A FUTURE IN PARAMEDICINE
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Whatever the situation, paramedics’ core business is caring for people and saving lives by providing access to rapid response pre-hospital emergency care and advanced life support as a basic right.

After paramedics arrive by ambulance at an accident or medical emergency site, they must assess the patient to formulate and diagnose an intervention plan and treatment.

They provide acute pre-hospital care, treating for shock and injury using ambulance medical equipment to resuscitate, stabilise and transfer for further treatment.

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Global demand and diversity
There is an increased demand worldwide for paramedics due to an aging population, fewer community GP’s and more emphasis on increasing primary healthcare in the community.

Primary care needs
The Ministry of Health’s increased focus on reducing hospital admissions through out-of-hospital care has led to increased roles and responsibilities for paramedics in the primary care setting. Paramedics with an advanced knowledge of chronic conditions in aging populations are particularly in demand.

Ethnic diversity
More diversity of ethnicity is needed within paramedic services due to New Zealand’s growing ethnic diversity. By 2018, 31% of New Zealanders will identify as non-European. Because of this, fluency in another language is becoming a useful additional skill.

Ambulance double crewing
An additional $58 million of funding has gone to the ambulance sector in New Zealand to ensure the double crewing of all ambulances by 2021. This translates into additional paramedics and ambulances and will result in less volunteers and an increase in professional and qualified staff.

Global opportunities
Overseas opportunities are enormous with inviting pay packets for organisations such as the South Australia Ambulance, ACT Ambulance, Ambulance Victoria and Western Australia. London Ambulance, South West Ambulance and other UK-based services are currently actively seeking graduates from New Zealand. There are also opportunities in Canada. Experienced paramedics can also be found on offshore oil rigs, on board super yachts and in special forces through the Middle East.

Placement and local opportunities
Within New Zealand graduates are recruited by St John and Wellington Free Ambulance (WFA) – as well as the NZ Defence Forces. Extensive clinical placements give students the perfect opportunity to prove themselves in a competitive market before graduating.

New employment options
Health and social services continue to grow, while costs and expectations are outstripping traditional services’ capacity to deal with them. Employment opportunities with primary health organisations (PHO’s) and district health boards (DHB’s) will become commonplace in NZ over the next decade with implementation of Paramedic registration toward the end of 2019.

Telehealth growth
Increasingly New Zealanders are seeking health support services via the phone or through the internet. In NZ we have one of the world’s best telehealth services. This provision of healthcare is both rewarding and utilises the skills and knowledge of paramedics who can now work alongside nurses and other healthcare workers in this emerging field of medicine.

A degree in paramedicine is required to be employed as a paramedic in New Zealand or Australia.

WORK SETTINGS
Paramedic graduates usually find jobs with ambulance services. St John Ambulance provides ambulance services to 95% of New Zealand’s population with Wellington Free Ambulance covering the greater Wellington region.

Paramedics can also work for out-of-hospital emergency care, such as off-shore oil rigs, industrial sites and ski field locations. They participate in USAR (urban search and rescue) groups who provide support during disasters such as the Christchurch earthquake.

Postgraduate qualifications open up opportunities for paramedic roles in remote overseas locations, such as the Pacific Islands and the Middle East.

With experience and specialist training, paramedics can become part of emergency response teams, working with NZ Police, Armed Offenders Squad and Special Tactics Group. They can also participate in international relief work. New Zealand Defence Forces also employ paramedics.

Ambulances are not the only vehicles used by paramedics. They can also operate from cars, vans, motorbikes – even bicycles (eg Oxfam Taupo Race pedal medics). And of course there are rescue helicopters.

CAREER ROLE EXAMPLES
Paramedics usually work two day shifts (12 hours each) and two night shifts (12 hours each), then have four days off.

Levels of practice
First Responders - Volunteers who have undergone a comprehensive first aid course and provide pre-hospital care to a limited level under supervision of paramedics

Emergency medical technician (EMT) – The emergency medical technician (EMT) assists paramedics as part of ambulance services, including some drug administration and life support. In NZ this is often a graduate entry role. EMT’s need an ‘authority to practice’ (ATP). You are typically eligible to apply for an ATP at the 18 month point in the Bachelor of Health Science in Paramedicine.
**Paramedic** – Attends accidents, medical emergencies and many other callouts, helping stabilise people who are sick, injured or in shock while transporting them to a medical facility if required. This level of practice includes skills such as manual defibrillation and IV cannulation, synchronised cardioversion and the administration of a range of drugs. Paramedics have completed a Bachelor of Health Science.

**Intensive care paramedic** – Officers at this level are specialists in critical care and clinical judgement, with a proven clinical ability to manage complex patients. They’re capable of delivering a wide range of drugs, advanced airway management, and a number of invasive skills. Requires a 12-month postgraduate course of study.

