

PreScribe

Te Whatu Ora in Te Tai Tokerau Staff Magazine



From Group Director of Operations



Alex Pimm

Kia ora koutou,

What a fantastic start to 2024 it has been for Te Tai Tokerau. The weather has been fabulous and drew even more people to our district for their holiday break than usual. Our teams have continued to provide high quality care for patients – thanks to everybody who’s supported our summer planning, especially working over the long weekends.

Earlier this month, the sod-turning event for our new radiation cancer therapy facility marked the beginning of a new era for cancer patients in Te Tai Tokerau. For too long, our patients have had to travel for this treatment, which not only puts added stress on them but also the added financial burden for whānau who often must take time off work to support them, and costs associated with travel and accommodation. It was a pleasure to join Prime Minister Rt Hon Christopher Luxon, Minister of Health Dr Shane Reti, our kaimahi and community members on this occasion. The tradies are already on site and work is progressing at speed to get the facility opened for our community.

In this issue of PreScribe, we welcome the 2024 Pūkawakawa students and several new graduates who have chosen to begin their careers with us. I wish them all well and hope that Te Tai Tokerau proves to be an inspiring and exciting place to live, work and learn.

Dr Robert Michael shares his experience as our first advanced trainee in cardiology. This programme will hopefully follow in the footsteps of the likes of Pūkawakawa because of the scope and breadth of experience trainees are exposed to here..

You will also read about the latest development works at Whangārei Hospital, which continue to progress at pace. There are also some good news stories from the many programmes of work that support our community through our partners at Northland Community Foundation and Sport Northland.

This issue celebrates some of our recent successes, like our partnership with Aotearoa Clinical Trials to manage novel clinical trials and fantastic patient outcomes thanks to our dieticians’ work within the Diabetes Clinic. We also share a heartfelt story from a very happy former Jim Carney Cancer Treatment Centre patient.

I encourage all staff to keep up with what change consultations are currently on What Say You and make sure you provide feedback on anything that affects you. The Pulse Survey is open from Wednesday, 10 to Wednesday 24 April 2024. This is a quick way to share your thoughts on how we’re going and give us some feedback. As with the first survey, we aim to check how our teams feel and what they think about their mahi and find ways to make Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora a better place to work for all. The survey is entirely confidential and anonymous; the more people participate, the more robust and representative the results will be.

On a personal note, that I was thrilled to have been appointed to the Group Director of Operations position for Te Tai Tokerau. I am excited to have this opportunity to work alongside you all in the coming years to support our patients, their whānau and our community to work towards a more equitable, accessible, cohesive, and people-centred system that improves the health and well-being of all Northlanders. Ngā mihi nui,

Alex Pimm

Group Director Operations



Prime Minister Rt Hon Christopher Luxon, Minister of Health Dr Shane Reti, Dr Vince Newton Clinical Director (Cancer & Blood Services), Alex Pimm Group Director of Operations (Te Tai Tokerau), Dee Telfer Operations Manager (Cancer & Blood Services, Radiation Oncology and FCT Lead)

Radiation Cancer Facility

Construction Starts

Minister of Health Dr Shane Reti said it was an exciting moment to be at Whangārei Hospital with Prime Minister Rt Hon Christopher Luxon to recognise the start of construction for a \$60.0m radiation cancer facility.

When complete, the Whangārei facility will provide comprehensive cancer services for the people of Te Tai Tokerau, removing the need for Northlanders to travel outside their region to get treatment.

“This new facility will provide the region’s first linear accelerator (LINAC) machine which is used for radiation treatment,” says Dr Reti. “When finished, it will also include two bunkers, (providing space for a second LINAC in the future when capacity demands), a CT scanner and extra chemotherapy spaces.

“The Jim Carney Cancer Treatment Centre already means a huge amount to the people of Whangārei, and wider Northland, and I’m delighted it will be expanded to meet the additional demand,” Dr Reti said.

“Currently, we know around 520 Northlanders travel to Auckland for radiotherapy each year because our region does not have the appropriate equipment.

