

## Leap of Faith

It is no secret that the young medical course at Notre Dame is still under constant review and development. When an individual is granted entry to the course and signs the enrolment forms they are completely aware of this characteristic. It is one of the reasons that makes studying at NDU Fremantle both exciting and challenging. Another requirement of any student at Notre Dame is to accept enrolment into the core units of Theology, Philosophy and Ethics alongside of the barrage of clinical skills and medical theory.

Initially I was sceptical as to the relevance of theology and philosophy in medical studies. That isn't to say that all traces of that scepticism are eliminated for all by the time the units are completed.

The insights into theology implore students to meditate and consider what aspects of life constitute 'personhood'. The relatively small class sizes and the seminar style presentations make for lively discussion and debate on other topics such as the perceptions of birth, life and death. These perceptions are then linked to the role of students as future practitioners and serve to develop understanding of various principles and value systems of future patients. These insights are garnished with a calorie controlled cut of Catholicism. Far from being a sermon however, the theological musings take into account the diverse make-up of a cohort of medical students (seemingly a group of ravenous sceptics).

The unit of Philosophy only presents a brief historical review of the subject; it attempts to habituate critical thinking in medical students. It seemed to me that for every student who grumbled that the discussion of fallacies was useless – there was one who would praise the engaging content. Some citing the potential application to statistic interpretation and the extra tools philosophy offers in dealing with dilemmas in medical practice, research and development.

Sometimes in our careers we dive in, not knowing what lies beneath - This year another group will take this leap of faith into Notre Dame (it is a leap year after all). The year after will testify to the new brand of doctor generated. Will the extra exposure to humanities make a significant difference to graduates? Is medicine studied in Catholic context all that different? This remains to be answered and even then, it's a question of faith.

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