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One of the greatest favours a bloke can do his body is to find a doctor he likes and get regular check-ups. Photo: iStock

## Glorious bastards

A New Zealand doctor is having a bit of fun telling good Kiwi blokes to get better. Happy, healthy Father's Day, says Megan Nicol Reed.

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We have five copies of Dr Dave Baldwin's book *Healthy Bastards: A Bloke's Guide to Being Healthy to Give Away*. Email [escape@star-times.co.nz](mailto:escape@star-times.co.nz) with Healthy Bastards in the subject line by Friday, September 11.

**IN DAVE** Baldwin's world, men are "bastards", women are "sheilas" and he's a "wanker". Actually he's a doctor, but he knows that for a lot of good Kiwi blokes, all doctors are just a "bunch of bloody idiots". He's not one to take offence.

"See, I know as a GP that through my style there is a group that gets irritated by me. But that's just the way I am. I'm just me, you know."

"There's a hardcore group of men, but also women as well, who just don't actually give a damn and it doesn't really seem to matter what you do they just don't listen and the first thing to really cheese them off is to tell them to stop smoking. You can just see them all wound up. Here's

another wanker doctor, you know. So I thought I'd rather come in the backdoor and get them inside with a bit of a hoot in the book."

That book is called *Healthy Bastards* and it's just been released. Written like he talks, it's for men who don't (or won't) go to the doctor. It covers all the stuff you'd expect such as obesity and erectile dysfunction, except that Baldwin calls them "fat bastards" and "pecker failure". Scattered through sections with titles like "High blood pressure will bugger your brain" are silly little drawings of a bloke called Gav.

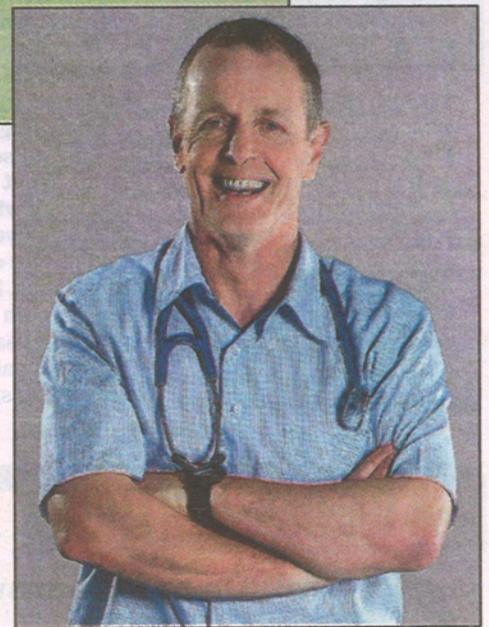
"Most of the books out there at the moment for health are for the worried well and they use words that are just too hard and my term for them is literary sleeping pills. People start reading them and within a few pages they've gone to sleep whereas the angle that I've gone with, a lot of the chapters start with anecdotes. For example in sexually transmitted diseases you've got Gav in the

wonderful Landsborough valley with his deer-hunting mates, he's got the barbed-wire runs and screaming and carrying on and it makes it interesting and the tough guy may think, 'Oh, I'll read on. Gee, I had that once.'"

Baldwin, 52, divides his time between his rural medical practice in Bulls and the Bulls Flying Doctor Service (the only mobile aviation medical service for pilots in the world). He was motivated to write this book (originally self-published for his pilot patients as *Fitness to Fly for Healthy Bastards*) after two decades across the specialties of family and aviation medicine.

"In general practice, you see a group of patients who just don't take care of themselves, and after a period of time it actually gets quite depressing signing death certificates of people who die way too early. And you think, 'What could I have done?'. You don't want to be the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. Then I had my contrasting practice through

Dave Baldwin says some find him irritating but that's just the way he is. Photo: Chris Coad



the aviation medicine and I see so many wonderful people, 80 year olds who look like they're 40 and they really take care of their bodies and you look at them, and you think why don't some of these other people do the same. So rather than just either denying it or just doing nothing about it, I thought I'd try and reach this group by writing a pretty non-PC, but fun, Barry Crump-style book."

He holds these elderly pilots up as examples of how we all should treat our "beautifully designed, robot machine, Terminator-like" bodies.

"They're all skinny. They all are fit. They all have low blood pressure. They don't smoke. And they've all got a big smile on their dial. All the

fat ones are dead."

He reckons one of the greatest favours you can do your body is to find a doctor you like and get regular check-ups. And despite scary statistics, like those which recently branded us one of the fattest countries in the world, Baldwin has seen improvement in New Zealanders' (particularly men's) attitudes towards their health.

"I might suggest, 'Look do you want us to check your prostate out?' Five years ago they'd have probably taken a swing at you, whereas now they've all had friends who have had prostate cancer and - it's quite embarrassing - they'll often have their tweeds off before you can say, 'Hold on.'"