procedures."

Forty or 50 years ago, if a sportsperson injured their anterior cruciate ligament they just stopped playing sport. That was an acceptable outcome in those days. "Nowadays people don't accept they have to stop doing something and we have the means to enable them to do that."

He says there are still challenges, especially in the area of cartilage injury – particularly of the knee – which are

still to be solved. "I have seen elite sportsmen with some pretty rotten looking knees. You can patch them up so they can continue in their sport, but you have to worry about what's around the corner for them." He says the non-elite athletes still need to be mindful

“Nowadays people don't accept they have to stop doing something and we have the means to enable them to do that.”

of their future. "The plumber who plays first grade rugby, still needs to be a plumber for the rest of his life. They have to focus on the bigger picture."

A former soccer and cricket player himself, Steve knows how important it is to get back to full fitness. "Fortunately, for the majority of injuries, most people can get back to playing." He says orthopaedics has got a lot better at working out why things don't go well and then addressing those things.

Away from work, Mr McChesney continues to pursue his passion for flying. His father's Cessna 180 is now conveniently based in the Waikato. Whenever he has time, he takes it up, especially above the Coromandel, which is his favourite place to fly.

He says flying appeals because it "takes you away from everything but it also occupies your whole mind." His fiancée Nicole – the couple will marry in February, 2012 – also likes flying. A pharmacist, she is marrying into a family of medics. Steve's brother is an obstetrician and gynaecologist and his sister is pharmacist. He says his father, a pilot, can't believe all his children have chosen medical fields. "He doesn't even like blood."

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



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“Quality care costs less
at Braemar hospitals”

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