

Why Am I? - The Science of Us

Otago documentary to screen in 70 countries

A major University of Otago scientific study will receive widespread recognition when a four-part documentary series on its widely acclaimed research screens in New Zealand and around the world.

The four-part series *Why Am I? – The Science of Us* will screen nationally in 2016, before reaching international audiences via networks covering 70 countries, including BBC Asia and SBS Australia.

The series is based on the groundbreaking work of the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study which has documented the health, development and well-being of 1037 people born in Dunedin between 1972 and 1973.

Since its inception, Study findings have been used in investigations as diverse as child health, injury prevention, ageing, infertility, the genetic basis for antisocial behaviour, and links between drug abuse and adult psychosis. These findings have influenced thinking and policymaking worldwide.

While the Study is widely regarded as a valuable research tool by the international scientific community – the project has yielded some 1,200 research articles, reports, books and book chapters – its activities are not widely known to the public.

Documentary maker Mark McNeill, of Razor Films, said the New Zealand On Air funded project had attracted worldwide interest because it addresses “fundamental questions” about what it means to be human.

Study Director Professor Richie Poulton describes the documentary as “spell-binding”.

"Producer Mark McNeill and Editor Irena Dol have done an exquisite job of bringing to life the findings of our long-running study. They have managed to stay true to the science whilst making it accessible and compelling viewing. I'm delighted with the end result. It is a fitting tribute to the 1037 study members who have made it all possible," he says.

An exhibition on the Study opened at Toitū Otago Settlers Museum this month, entitled *Slice of Life – The World Famous Dunedin Study*. It runs until March 2017, and admission is free.

Watch the promo video for the documentary.

Read more about the Dunedin Study at the [Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Research Unit \(DMHDRU\) website](#).



Pictured: Past and present DHMDRU staff involved in the Dunedin Study (including the founding Director Dr Phil A. Silva), along with students and local Study investigators and colleagues. Taken at the farewell blessing of the Barningham Building on 12 November 2015. The Barningham Building is where the Unit resided since 1985, and was vacated prior to demolition for the Dental School redevelopment.