

Kia ora, The recent PSANZ 2024 Congress in Ōtautahi, Christchurch was a great success showcasing the diversity of all those that work in perinatal health. The city with the autumn leaves and amazing weather was beautiful. The executive were able to showcase our new professional look which included a newly branded Perinatal Society of New Zealand sign and tablecloth. The photo was gifted to us by a special māmā and we are very grateful to her and her whānau for their generosity. For the first time at a PSANZ Congress the Perinatal Society of New Zealand funded an indigenous health award and the worthy recipient was Jen Rogers who presented a poster titled “Experiences of whānau Māori with pēpi at risk of neonatal hypoglycaemia”. The Society also helped to fund 2 new investigators to attend the conference Anja Bronnert and Eamon Walsh, who both presented their research findings at an extremely high standard. They have provided an overview of their first PSANZ experience.

Reflections from Eamon Walsh

Highlights

The highlight for me was hearing about the randomized control trials (RCTs) currently being conducted and those set to commence soon. These trials represent cutting-edge research in various medical fields, offering insights into innovative therapies that could significantly impact patient care.

I was particularly interested in hearing about cell therapies. As a future doctor, this type of translational research is fascinating to me because it highlights how rapidly medical practice can transform in response to new evidence. I am excited about the potential advancements in perinatal medicine, and makes me wonder what clinical medicine will be like when I am practising.

Takeaways

My key takeaway from the conference is the critical importance of robust data. Well-designed and high-quality trials are essential for advancing medical practice. In a world overflowing with data, it's imperative for doctors to stay engaged with research, think independently, and make critically informed decisions.

New Zealand has a rich history of innovation in perinatal medicine, and I felt honoured to contribute in a small way.

Special thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Chris McKinlay, an expert in his field who has profoundly impacted my medical training by instilling in me a passion for research and neonatal medicine.

Reflections for Anja Bronnert

I am a second-year PhD student in neonatal nutrition at the University of Auckland/the Liggins Institute, and thanks to the PSNZ Early Career Researcher Travel Award, I had the opportunity to visit the PSANZ Annual Congress in Christchurch a few weeks ago.

I was not sure what to expect from my first scientific conference, but I had an amazing immersive experience I will cherish for a long time. Between discussing posters, chats in the coffee cart queue, darting from room to room to not miss presentations, and social events, everyone has made me feel truly welcome in our Australia-New Zealand (and beyond) perinatal research community. While I am lucky to have the most supportive colleagues and supervisors at the Liggins Institute, there was something special about having new people come up to me after my presentation to connect, ask questions, and support; about an entire room tearing up over a particularly moving presentation; and about the unwavering aim for inclusivity and diversity - And definitely something special about dancing to ABBA with leading perinatal experts in flares, hippie sunglasses, and flower crowns.

It felt like the perfect mix of old friends meeting again and new friends meeting for the first time, with knowledge exchanged, advice given, and collaborations forged. I had fun branching out and learning something slightly off “my neonatal nutrition lane”, but I also enjoyed learning and sharing about different perspectives and recent advances in my field. This congress week has made the perinatal



research community seem both so big and so small. It underscored how multidisciplinary our field is and how much all the disciplines depend on, support, and respect each other. Here is to our collaborative passion and Navigating Futures Together; see you all at PSANZ 2025!

