

Chief Nursing Officer update to Nurses across Aotearoa September 2020

Tēnā koutou katoa,

I want to begin this update by acknowledging the uncertainty and stress felt throughout Aotearoa over the past couple of months with the re-emergence of COVID-19 in the Auckland area, and other affected communities. My aroha goes to those whānau affected by the recent community clusters, to those families who have lost love ones as a result of COVID-19, and to our clinical colleagues who have been directly affected.

Thank you all, particularly those of you in Auckland and Waikato, for your contribution to the national health response to this outbreak. Yet again nursing has responded to ensure that our communities are kept safe. I want to honour those health care workers and our nursing colleagues who are working at the front line: those caring for COVID-19 positive patients, those working in the managed isolation and quarantine facilities, those in community swabbing centres, those undertaking contact tracing, and those working in all health care settings, who are doing their very best during these trying times.

I have been concerned with the growing feedback regarding the discrimination of COVID-19 health workers including nurses. I want to reassure that efforts are being made to address this challenging commentary and associated actions.

With the advent of mandatory mask wearing on public transport and the wider use of masks and face coverings in late August we have yet again had to adjust to another change in our lives that we have needed to adapt to.

We are indeed within a time of constant change and uncertainty, it is therefore important to continue to be kind to each other, and to ourselves.

Last week we celebrated Te wiki o te reo Māori. Encouraging the use of one of New Zealand's official languages certainly made me smile all week. To hear so many making a concerted effort to speak te reo, I hope this has sparked an interest to not just speak te reo Māori for one week, but for the whole year and beyond.

This week is Mental Health Awareness Week, but I will touch base with more information about this later in the update.

Changes to national alert levels

As of 11.59pm on Monday 21 September, all of New Zealand except Auckland will move to Alert Level 1. From 11.59pm on Wednesday 23 September, Auckland will move to Alert Level 2.

At Level 1, you're encouraged to continue with public health measures, including frequent hand-washing and wearing masks and face coverings on public transport. At Level 2 (in Auckland), masks and face coverings will continue to be mandatory on public transport, and gatherings are limited to 100 people. People must continue to be mindful of physical distancing.

At both levels, please continue to use the COVID tracer app to keep track of where you've been and who you've been in contact with.

If you are flying to, from or transiting through Auckland, face coverings need to be worn. On all other flights, you are encouraged to wear face coverings. If you're sick, please stay home. Don't go to work. If you have symptoms of cold or flu call your health professional or Healthline and get advice about being tested.

Mental Health Awareness Week

This week is Mental Health Awareness Week. The theme this year is Reimagine Wellbeing Together – He Tirohanga Anamata. This year hasn't been easy, so it's timely to pause to reflect on the experiences, actions, surroundings that make us feel good and help us to stay well.

The below graphic is a simple depiction of some of the ways we can manage our wellbeing: find ways to give, be active, continue to learn, connect with others, and notice the good things happening around us. Sometimes it's easier said than done to fit these things into our busy lives, but it's worth the effort. The small investment reaps bigger rewards.



Sir John Kirwan has recently shared some of the tools and resources available to support mental wellbeing including his personally designed application 'Mentemia' <https://www.mentemia.com/nz/home>. I would highly recommend downloading this app as it provides some excellent advice and ideas on how to keep well.

In continuing to celebrate International Year of the Nurse I am pleased to announce the next live zoom event scheduled for the 24 September 2020 from 11.00am-1.00pm.

This event coincides with Mental Health Awareness week 21-27 September led by the Mental Health Foundation. The theme this year is *Reimagine Wellbeing Together-He Tirohanga Anamata*. <https://www.mhaw.nz/>

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 wonderful event. We have several inspiring guest speakers, so we hope you can join us as this is the perfect time to listen, learn and reflect about the Wellbeing of Nurses. Please contact Suzette, Chrissy or Debra Begg at debra.begg@health.govt.nz if you are interested in attending.

Voluntary Bonding Scheme 2021 intake

New professions have been added to the 2021 Voluntary Bonding Scheme, which is offered every year to encourage newly qualified health professionals to work in the communities and specialties that need them most.

The new professions added include enrolled nurses working in mental health and addiction and aged care, as well as more locations for midwives. Outside of nursing and midwifery, public sector radiation therapists and medical physicists have also been added.

The Registration of Interest period for the 2021 intake is expected to open for six weeks beginning in February. Keep an eye out for more information in future updates.

NZRGPN Nurse Practitioner Recruitment Initiative

Following a Registration of Interest process that involved an open invitation to all rural health services to apply, five rural health providers have been selected to establish new Nurse Practitioner roles within their teams.

