



## Kawhia GP 2019 Peter Snow Memorial Award recipient

The 2019 Peter Snow Memorial Award has gone to long-time Kawhia GP Dr John Burton. The award was announced at a ceremony at the New Zealand Rural General Practice Network's annual conference in Blenheim on April 6.

Dr Burton was nominated for "innovation and service to rural health in New Zealand".

He has practised in the Kawhia community for 27 years, is a long-time member of the New Zealand Rural General Practice Network and a past member of the NZRGPN Executive and Board.

"It was a bit of a shock to hear of the award because I did not think I would be in the running to receive it. I remember meeting Peter Snow when he was president of the College of GPs and he was quite awe-inspiring," said Dr Burton.

After returning from volunteer work in West Africa in mid-1991 he says he was inundated with replies when he advertised he wanted to work in a rural practice. Kawhia was not even on his shortlist of 17 rural locations around New Zealand. However, after visiting Kawhia and further consideration, he decided that the having the time to develop relationships with patients that a small practice offers, along with the scope of medicine and the cultural diversity, made it an attractive opportunity.

Looking ahead to retirement Dr Burton says he would like to stay in the Kawhia community and perhaps work as a rural GP consultant alongside a registrar. "That's quite an exciting idea. It'd be great if some of us older docs could stick around to support new ones coming through."

John attended King's College in Auckland (1972 to 1976) and Dunedin Medical School from 1977 to 1983 graduating with a Bachelor of Medicine (MB) and Bachelor of Surgery (ChB). He was a house surgeon at Waikato Hospital, Hamilton, 1984-1985; sat his Dip. Obs. (Auckland), 1985; completed the General Practice Training Scheme in Waikato, 1986; gained Membership of the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners in 1988; became a Fellow of the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners in 1999; and was PRIME (Primary Response in Medical Emergencies) trained in 2000.

From 1987 to 1989 Dr Burton did a series of mainly rural locums throughout New Zealand, apart from three short-term locums in Tonga. For one year from mid-1990, he and his wife, Sue worked in a bush hospital in Benin, West Africa with SIM International. He did further rural locums on return before buying a solo rural practice in Kawhia, King Country, in 1992, where he has remained since. In 2002 he did a sabbatical in Wyndham, northern Western Australia as Senior Medical Officer for six and a half months. John and Sue did short-term medical missions with Marine Reach working on Kadavu Island, Fiji in 2009; and Tanna and Erromango Islands in Vanuatu in 2016. In 2017 he had a sabbatical which included observing work in a peripheral clinic in Vietnam and at the Department of General Practice at Haikou Hospital, Hainan, China before they spent three months as guests of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine to learn about rural medical education and community engagement. These experiences have supported his passions of teaching and of trying to improve the health care of people who have been seen as "hard to reach."

John's wife Sue, a trained medical laboratory technologist, has worked one session a week as receptionist at Kawhia Health Centre since 1992 as well as running regular women's health clinics. The couple have three children: David is a house surgeon (PGY1) at Gisborne Hospital; Erika is a nurse at Wairau Hospital and Alice is doing a Communications degree at AUT.

### About the award

The Peter Snow Memorial Award was set up to honour the life and work of Dr Peter Snow who passed away in March 2006. Dr Snow was a rural general practitioner based in Tapanui. As well as caring for his patients, Peter was Past-President of the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners and was a member of the Otago Hospital Board and District Health Board. He was enthusiastic and active in seeking knowledge to improve the health and safety of rural communities. His work contributed to the identification of the chronic fatigue syndrome and he was influential in raising safety awareness on issues related to farming accidents.

Previous winners include:

Inaugural winner Dr Ron Janes (2007)  
Nurse Jean Ross and Dr Pat Farry (2008 – jointly awarded)  
Dr Garry Nixon (2009)  
Dr Tim Malloy (2010)  
Dr Martin London (2011)  
Nurse Kirsty Murrell-McMillan (2012)  
Dr Graeme Fenton and NZIRH CE Robin Steed (2013)  
Kim Gosman and Dr Janne Bills (2014)  
Dr Katharina Blattner (2015)  
Dr Ivan and Leonie (RNS) Howie (2016)  
Drs Chris Henry and Andrea Judd (2017)  
Dr Keith Buswell (2018).