

## Meet Sandeep Uppal



When Sandeep Uppal arrived in New Zealand in July, 2012, he was too scared to talk to the person who was waiting for him. Sandeep had come to NZ to study towards a Graduate Diploma in Infection Prevention at Waiariki Institute (now, Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology) in Rotorua. In his native home of Sri Ganganagar in India's northern province of Rajasthan, he had spent his primary & secondary school years speaking only Hindi and it was only when he enrolled for a degree in prosthetics that the language of instruction changed to English. Even then, the emphasis was on writing, not speaking. In NZ, Sandeep quickly realised that if he wanted to achieve his career ambitions, or to have any chance of finding work, he needed to speedily improve his English and communication skills as the Waiariki course on its own was not going to be enough. Sandeep joined the public speaking group Toastmasters and he remembers his heart pounding as he first stood up to speak. He ended up winning competitions for his humorous and inspirational speeches with that, he joined Speech New Zealand for Certificate in Professional speaking, where his examination speech was about Prosthetics and Orthotics. All these things made a huge difference professionally in his life.

During study with Waiariki, Sandeep found work on the night shift at a service station and also started working as a care giver in Tauranga, where he travelled by Bus each morning after his night shift at the gas station. After completing study with Waiariki, Sandeep began looking for work that matched his qualifications as his job search visa was due to expire soon. Finally, he got a job offer in Wellington limb centre in April 2014. Sandeep spent 3 ½ years in Wellington before transferring to the Burwood Limb Centre in October, 2017. Sandeep lives in St Albans with his younger sister (Renuka) who is also doing well in NZ but his parents still reside in India. He has 2 special friends as well in Christchurch, they are like family to him with whom Sandeep spends his free time.

Sandeep had obtained his Bachelor's Degree in Prosthetics & Orthotics after 4.5 years of study in India back in 2011 and worked for Endolite India for 1 year. He had grown up in a happy and supportive family environment and although his parents found it hard financially, they would do whatever it took to assist Sandeep to follow his dreams. He recalls his Mum, Lakhveer, saying he should always be true to himself so he made plans to come to NZ to pursue his dreams. Sandeep has a very special relationship with his Mum and also with a mentor in Rotorua, "Jennie, his NZ Mum". Sandeep said "Many people in this world even

don't have one mum and I am lucky and blessed to have 2 beautiful angels in my life, my Mum in India (Lakhveer Uppal) and in NZ (Jennie Arvidson).

Sandeep says that he is thoroughly enjoying his new life in Christchurch and is passionate about his role at the Limb Centre at which client focus is his primary objective. "Every patient has a different story and the way we communicate with them is also very different. Some are happy and enthusiastic, they like to walk, they are excited to have a new limb but some are not ready to accept what has happened to them. You need to be able to explain things to them, assure them that they will be fine and that they can trust you. You need to build that relationship"

Sandeep is justifiably proud of his achievements in presenting to the World Congress of International Prosthetics & Orthotics, (ISPO) in Lyon, France, 2015 and in Cape Town, South Africa 2017. In addition, he also presented at Australian Orthotics and Prosthetics Association twice in 2015 and 2016. He is also currently the Secretary of NZOPA (NZ Prosthetics and Orthotics association). Earlier this year, he was an Ottobock Repair Centre Volunteer at the Para Sport Gold Coast Commonwealth Games which he described as one of the greatest experiences of his life.

**FAVOURITE FOOD:** Apart from Indian, Italian pasta dish with garlic & mushroom sauce.

**FAVOURITE PLACES:** Paris & Sydney.

**ACTIVITIES/HOBBIES:** Love to do Bollywood freestyle Dance but also likes contemporary dance.

**FAVOURITE MUSIC:** All genres but particularly ballads where songs have a story and meaning.

**FAVOURITE MOVIE:** The Fault in our Stars (about an amputee) & Bollywood Movies.

**FAVOURITE BOOK/AUTHOR:** The Laws of Spiritual World by Khorshed Bhavnagari and J K Rowling and the Harry Potter series.

Sandeep states that the greatest risk he has ever taken in his life was to travel to NZ to pursue his dreams but admits he is a risk taker and thinks that accepting the challenges has made him a stronger person. He also says that he finds it hard to say "No" to people but he has learnt to think about himself as well. Sandeep has travel experiences in Europe, South Africa, South East Asia and Australia as well as a lot of NZ.