

# Class of '79 supporting next generation of doctors

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A desire to give back, and help those pursuing a career in medicine, has spurred a group of senior medical graduates to provide a scholarship for the last 15 years.

Since 2005 the Otago Medical School class of 1979 has provided a scholarship for second and third year undergraduate medical students suffering financial hardship.



From left: Mr Mike Hunter, 2014 scholarship recipients Claire Richardson and Mercy Moxham, Professor Rob Walker

Class alumni and scholarship review panel member Dr Sharleen Johnston of Dunedin says the class initially held reunions every 10 years, but have made them five yearly since 2004.

"I think that what makes our class different is that we've had so many reunions. We've set up a website and there's more communication between the group."

She says at the 20-year reunion it was decided to use the reunion profits as a seeding fund for a scholarship. "After that many of us set up regular contributions and others did lump sum payments to help grow the fund."

Dr Johnston says there are usually two \$3,000 scholarships awarded each year, that are a one-off payment. The scholarships aren't based on academic achievement, but are purely assessed on financial hardship.

*"When we set up the scholarship, we were aware that education had become very expensive with the increasing costs that were likely to impact upon young people."*

*- Dr Sharleen Johnston,  
Otago Medical School Class  
of 1979*

“When we set up the scholarship, we were aware that education had become very expensive with the increasing costs that were likely to impact upon young people.”

Dr Johnston says a presentation about recent scholarship recipients is shown at every reunion.

“We set it up for second and third-year students as they’re all in Dunedin at that stage, and that’s where the panel is currently based. In the future we’re considering having past scholarship winners as members of the scholarship selection committee.”

She says at least one class member is planning to make the scholarship the main beneficiary of her will.

Tied into the University’s 150th celebrations last year’s reunion was held in Dunedin, while the next Otago Medical School Class of ‘79 reunion is planned for Wellington in 2024.



Inaugural Class of '79 scholarship recipient  
Nicola Baxter

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