

Michael Pittilo Student Essay Award winner announced

Warm congratulations to **Fiona Price-Keuhne** from University College London Medical School, who is this year's winner of the Michael Pittilo Student Essay Award.

The Michael Pittilo Student Essay Award is presented annually for the best student essay on integrated health and care. In line with Michael Pittilo's vision of integrating conventional and complementary approaches, the award is open to both medical and complementary therapy students.

The aim is to celebrate the diversity of clinical approaches, but also to provide an integrated message that ensures that patients get the very best and most effective care.

Dr Michael Dixon, who announced the winners, said: 'That means integrating the best of science (both biomedical and psychosocial) with clinical intuition and judgment, along with the mindset, beliefs and wishes of the

patient. These are the same principles behind the College of Medicine that will be launched on 28 October 2010, and will host the ongoing Michael Pittilo Student Essay Award.'

Chairman of the new College of Medicine, Dr Dixon continued: 'As a multi-professional college, we hope to encourage students to write for this award because we believe that students often express an element of fresh idealism and open mindedness, which, all too often, can become thwarted as they progress through mainstream medical training and become fully fledged clinicians.'

Students taking part in the 2010 awards were given the following essay topic: 'Describe an integrated approach to one area of patient care, and explain how it might still be affecting the health and well-being of the patients it serves in 10 years' time.'

The submitted essays varied considerably in

terms of the conditions and therapies focused upon, but all were of a high standard and clearly mirrored the authors' passion for an integrated approach to healthcare.

Five essays were eventually short-listed and deliberated over by a panel of judges, which included Dr Dixon and Karen Young, editor of IT. After much consideration, it was unanimously decided that Fiona Price-Keuhne had submitted the winning essay. As well as having this published in *International Therapist*, Fiona receives a certificate and prize of £500.

Congratulations also go to **Nicholas Robertson**, a medical student at Newcastle University, who was awarded second place, and to the runners up: **Lara Just**, Centre for Nutrition Education and Lifestyle Management; and **Ravi Naik**, Imperial College School of Medicine, who were both awarded merits for their outstanding essays.



An integrated approach to the patient on long-term systemic corticosteroid treatment

by **Fiona Price-Keuhne**,
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INTRODUCTION

Corticosteroids have played a vital role in the life-saving treatment of my systemic vasculitis, Wegener's granulomatosis. Indeed without their help, I may not have been here today. However, the treatment has come at a price; mood swings, muscle wastage and osteoporosis are just a few of the side effects that I have battled with as a result of long-term systemic steroid treatment.

For patients like me with a chronic inflammatory or autoimmune condition – those with scleroderma, Crohn's disease or rheumatoid arthritis to name just a few – the anti-inflammatory and immunosuppressant actions of long-term steroid therapy can give us a quality of life and a control of our diseases that would otherwise be impossible. Unfortunately, the systemic nature of the drug means that its side effects are wide-ranging and potentially devastating to our health and general well-being.

I believe that an integrated approach to patients on long-term steroids is the key to lessening the impact that the treatment has on the patient's life, with particular focus on weight control, bone health and psychological problems. While some benefits would be evident straight away and others would be seen 10 years on and beyond, the person's journey through healthcare and life in general could be transformed for the better.

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

Central to an integrated approach to the person on long-term steroids is patient education from the very beginning of treatment, explaining the possible short-term and long-term consequences of steroid therapy.

By empowering the person with the knowledge to self-care and self-manage, they are encouraged to take responsibility for their health. Crucially, the person must decide themselves to make choices and

changes in their life that will keep them well. They can only do this with guidance and education.

Support from experts in fields such as diet and nutrition, stress relief and exercise is essential. These specialists would be well versed in the complexities of a patient with an underlying disease who is on long-term systemic steroid treatment. The specialist would also appreciate the individuality of the person, taking into account their unique needs, feelings and way of life as a whole. Together, the patient, specialist and medical team can confront weight control, bone health and mental well-being.

EATING WELL AND DEALING WITH AN INCREASED APPETITE

Dramatic weight gain is one of the most dreaded side effects of treatment with corticosteroids. While obesity is a well-established risk factor for cardiovascular disease, strokes and