Congratulations to Toi Ora Health (Ōpōtiki), Raglan Medical Centre, Taumarunui Community Kokiri Trust, Waiau Health Trust (Tuatapere) and Hauora Hokianga (Rāwene) that were selected. We look forward to following updates as each of the new roles become established.

Clarification of final year master's pathway for Nurse Practitioners and the nationwide Nurse Practitioner Training Programme (NPTP)

Given the launch of the nationwide NPTP, it has been a bit confusing for some students regarding NP pathways and access to funding. This statement aims to clarify the pathway and briefly outlines the two funding pathways: NPTP; and Postgraduate Nursing Funding.

Nurse Practitioners (NPs) are required to have completed a master's degree in nursing through a Nursing Council of New Zealand (NCNZ) approved pathway at an approved tertiary education provider. There are two funding streams for nurse practitioner training:

1. The Nurse Practitioner Training Programme (NPTP)

The Ministry of Health announced funding for a nationwide NPTP to commence in 2021 for 50 NP training placements per year. This new programme is being delivered in partnership by the University of Auckland, the University of Otago, and Victoria University of Wellington.

The new programme replaces an existing pilot Nurse Practitioner Training Programme (NPTP) delivered by the University of Auckland's School of Nursing and Massey University which is due to end in December 2020.

The NPTP is funded directly by the Ministry of Health to the Universities in partnership to deliver the nationwide NPTP. Additional funding is provided through this programme to ensure students receive:

- 500 hours supervised practice (with NP or senior doctor)
- Release time for a minimum of 12 study days
- A minimum of 10 days in a secondary placement
- Clinical supervision by a NP either in their main or secondary placement
- Regular support and site visits from a NP academic mentor
- Mentoring to complete NP portfolio, mock panel assessment, & registration with NZNC
- Additional discretionary support for Māori and Pacific students.

Students interested in applying for the NPTP should contact the University provider of their choice to discuss their eligibility for the programme. Information and the application form are available from:

<https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/fmhs/business-employers-community/continuing-education/national-nurse-practitioner-training-programme.html>

2. Post Graduate Nursing Funding

Nurses may complete master's courses to register as NPs delivered through other tertiary education providers. Students attending these programmes are eligible to access Post Graduate

Nursing Funding (Health Workforce Directorate funding) through their local district health board (DHB) under the direction of the Director of Nursing and their postgraduate education coordinator.

All master's programmes that meet the requirements for registration as a NP have to meet the standards required by the NCNZ.

The introduction of a nationwide NPTP does not change the opportunity for nurses to complete their final year practicum courses through their existing tertiary education provider. As noted, there are options available to complete these requirements.

Aged Residential Care

I want to acknowledge the work by Aged Residential Care (ARC) providers to protect their vulnerable residents during the Auckland COVID-19 outbreak. When the outbreak was discovered in early August, all aged residential facilities were advised that they were to go into Alert Level 3 lockdown nationwide, meaning staff could not work in multiple locations and the public were restricted from visiting loved ones.

These restrictions have since changed and the Ministry has updated its advice for people visiting Aged Residential Care facilities under each Alert Level.

Under Alert Level 2, there are a range of measures for managing visits to ARC facilities to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission to residents and staff. These are outlined on our website here: [COVID-19 information for Aged Care Providers](#). Links to other alert levels can also be found on this page.

Alert Level 2 allows greater scope for whānau and family visits, and the lifting of restrictions of staff movements across and within facilities. Where ARC staff are employed across multiple sites/roles, there must be plans in place where staff follow basic hygiene measures, PPE guidance and standard IPC precautions to reduce the risk of transmissions between settings.

In June, the Ministry developed a clinical COVID-19 assessment tool for aged residential care providers to use for all new residents or returning residents. New and returning residents are tested for COVID-19 if they meet the clinical tool's requirements for a test.

Ara Poutama Aotearoa National Health Leaders Forum

On the 11 August 2020, I attended the Ara Poutama Aotearoa National Health Leaders Forum at the National Learning Centre in Upper Hutt.

The theme of the forum was '*Kotahi anō te kaupapa: ko te oranga o te iwi*' - 'There is only one purpose to our work: the wellness and wellbeing of people'.

It was a privilege to spend time with the nurse leaders of corrections as we discussed various workforce issues including recruitment and retention strategies.

State of the Nation Infection Prevention and Control workshop

In August, I chaired a national workshop on infection prevention and control (IPC) practice across Aotearoa and in particular the learnings and reflection on COVID-19 related to the various reviews that have been conducted.