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**SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE**

**Practice professionally** – Undertake safe, skilled, ethical and legally appropriate pre-hospital emergency care that meets legislative requirements of all health professionals.

**Demonstrate sound clinical judgement** – Make clinical decisions in a timely, ethical and patient inclusive fashion. Be able to adapt to changes in the patient’s condition, taking into account the patient’s present condition and circumstances leading to it, their age and autonomy, distance to hospital care and availability of resources.

**Practice contextually** – Value and respect diverse cultural and professional perspectives and skilled at working with colleagues, sick and injured people, whānau – family members, and the community.

**Problem solve effectively** – Able to interpret observations and clinical history, recognise severity and solve problems in new situations. Underpin problem solving with a sound grasp of knowledge and rationale.

**Lead astutely** – Competent at making decisions in a team setting, working well under pressure, being a role model and fostering optimal performance in teams.

**Clinical skills** – Knowledgeable in a range of nursing practice, from putting in IVs, to resuscitation, treating shock and injuries, performing emergency procedures and using specialist equipment such as cardiac defibrillators. Demonstrate competency in safety and situation assessment and risk management. Highly knowledgeable about the anatomy and physiology of the human body.

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**PERSONAL QUALITIES**

- Effective communication skills, capable of relating to a diverse range of people
- Able to develop professional relationships with emergency services including police
- Physically fit and capable of dealing with long shifts
- Motivated, resilient and realistic about the challenges of paramedicine
- Self-assured, confident, trustworthy and ethical
- Demonstrate professional integrity, honesty, and collegiality
- Clean driver’s licence.

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**PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION**

This issue is currently under governmental consideration.

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**THE AUT ADVANTAGE**

AUT is the only New Zealand university to offer a Bachelor of Health Science in Paramedicine. Whitireia Community Polytechnic (Wellington region) also offers a degree.

Extensive clinical hours (approximately 1000 hours), while studying, ensure AUT paramedic graduates are work ready. This includes a hospital placement in a general ward, as well as emergency wards.

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**FURTHER STUDY OPTIONS**

Further study is available at postgraduate level, including the Postgraduate Certificate in Health Science in Critical Care Paramedicine, Postgraduate Diploma in Health Science in Paramedicine and Doctor of Health Science. Study areas include psychosocial aspects of emergencies, resuscitation physiology, emergency risk communication, contemporary intensive paramedicine and business continuity and crisis management.
I’ve been working in Tauranga for St John about a year and a half since graduating. Before that I worked three years as a volunteer and casual paid officer for them.

I work four, 12-hour shifts, consisting of two days and two nights, followed by four days off. A typical 12-hour shift involves primarily responding to 111 calls where we treat and stabilise the patient(s) before transporting them to the most appropriate medical facility.

People’s emergencies range from coughs and colds, to falls, chest pain, mental health issues, car accidents or cardiac arrests. It is a mix of medical and traumatic emergencies; only a small proportion involves lights, sirens and saving lives. We are simply there for people when they need help and are unsure of where to go or what to do.

At the end of the working day, you feel as though you have helped someone along the way, positively impacting their lives, regardless of how big or small that may be. I also enjoy the team environment, whether on the road working alongside your crew partner, or back at the station.”

“Kurt’s degree, clinical ability and character make him an asset to our service! Kurt maintained contact with our local area as a volunteer while completing his degree. Throughout this time he proved a reliable and competent practitioner who displays the values that St John hold in high regard: teamwork, professionalism, integrity and empathy.

His AUT degree in paramedicine armed him with the knowledge and skills required to help our patients and their families in the pre-hospital environment.”

Ross Clarke
Territory Manager, St John
USEFUL WEBSITES

St John NZ
www.stjohn.org.nz/About-St-John/Join-St-John/Ambulance-Officers

New Zealand paramedic organisation
www.nzparamedic.org/become-a-paramedic

Paramedics Australasia
www.paramedics.org

Defence Forces
www.defencecareers.mil.nz/army/jobs/medic

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about Paramedicine studies and the Bachelor of Health Science, visit www.aut.ac.nz/paramedicine

FUTURE STUDENTS
Contact the Future Student Advisory team for more information: www.aut.ac.nz/enquire
futurestudents@aut.ac.nz

CURRENT AUT STUDENTS
Contact the Student Hub Advisors team for more information: 0800 AUT UNI (0800 288 864)
www.aut.ac.nz/enquire | studenthub@aut.ac.nz

EMPLOYABILITY & CAREERS
For other Future Career Sheets visit:
www.aut.ac.nz/careersheets
For employability and career support, AUT students can book an appointment through https://elab.aut.ac.nz/

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The information contained in this career sheet is correct at time of printing, August 2019.