

One minute with Health Protection Officer Ayan Hussein

What does your job involve?

I identify and manage potential health risks to the public. Health Protection Officers (HPOs) carry out a regulatory role on behalf of the Director General of Health. The main areas we focus on include:

- Communicable diseases;
- Environmental health; and
- Food safety.

What pathway got you to this job?

I hold a Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Science and Post-graduate Diploma in Public Health.

What advice would you give someone keen to enter your field?

Our days are filled with a variety of activities and are never boring or predictable. A week in the life of an HPO may involve:

- Surveillance of exotic mosquitoes around the airport and seaport;
- Responding to a case or an outbreak of infectious disease;
- Investigating a chemical spill and providing advice to protect the public;
- Carrying out a pre-licencing assessment of a prospective early childcare centre and providing health reports to the Ministry of Education;
- Granting pratique (health clearance) to incoming maritime vessels;
- Inspecting a ship and issuing Ship Sanitation Certification and much more.

Who inspires you and why?

My dad has been a constant source of inspiration. I have seen him work hard and put the needs of others first before his own needs for as long as I can remember. He has made it his life's mission to increase literacy and eradicate poverty – not only within his immediate family – but his local community back home by sponsoring youth education, contributing towards setting up small businesses for his siblings, nephews and nieces, feeding the orphans and taking part in building schools, mosques and public facilities.

He always reminds us to lift others who are in need without expecting favours in return so that Allah can lift us up when we are in need.

What do Waitaha Canterbury's values (Care and respect for others, Integrity in all we do and Responsibility for outcomes) mean to you in your role?

I take pride in how I show kindness, caring, empathy, and compassion with all aspects of my work, within the community and at New Zealand's points of entry.

If you could be anywhere in the world right now where would you be?

In Turkey helping my earthquake-stricken brothers and sisters. The catastrophic February earthquake has devastated the people of Turkey and the already displaced people of Syria, leaving behind huge destruction of lives and infrastructure.



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I feel their pain on a personal note because in 2011, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (then prime minister) set foot in Mogadishu, to draw the attention of the international community to the great drought disaster in Somalia and to show solidarity with the Somali people.

That visit became the most high-profile visit by a non-African leader to Somalia which attracted the world's attention to the dire humanitarian crisis in my birth country. Turkey's priority in Somalia was to deliver humanitarian aid to those affected by the drought.

As a global citizen who knows one or two things about natural and man-made disasters, my heart aches for the people of Turkey and Syria.

Who would you want to play you if there was a movie made about your life?

Angelina Jolie. I admire her service to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and commitment to protecting the rights and safety of displaced people.

What are your hobbies or interests outside of work?

Trying new recipes, creating teaching content for kids and reading.