

## Chief Nursing Officer update to Nurses across Aotearoa

### October 2020

Tēnā koutou katoa,

With all of New Zealand back at Alert Level 1, I want to begin this pānui by taking a moment to acknowledge the work of nurses across New Zealand, particularly those in Auckland and nurses and health care workers in national managed isolation and quarantine facilities for your contribution to the national health response. I recognise the additional pressures that have been placed on many people and encourage you all to continue to look after yourselves and each other.

#### Changes to the Office of the Chief Nurse

I am delighted to announce some new additions to the Chief Nurses Office.

Pam Doole and Jill Wilkinson joined the Office of the Chief Nurse at the Ministry of Health last week as Clinical Chief Advisors: Nursing. Pam has commenced in a full-time role, with Jill joining the team for a four-month period.

Pam has a deep understanding of professional nursing issues, regulation and policy as it relates to nursing. In her long service at Nursing Council, Pam has led many strategic projects including the development of registered nurses prescribing, review of the nurse practitioner scope of practice and the Code of Conduct.

Jill also has an extensive health background with over 20 years' experience in policy development, research and academic leadership roles. As a Senior Policy Analyst with the NZ Nurses Organisation, policy intern with the International Council of Nurses in Geneva and teaching and research roles at Massey and Victoria universities Jill brings a range of skills to the team.

Pam and Jill will be a huge asset to the clinical team at the Ministry.

You may have heard that I will be departing the Ministry of Health at the end of the year. I have made the difficult decision to leave the Ministry to return home to Tai Tokerau having accepted the CEO role for Hauora Hokianga, a rural integrated health service in Rawene.

It is with a heavy heart that I leave, as I am leaving a great team and colleagues within the Ministry and the wider sector, and a role I would have liked to have done so much more with. I leave with the assurance there is a great team within the Office of the Chief Nurse, and amazing nursing leaders across the sector who are improving health outcomes with the great work they are all doing.

#### Zoom webinar series

On Thursday 24 September 2020, the fourth zoom webinar for the year was held to celebrate nursing in Aotearoa New Zealand as part of International Year of the Nurse 2020.

The webinar was held during Mental Health Awareness Week (MHAW) and, had a theme of "Nurses: Reimagine our wellbeing" to align with MHAW's theme, "Reimagine Wellbeing Together - He Tirohanga Anamata".

Thank you to Suzette Poole and Chrissy Kake, President and Kaiwhakahaere of Te Ao Māramatanga, the New Zealand College of Mental Health Nurses, for planning this fantastic event, and to our guest speakers Gemma Aburn, Dr Maria Baker, Dr Tony O'Brien and Dr Daryle Deering.

The webinar was recorded and will be available soon to view.

Planning is underway for the final webinar of 2020, and more information will be provided soon. Keep 10 December from 2.00pm-5.00pm free in your diary for the end of year webinar, I promise there will be some great speakers and kōrero to be had.

### **Infection Prevention and Control in health and disability care settings**

Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) guidance and the use of protective equipment during changes to Alert Levels across a range of health and disability and non-health worker settings is available on the Ministry's website. This information is updated frequently.

There are new guidelines on the types of masks and gloves used in health care settings, and when they should be used. These guidelines have been developed to ensure the appropriate mask or gloves are used according to established IPC practices. Following the guidelines will also help ensure the right masks and gloves are available when and where they are most needed during times of constrained international supply.

The guidelines are available on the Ministry's website [here](#).

### **National Infection Prevention and Control Expert Group**

I am pleased to advise that a National Infection Prevention and Control Expert Group (NIPCEG) has been established and met for the first time on the 20<sup>th</sup> October during the week of the International Infection Prevention.

The National Infection Prevention and Control Expert Group (NIPCEG) has been established to provide expert advice to support infection prevention and control best practice in the health sector. It has been initially developed to respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic but will provide a broader longer-term direction.

The pandemic has highlighted concerns regarding IPC knowledge and the application of consistent practice across Aotearoa. Learnings from COVID-19 and recommendations from various sector reviews requires the development of a national IPC strategy to ensure robust systems and structures are in place to support IPC activity across the system i.e. in hospitals, primary health care, community and aged residential care facilities.

NIPCEG is chaired by the Moh Chief Nurse and has a range of sector IPC experts to support the work programme of the group.

### **Medicines List for registered nurse prescribing in primary and specialty teams**

The Ministry has received proposed amendments to the medicines list from Nursing Council of New Zealand. There are over 50 prescription-only medicines proposed for addition to the current list. A further update will be provided next month but look out for the Medicines list consultation on the Ministry's website before the end of the year.

## **Unapproved Medicines (Section 29) and global supply of medicines**

An unapproved medicine is a medicine which has not been through a regulatory process in New Zealand to be considered safe to prescribe. Responsibility lies with the practitioner who prescribes an unapproved medicine. The practitioner must consider the evidence and clinical experience of the use of the unapproved medicine and weigh up the risks and benefits.