The outcome of this workshop is to establish a national IPC network to provide some consistency to IPC practice across the sector. I will keep you updated on the developments of this work.

NZNO conference

I also had the pleasure this month of being invited as the closing speaker of the NZNO conference. The theme of the conference was Community Wellbeing in Aotearoa - Nursing 2020 and beyond.

As a web based coordinated conference it didn't come without its IT challenges, but again highlights our adaptability to changing situations where our national and international conferences and forum are being held in ways we never imagined.

I was able to share with the conference audience the release of the State of the World Nursing (SOWN) report, the very first of its kind. The SOWN 2020 report provides the latest, most up-to-date evidence on and policy options for the global nursing workforce. It also presents a compelling case for investment in nursing education, jobs, and leadership.

The report was developed in collaboration with the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and the Nursing Now campaign. It describes how the nursing workforce will contribute to Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and highlight areas for policy development.

The key objectives of the report are to: provide a global picture of the nursing workforce; inform policy and nursing workforces strategies at the national level; speed up progress across the Sustainable Development Goals; increase investment in nursing, the health workforce, and gender equity agendas; and highlight the critical contribution of nurses in achieving the WHO's "Triple Billion Goals".

Āwhina app

What is Āwhina? Āwhina is a mobile app that lets health workers access the latest information from the Ministry of Health and other trusted sources.

The app pushes notifications about updates or new content and, allows users to save content in the app for quick access later on.

Recently we have seen an increase in the use of the Āwhina app. Thank you to all of you who have downloaded the app and/or encouraged others to download and use it. More information can be found on the Ministry's website [here](#).

The Ministry is continuing to review and improve the app's functionality based on feedback. Feedback about the app or its content can be provided using the feedback function within the app or by emailing: Awahina.info@health.govt.nz.

The re-emergence of COVID in the community last month resulted in a >350% increase in users on the app.

Āwhina – September release features:

- Ability to submit feedback on articles from the app
- Updated menu items, including a new resource for pressure injuries
- App icon badge on all devices
- Improvements to the Notifications list – notifications display in order of most recent first, and the notification bell count updates when articles are viewed in Latest Information feed.

NZ COVID Tracer app

Over 45% of the New Zealand population aged 15 and over have now downloaded the NZ COVID Tracer app. Thank you to all of you who have downloaded and used it and encourage others to do the same, we hope to see these numbers continue to grow.

Nursing Leadership announcements

The August and September months have been a bitter sweet period for announcing changes to nursing leadership across Aotearoa.

Congratulations to Phil Halligan who was formally appointed to the Director of Nursing role at Wairarapa DHB. I had the pleasure of attending the recent 2020 Year of the Nurse and Midwife formal dinner function hosted by Phil and Midwifery Leader Michelle Thomas. It was a great evening celebrating nursing and midwifery practice in the Wairarapa.

In December Northland DHB is welcoming a new nurse leader to Tai Tokerau. Maree Sheard has been appointed to the position of Chief Nurse & Midwifery Officer, Northland DHB. Maree has held previous nursing leadership roles, including with the NZ Defence Force.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Dee Telfer for her passion, energy and integrity for covering in the acting role for the past 18 months. Northland should be proud to have had Dee in the role for this period, and what she has contributed during this tenure. Thank you Dee.

Sadly, the Canterbury region (and the rest of the country) bid farewell to Mary Gordon. As a well-recognised and respected nursing leader in New Zealand and with over 30 years of health sector experience Mary's contribution to nursing has been far reaching and impactful.

On a final note, I too have announced my departure from the Chief Nursing Officer position with the Ministry of Health. I have accepted the role of Chief Executive Officer with Hauora Hokianga, an integrated health service in Hokianga, Northland commencing in early 2021.

It has been a difficult decision to make, but one where I will take the enormous learnings from the time working in the Ministry of Health and duly apply this learning to the CEO role at Hokianga. As the old saying goes – 'once a nurse always a nurse' so I will continue to influence nursing albeit in a different role... and geographical area. In returning to the Hokianga, I will be closer at hand to the delivery of health services and to the COVID-19 response in a remote rural community.

I want to again recognize the excellent job that you are all doing across the health sector, where ever you are making a difference in a health care setting, and in particular those involved in responding to the outbreak in Auckland and beyond. Please continue looking after yourselves and each other as we respond to this challenge together.

Thank you again for all the work you have done and continue to do to ensure that New Zealand's health services are delivered to the highest possible standard.

Nāku noa,

Margareth Broodkoorn
Chief Nursing Officer
Ministry of Health