A FUTURE IN PARAMEDICINE
Flashing sirens and speeding ambulances create a public image of 24/7 adrenaline activity, but paramedics handle much more than car crashes and other accidents. As emergency medicine professionals, 80% of their work is medical; only 20% of their work involves trauma.

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.

Paramedics also supply ambulance assistance from home to hospital and between hospitals.

If you have a strong compassionate personality, a genuine interest in providing emergency care, have strengths in defusing volatile situations, and can cope with unpredictable challenges involving trauma and illness, then this could be a great career path for you.

**WHAT IS PARAMEDICINE?**

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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 (e.g. Oxfam Taupo Race pedal medics). And of course there are rescue helicopters.

CAREER ROLE EXAMPLES

Traditionally paramedics work two days 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. This is the first level of authority to practice (ATP). You are typically eligible to apply for an Authority to Practice (ATP) as emergency medical technician at the 18 month point in the bachelor of health science paramedicine degree.
**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 in Paramedicine.

**Intensive care paramedic**
Officers at this level are specialists in critical care and clinical judgement, with a proven 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION

This issue is currently under governmental consideration.

## THE AUT ADVANTAGE

AUT is the only New Zealand university to offer a degree 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.

## 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.

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### SALARY GUIDE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Salary (per year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency medical technician</td>
<td>$55,000 – $60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paramedic</td>
<td>$60,000 – $70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive care paramedic</td>
<td>$70,000 – $75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian new graduates</td>
<td>AUS $90,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Salary range is indicative of the New Zealand job market at the time of publication and should only be used as a guideline.
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.

EMployer comment

“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

Paramedic Hub
www.paramedichub.com

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

For the most up-to-date information on paramedicine study, visit our website:
www.aut.ac.nz/paramedicine

You can also contact the AUT Student Centre team for help and advice:

0800 AUT UNI (0800 288 864)
email: studentcentre@aut.ac.nz

CITY CAMPUS
55 Wellesley Street East, Auckland Central

NORTH CAMPUS
90 Akoranga Drive, Northcote, Auckland

SOUTH CAMPUS
640 Great South Road, Manukau, Auckland

AUT MILLENIUM
17 Antares Place, Mairangi Bay, Auckland

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The information contained in this career sheet was correct at time of print, March 2015.