

## Experiences from Working as a Dermatologist in New Zealand

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I always dreamt of working overseas at one point during my career.

As a medical officer both my husband and I dreamt of working for longer periods of time in a developing country. However, as the years went by and we became parents our priorities changed.

I began working as a dermatology registrar at the hospital of Gävle, Sweden, in 2010. During my training I had the opportunity to do a 3-month rotation in the paediatric dermatology clinic at Gregorio Marañón hospital in Madrid. During that experience I became even more convinced I wanted to work abroad to widen my experience and show our children the world.

As a registrar in Gävle I had the privilege to work with teledermoscopy on a daily basis due to a project initiated by Dr Susanne Vandell Uddströmer in 2012.

With that invaluable training from Dr Uddströmer Vandell and courses in teledermoscopy in Graz and in Sweden I soon started to look out for new challenges.

In the beginning of 2016 during a trip to New Zealand I met Dr Amanda Oakley, the founder of DermNet NZ and teledermoscopy in New Zealand. Dr. Oakley was in need of a dermatologist with experience in teledermoscopy. That was the beginning of my long journey to NZ.

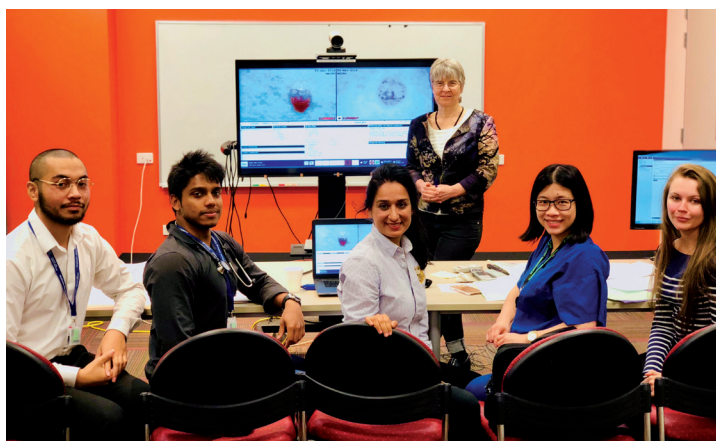
### How to get registration

Before applying for work in New Zealand you need to submit a cover letter, CV and provide 3 references (colleagues that you have worked with during the past 3 years).

The references have to fill out several pages with questions about your work experience. A phone call interview is also obligatory to confirm the identity of each referee. If you are accepted you will receive a work contract which allows you to start your registration pathway through Medical Council of New Zealand (MCNZ). Plenty of paper work is required for this process including English language tests IELTS (academic version) where you need to achieve at least 7.5 points (max score 9).



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Teledermoscopy teaching 4 hours every Friday morning for registrars, GPs and medical students.

MCNZ also require a weekly supervision plan from the future supervisor. Written feedback is also needed every 3 months to confirm that you are eligible to continue to work in NZ. If you want to apply for a different position you need to contact MCNZ and have a new supervision plan with updated references.

### Working for Waikato DHB and DermNet NZ

As a dermatologist trained in Scandinavia you are allowed to work as a dermatologist registered under the Health Practitioners Competence under supervision of one or two senior consultants. The supervisors role is to support you as a new colleague and make sure the requirements are fulfilled so that you can continue to work as a dermatologist. MCNZ requires written feedback every 3 months with information regarding strengths, weaknesses and language competence. If the requirements are not fulfilled you could be stopped from working as a medical practitioner. As a part time locum at the hospital I started with 2 weeks of introduction where I had to do electronic referral triage (e-triage) and joined clinics with senior consultants. After two weeks of introduction I started to work independently doing e-triage (teledermatology including teledermoscopy) 3 times a week, teaching teledermoscopy every Friday morning, general dermatology clinics, supervise registrars in clinic and theatre.

As a part time consultant for DermNetNZ.org my assignments include updating new webpages for different skin conditions or new treatments, selecting images for the webpages and contacting colleagues all over the world asking for image contributions for DermNetNZ.org.

### NZ vs Sweden

The work is over all very similar except the higher percentage of dark skinned patients, mainly of Mauri and Polynesian origin.

We also see more unusual conditions such as rheumatic fever, Orf and more severe atopic eczema.

As a registrar in NZ you need to give talks to your colleagues and nurses at least once a week. In addition there is Journal club once a month, a dermatopathology meeting every week and Grand Round once a week. Dermatology registrars in NZ have at least 3–4 years of internal medicine experience. The dermatology program is 4 years. Two years are spent in NZ and 2 years overseas (usually the UK, Australia or Canada). If trainees do not achieve the expected goals their training can be ceased.

As a consultant dermatologist in NZ you need to engage in peer review at least once a year, attended cultural training courses, conferences every year in order to keep your right to practice dermatology.

### What I miss working in NZ

I miss the good teamwork with very experienced nurses and healthcare assistants, which I had back home in Gävle. Some treatments like tacrolimus are not funded in NZ.

And what I miss most of all is my clean scrubs back home.

In NZ we wear our own clothes during consultations and even when performing punch biopsies. Scrubs are worn in theatre. Having said that infection rates are very low here.

### What I would like to take home to Sweden

In general I found that the registrars here are encouraged to read a lot and therefore have a good deep theoretical understanding of different diseases and treatments.



Surfing lessons every weekend in Raglan 45 minutes drive from Hamilton.

New Zealand relies on good General Practitioners to manage many dermatological conditions. For example they can initiate treatments like imiquimod and isotretinoin.

I enjoy the discipline at work and MCNZs helpful protocols and requirements for registrars, supervisors and consultants.

I also value continued medical education for consultants.

### **Life in New Zealand**

New Zealand is a multicultural nation with a population of around 4.7 million.

People are friendly, easy going and from a range of different backgrounds and cultures. Outdoor activities are abundant, including water sports, snow sports, extreme sports, as well as some of the most beautiful walks in the world. Moving to NZ

as a family can be challenging at the beginning but life gets easier once you are here. The day we arrived in NZ we bought a car. Our house was rented out within the first week and the children were enrolled in a local school. Our work colleagues are friendly and keen on showing each other interesting patients and sharing knowledge.

Every day has been a huge adventure for us as a family and our children have had the opportunity to learn English, Maori and participate in sports like rippa ruby, cricket, surfing, and join the Kapa haka group at school.

I can really recommend working in NZ or overseas. It is a great experience to learn a new system, create new working connections, work with new colleagues and learn a new culture and language. All you need is determination and a sense of adventure. Personally, working overseas has been an incredible learning experience and undoubtedly my career has been enriched by it.