

17/4/2020

Chief Nursing Officer letter to Nurses across Aotearoa

Tēnā koutou katoa,

This week the Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern again acknowledged New Zealand nurses not just here at home but also those who are providing essential frontline services all around the world. The fantastic work of Invercargill nurse Jenny McGee in the United Kingdom, and the personal recognition she received from British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, is an important reminder of the work that New Zealanders and in particular nurses around the world are doing.

Thank you to the nursing teams in Christchurch and around the motu (country)

In this pānui I would specifically like to acknowledge the amazing work of the nurses and staff at Rosewood Rest Home and Hospital and Burwood Hospital who provide the best possible care in an extremely challenging environment.

In a media conference this week, Director-General of Health Dr Ashley Bloomfield shared words from family members of residents, who expressed their gratitude and respect for the staff at these facilities and the compassion and professionalism they had shown in these incredibly difficult times. I would like to reiterate these sentiments and express how proud I am of you all for the important mahi you are doing, please know that the care and aroha you are providing is not going un-noticed.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

I understand that many nurses and health care workers have many questions and concerns regarding the appropriate use of, and access to, PPE. I can assure you that the safety of frontline healthcare workers continues to be a top priority for myself and Ministry colleagues.

The national ordering process for PPE was stood up earlier this week to distribute masks to health care workers, with other PPE products being added to this process in the near future. I am aware there are still areas that are not receiving adequate supply, but please be assured this is actively being worked on.

PPE stock is actively being sourced with approximately 10 million items this week for distribution of which 9 million are procedure masks or equivalent, 444,000 face shields, 350,000 goggles and 50,000 isolation gowns. Next week we expect to receive 18 million items of which 16,500,000 are procedure masks.

The Ministry of Health Guidelines for the use of PPE for frontline workers has been updated and is available on the Ministry's website here: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-advice-essential-workers-including-personal-protective-equipment/personal-protective-equipment-use-health-care> . This has been developed in consultation with representatives of the health unions including NZNO.

Further information is being developed in a poster form with more specific information on wearing PPE and considerations to be taken into account when using PPE.

State of the World's Nursing report

On 7 April 2020, World Health Day, the WHO and partners International Council of Nurses and Nursing Now released the State of the World's Nursing 2020 report. This is the very first time that over 190 countries from around the world submitted their respective country workforce data, which has been collated into this global report.

On 14 April 2020, the Ministry of Health hosted a webinar to reflect on the findings of the report. Approximately 80 people participated in the webinar, which included an overview of the report and what it means for nursing regulation, along with a panel discussion.

Minister of Health Dr David Clarke was unable to attend the webinar, but forwarded a korero which I read out on his behalf. He acknowledged that the report will support evidence-based planning for investing in the nursing profession in order to improve health and wellbeing for all. He also acknowledged the overwhelming response of nurses to the Covid-19 pandemic, which is testament to the dedication and resilience of New Zealand nurses. "We have a lot to be proud of, even in these difficult times. Thank you once again for your unwavering commitment to the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders".

A big mihi to all who attended the webinar, particularly the speakers and panel members. The recording of the webinar and the powerpoints presented on the day will be made available on the Ministry's website for those who were unable to attend.

Not only did the webinar provide an opportunity to celebrate the report and its significance for nursing worldwide, it was also a chance to connect with our colleagues across the country via a new way of connecting that we are all getting used to. We hope to host more webinars in the near future, keep an eye out for more information on these.

Vaccinations

As at 8 April, Ministry of Health, PHARMAC and HCL have ensured 1,013,828 influenza vaccines have been distributed to vaccination providers.

We are still in the early phase of the vaccination campaign, focusing on providing vaccinations for those who are most vulnerable – over-65s, pregnant women and those with underlying health conditions, as well as healthcare and other front-line workers. In order to ensure that everyone in the priority populations have had adequate opportunity to receive their vaccination, only these groups should be provided vaccinations until 27 April.

Please continue to encourage your nursing colleagues and their whānau within the priority groups to get their free influenza vaccinations as soon as possible.

Wherever possible, we urge providers to record influenza vaccination on the NIR. The NIR is the most accurate source of information for the Ministry about how many vaccines have been administered and how many are still likely to be in circulation and guides our decision-making.

Flutracking

Flutracking is an online survey which asks if you have had a fever or cough in the last week and can help us track COVID-19. Registering online will help our surveillance efforts by providing early detection of community spread of the flu and also of COVID-19 symptoms.

We encourage whānau to register online at www.info.flutracking.net. This is a practical thing we can all do to help us monitor flu and COVID-19 symptoms throughout New Zealand. I have signed up so I hope you will too.

Call for health workers to assist with Covid 19 response

Thank you to the nurses who have offered to return to work to assist with the Covid 19 response as part of the Health Workforce Directorate database. Nursing Council has issued more than 900 Interim Practising Certificates (IPCs). According to Nursing Council the majority of IPCs have been issued to nurses aged between 30-60 who have either retired or taken a career break.

Like Jenny McGee, I know there are a lot of nurses doing amazing work in New Zealand and overseas. I would love to hear their (and your) stories and share them. If you have any stories you would like to share, I encourage you to send them through to us at chief nursing officer @health .govt.nz.

We can be extremely proud of our nurses, health sector workforce and all New Zealanders for their response in these difficult times. As we begin to prepare to move out of Alert Level 4, we must continue to ensure that we are doing everything we can to keep our whānau, communities and workforce safe. I encourage you to continue to check the official NZ COVID-19 website and the Ministry's COVID-19 website pages for updates.

Nāku noa,

Margareth Broodkoorn
Chief Nursing Officer
Ministry of Health