



Surgeons Nick Fisher and Tammy Pegg, Nelson

tag and take turns. When you've got a business and kids, it's about being as efficient with your time as possible."

Nathan's thankful for Jodie's background of competitive sport. "She knows you don't get the results without hard work. Because I compete in endurance sport, I need to do a reasonable amount of training, and with that there are compromises and sacrifices."

"I don't spend much time in the car these days with the family; I'm usually biking or running wherever we go. I just meet Jodie and the kids wherever."

Jodie laughs, "The kids asked the other day if you were swimming to Nelson!"

At this point in their careers, they find delegating responsibilities the most effective way to manage their lives.

"What's made it work for us is that we have clear roles as to what we're doing," explains Jodie. "Often my job is the kids, but with major events I generally get our parents in so I can help Nathan."

An appreciative Nathan adds, "The level of communication and trust between us is so much higher than I could ever have with a staff member or co-worker."

Despite the solitary life of an athlete, they also regularly compete in teams, and their ability to work as a team shines through in their relationship.



As key members of Nelson Hospital's cardiology unit, former Royal Naval Surgeon Commander Nick Fisher, 42, and Dr Tammy Pegg, 33, know all about the value of teamwork. A rare husband-and-wife team at such a level, Nick arrived five years ago to help create a new department alongside Dr Andrew Hamer, and introduced the interventional procedure known as angioplasty – the insertion and inflation of a balloon to open damaged arteries – to the region.

Tammy has a PhD from Oxford University and practised in the UK and Australia before coming to Nelson to work with Nick. They have a small baby (Tammy knew it was a boy the first time she scanned herself) and Nick has two daughters and a son from an earlier marriage. "I'm near to finishing the repeat training needed for me to practise in New Zealand," says Tammy. "I'd have finished if he'd not got me pregnant!"

"We're working closely together at the moment," says Tammy. "But having two consultants in the same place at the same time isn't an efficient use of staff, so in the near future we won't be side by side."

They live in Mahana on undulating land with space for a fledgling vineyard and a roaming peacock. Like many professionals in medicine, they have a starkly realistic view of life. "Careers like ours occupy 100% of your life," says Nick.

Speaking after a late return from the hospital, the next morning brings a 7.00am flight to Wellington and a full day of operating. "How I feel in the evenings depends on how work goes. During the day, people will live or die on my hands," he says.

And it helps to have an informed partner that fully appreciates your reaction to those kinds of pressures. "A lot of that I can pick up just from knowing the job itself," confirms Tammy. "If he says, 'I did a primary angioplasty and got no re-flow,' I know he'll be pissed off. And he'll feel guilty and be wondering if he could have done something different."

Despite Tammy also dealing with a young baby, she's sensitive enough to realise it's not the time to talk about how tough her day might have been. "He'll need to go off into the garden for an hour and just drive the tractor round in circles."

The empathy channels both ways. "As a professional woman, it's very difficult to explain to people why I worked late and couldn't pick up the kids from school. 'They should be your first priority!' – Nick would never say something like that to me."

"If I'm in the emergency department and someone's in cardiac arrest, I can't just leave. Even though you'd give your right arm to be picking up your kids, you've got nurses and junior doctors there, and the eyes of the patient's family boring into your soul. Only another doctor would understand what that's like."