Section 29 of Medicines Act 1981 permits the sale or supply of an unapproved medicine to a medical practitioner for the treatment under that medical practitioner's care provided the Director-General of Health is notified of that supply. Non-medical prescribers, including nurse practitioners, can't prescribe unapproved (section 29) medicines under the Medicines Act. There is no provision in the Medicines Act for this to be 'waived' or amended. Changes to permit non-medical prescribers to prescribe section 29 medicines would require amendments to the primary legislation. There are no plans to broaden prescribing of unapproved medicines to non-medical practitioner prescribers under the current Medicines Act.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected global supply chains and increasing numbers of medicines are being classified as Section 29 as New Zealand approved medicines need to be substituted with non-approved medicines to maintain medicines supply to New Zealanders.

The Ministry is aware of the challenges that disruptions to the medicines supply chain cause non-medical prescribers, and the impact on patient care and access to medicines. The Ministry (including Medsafe and Medicines Control) is working with PHARMAC to better understand and manage the issues and minimise disruptions to the availability of funded medicines in New Zealand.

## **PHARMAC remove 'Retail Pharmacy – Specialist' restriction on a number of medicines**

Earlier this year, PHARMAC amended or removed funding criteria for many pharmaceuticals to improve access to these treatments ahead of and in response to COVID-19 impacts on the health sector.

Following recent consultation, the decision was made to remove the 'Retail Pharmacy – Specialist' restriction from a number of community pharmaceuticals. This restriction required that a prescription be written by, or on the recommendation of, a particular 'specialist' (as defined in the Pharmaceutical Schedule, now encompassing all vocationally registered medical practitioners) in order to be subsidised.

More information about the consultation and decision can be found at:

<https://www.pharmac.govt.nz/news/notification-2020-08-21-covid-19-schedule/>

The Ministry of Health and PHARMAC also worked together on the introduction of a change to prescribing rules for special authority medicines, with pharmacist prescribers now able to apply for special authority to prescribe specific restricted medicines. This change came into effect on 1 October 2020. More information can be found on the Ministry's website [here](#).

## **Primary Maternity Services Notice Review 2021**

Consultation is underway for the Ministry of Health's proposed changes to the Primary Maternity Services Notice pursuant to Section 88 of the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000 (the Notice).

The Ministry of Health is making these changes to increase the flexibility of community maternity services to better meet the varied needs of women and their whānau and is proposing both administrative and structural changes to the Notice.

This consultation may be of interest in particular to nurse practitioners working in primary health care. Information on how to make a submission can be found on the Ministry's website [here](#).

Submissions close 5.00pm, Friday 13 November 2020.

## **Arms Legislation 2020**

The Arms Legislation Act 2020 introduced changes to the Arms Act 1983 which come into effect from 24 December 2020. The alterations have been prompted by government desire to reduce harm from firearms. The next phase of the implementation of legislation aimed at reducing firearm deaths involves alteration to firearms licensing procedures.

The December 2020 amendments will provide that:

- 1) Applicants for new firearms licences and licence holders seeking to renew existing licences, will need to provide details of their Health Practitioner to Police.
- 2) Police will notify health practitioners when their patient is been issued with a firearms licence,
- 3) Health practitioners must consider notifying police of health concerns related to their patient's firearms access.

Police are currently developing Guidelines for Health Practitioners and a communications plan with input from the Ministry of Health. We will keep you informed as this work develops.

## **NZ COVID Tracer App**

I wanted to provide a quick update on the NZ COVID Tracer App, particularly contact alerts. Contact alerts let people know they may have been exposed to COVID-19, so they can take appropriate steps to protect themselves, their whānau and the community.

The Ministry can customise contact alerts so people who have visited locations with a higher risk of exposure are advised to self-isolate and get tested, while people who visited lower-risk locations can be asked to look out for any COVID-19 symptoms. To date, over 30 contact alerts have been issued through the app.

At the same time, people identified through the contact tracing process can share their digital diaries to give contact tracers a head-start in identifying anyone else who may have been exposed to the virus.

I urge you to continue to use the app and encourage your friends, colleagues and whānau to do the same. It is the fastest and easiest way to keep a detailed record of where we've been and who we've seen. Anyone having problems with the app can visit our website or get in touch either by email or phone – [help@covidtracer.min.health.nz](mailto:help@covidtracer.min.health.nz) or 0800 800 606.

For those who can't use the app, NZ COVID Tracer diary booklets are available. They can be printed from the COVID-19 website in English and 22 other languages. Booklets can also be ordered in packs of 10 through <https://order.hpa.org.nz/collections/covid-19/products/covid-19-booklet> or by emailing [covid19response@dpmc.govt.nz](mailto:covid19response@dpmc.govt.nz).

I want to once again acknowledge the excellent job that you are all doing across the health sector, particularly those who responded to the outbreak in Auckland. Please continue to look after yourselves and each other as we face this challenge together.

Nāku noa,

**Margareth Broodkoorn**  
Chief Nursing Officer  
Ministry of Health