



Dear Colleague

Braemar ENT specialist Andy Wood works in a field that delivers life-changing results...



ENT specialist Andy Wood says he's in the business of "taking concerns about the nose out of people's life". For those with chronic rhinosinusitis – a condition that causes facial pain, a blocked nose, excess mucous, lack of smell and interrupted sleep – that is very good news.

"When your nose is the focus of your life, it's hard to put it out of your mind.

It affects work, sleep, social relationships and enjoyment of life. When the condition is effectively treated, you can get on with life and forget about it," he says.

Chronic rhinosinusitis is a morbid and expensive disorder involving persistent inflammation of the nose and sinuses. A popular hypothesis is that it is caused by a temporary but significant viral infection, which changes the biology of the sinuses, allowing bacteria to persist and stimulate inflammation.

There are no robust data for New Zealand, but in the US, it is estimated that up to 10 per cent of the population (potentially up to 400,000 Kiwis) have symptoms. UK-born Andy has spent large parts of his career – including three and a half years completing his PhD – researching the underlying causes of the condition, and applying that knowledge to his

practice. "While it's not a life-and-death condition, it's about improving the quality of lives. If your sinuses play up, the impact on your life is significant."

The field of ENT attracted him when he was at medical school in Oxford. He says it excites him in part because developments in technology and techniques have evolved rapidly over the past two decades. "Many people don't realise what is possible now. Their opinions may be based on their experience of surgery from another era. Contemporary surgery is very commonly effective and well tolerated and can be life-changing."

But he says rhinosinusitis is not one disease and different people have different symptoms. "One of the things that attracted me to ENT is that there are a range of non-surgical treatments that are also effective. While most sinus and nasal conditions



can be improved by some form of surgery, for some an operation is terrifying. For them, we can offer a range of options. We are not merely technicians. The aim is to marry treatments to the symptoms. For some that might be simple measures like a nasal spray; for others surgery."

The nose is also an entry point for other procedures, such as operations on pituitary and other brain tumours, the tear ducts, the orbit, and for stopping leaks of cerebro spinal fluid, from around the brain. Traditionally, those operations may have involved incisions in the face or on the head, resulting in significant scarring and recovery time. Transnasal surgery is less invasive and commonly leads to a quicker recovery time. Andy says because the surgery requires more than one surgeon – an ENT specialist and a neurosurgeon or eye surgeon - there is an interface between the fields. "We work together and commonly share care of patients and learn huge amounts from each other."

Further developments are on the horizon. One of the big challenges in treating sinusitis is to effectively deliver anti-inflammatory steroids into the affected area. With his active research interest, he is in discussion with Bioengineers about devices for the slow release of steroids. Andy also expects that at some point in the future he will operate wearing 3D

glasses, which will allow surgeons to see in even greater detail.

He says, in the field of rhinology, New Zealand is "well up there". Arguably the world's leading rhinologist is based in Adelaide and skills have cascaded through Australasia including to Auckland where Andy underwent further Rhinology training under the tutorship of Professor Richard Douglas, a leader in the field. Andy is active in surgical research and is currently involved in five projects, providing mentorship to junior colleagues. His roles in the University of Auckland and the New Zealand ENT Training Committee mean that he frequently teaches at both undergraduate and post-graduate level.

He says there is still much to learn and significant room for further improvements. But the rewards are endless. "In surgery, it's almost instant, when you see a patient get back to good health. In research, you may have to work for 18 months, before you can stand on a podium and present your results."

Andy also treats tonsillitis, ear infections, glue ear, hearing loss, sore throats and snoring and obstructive sleep apnoea in both adults and children.

Dr Greg Spark – Deputy Chairman

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Areas of Specialisation

Rhinology and Anterior skull base surgery.

Ear Nose and Throat Surgery.

Specialist Training

BA, The University of Oxford,
UK (2000)

BM BCh, The University of Oxford,
UK (2003)

PhD, The University of Auckland
(2013)

FRACS, Royal Australasian College
of Surgery (2014)

Rhinology Fellowship, Auckland
Region (2015-16)

Positions & Memberships

Consultant Surgeon, Waikato
District Health Board

Fellow of the Royal Australasian
College of Surgeons

Member of the New Zealand Society
of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck
Surgery

Member of the Australia and New
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Member of the New Zealand
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