

Helping everyone be healthy bastards

Reading and writing are often loves which go hand in hand for many people, but as reporter **Lucy Ratcliffe** finds out, that's not the case for Bulls GP **Dave Baldwin**



When Dave Baldwin isn't writing or working at the Bulls Medical Centre, he's doing pilot medicals

Dave Baldwin hates reading with a passion. One time, when he was heading over to a mate's place for beer, the gathering turned out to be a book group. Dave gave reading a go, but in the end he asked wife Sandi, a primary school teacher, to read to him instead. The blokes in the book group weren't too impressed when they found out.



Ironically, the Manawatu GP and founder of pilot medicals business, Bulls Flying Doctor Service, is the author of two books. The most recent was published earlier this month and goes by the name of *Healthy Bastards: A bloke's guide to being healthy*. It's an "un-aviated" version of his first book *Fitness to Fly for Healthy Bastards* which he self-published in 2007.

Healthy Bastards: A bloke's guide to being healthy has been published by Random House, and the experience is quite a contrast to his first foray into publishing. Dave says he doesn't have to worry about marketing or any of that kind of carry on. He just has to turn up, entertain people, talk about the book and sign a few. Not that it's a task the 52-year-old isn't taking seriously. When *New Zealand Doctor* phoned, Dave answered saying he was just in the middle of having a play with his new audio system – portable microphones and the like. He's got his own projector for presentations too.

"It's very important to have your own gear," he explains. "I have seen the most intelligent guys look like dicks when the gear doesn't work, [but] the most important thing is that I can fit it in my plane."

It just wouldn't do to have the audio gear strapped to the wing of the plane, he explains. Plus, Dave has to fit in his doctor's bag so he can do some pilot medicals during the book tour – he's bound to end up doing a few.



Healthy Bastards: A bloke's guide to being healthy, came about after he found out the first book was more of a hit with non-aviated folk than pilots. He's actually run out of stock it was so popular. But also prominent in his mind was the stark difference



between the patients he saw when travelling to remote parts of the country to do pilot medicals and those he saw in a general practice setting at his other workplace, Bulls Medical Centre.

In general practice, he's noticed more and more people dying prematurely. But doing pilot medicals, he meets sprightly 80-year-olds who are still flying and making the most of life. Or, in Dave's words, "shagging like mad men and as happy as sand boys". They are driven by the magic of flying to keep themselves healthy.

This isn't dissimilar to Dave's own philosophy. He doesn't see the maintenance required for the human body any different to how he would look after a motor vehicle coming off an assembly line. The body needs regular services and repairs, he explains.

Sadly, the same understanding doesn't apply to all blokes. "The facts are that men die earlier than women, and it's usually self-induced," he says.

Having said that, Dave stresses the new book isn't strictly for men. He has included a chapter on lady health issues, or as Dave has entitled it "a section on Sheila's".

"I wouldn't go as far as writing a whole book on women's health though – first, I'm not a suitably qualified gynaecologist," Dave writes at the beginning of the section.

"And second, I'd have to call it something like *Fitness for Healthy Bitches*, and I don't think that would go down very well." lratcliffe@nzdoctor.co.nz **D**