“Having a LINAC facility at Whangārei Hospital will support more timely access for these patients from right across Te Tai Tokerau, many from very remote areas of the district.

“We know the impact that travelling long distances has on patients and their whānau.

“Providing care closer to home will support patients to attend their appointments and treatment, reduce the impact on their lives and be closer to whānau. That support is so important to all of us when our family members are sick.”

“As a National MP, as well as having the health portfolio, I’m proud we’ve already supported a number of steps for people with cancer, including our commitment to raise the breast screening age to 74, providing better access to PET-CT scans no matter where people live, and, through Pharmac, providing access to several new treatments for breast and blood cancer,” Dr Reti said.

“All these initiatives will add up to make a difference for New Zealanders impacted by cancer.”



Prime Minister Rt Hon Christopher Luxon and Minister of Health Dr Shane Reti with staff and community members at the sod turning for the new radiation cancer facility

Infrastructure and Investment Update

About Project Pihi Kaha

In November 2022, the government announced \$759m of capital funding for stage one of the Whangārei Hospital redevelopment known as Project Pihi Kaha.

Planning is underway on the first stage of work to create an acute services building that will meet Northland's unique health needs by increasing service capacity while creating modern, fit-for-purpose facilities that provide equitable health care for its population. It will also allow us to vacate and decommission parts of the existing hospital that are at the end of their useful lives.

Larger clinic areas and additional spaces for support services will enable the smooth running of operations, which will be complemented by new digital technologies to streamline services, support pandemic readiness, and equip staff with the tools they need to continue to provide excellent care to Northland communities. The new facilities will assist in reducing waiting times for ED and planned care, as well as reductions in hospital acquired complications and average lengths of stay.

With improved staff and public zones and culturally inclusive spaces that align with a Māori worldview, the new hospital will also create a more welcoming and calming atmosphere for staff, patients and visiting whānau.

Project Pihi Kaha is due to be complete by 2032 and will provide broader social and economic benefits for Te Tai Tokerau in addition to healthcare benefits. The project team is working closely with local and regional agencies to better understand local businesses' capacity and capability to ensure ample opportunities are available to educate and upskill local workforce.

Enabling Works

As part of the enabling works, some existing buildings will need to be moved from the building site – this includes the Whānau House and Child Health Centre. Work has already begun on these two projects to prepare the site for the main acute services building.

Whānau House – Te Whaea o te Iwi

Construction of a new Whānau House at 53 Hospital Rd is well underway to create a more private, modern, and comfortable space for whānau visiting the hospital from out of the region.

The building is taking shape with timber framing complete and roof installation underway. This whare will retain its name of Te Whaea o te Iwi, and its construction is expected to be completed in June 2024.

Child Health Centre – Tira Ora

A new Child Health Centre will be constructed adjacent to the Te Kotuku maternity building and connected by a link bridge to create a mother, child and baby health hub. This building is called Tira Ora to represent the many faces of wellbeing.



Child Health Centre – Tira Ora

The architectural and engineering design teams are on board and have been working closely with the service through the various design stages. Main contractor procurement will begin in the middle of this year, and construction is expected to commence by the end of 2024.

Acute Service Building – Pūkauakaua

The internal Pihi Kaha project team have been very busy behind the scenes planning and preparing for a new Acute Services Building (ASB) that will be constructed on the existing hospital grounds. This building will be named Pūkauakaua in homage to the Pā site it rests on.

The team recently onboarded additional project management and cost consultancy resourcing to help establish the wider team and assist with the project moving forward. They will help develop and implement planning and procurement processes to bring on board the architectural and engineering design teams as well as a main contractor, who will help build key relationships with internal and external stakeholders and local contractors through the design process.

Design is anticipated to commence in 2024 and construction in 2026, with completion in 2032.

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An important part of the design process will be confirming the clinical needs – or health services



Acute Service Building – Pūkauakaua

required – in line with national service planning prior to design commencing. Design is anticipated to commence in 2024 and construction in 2026, with completion in 2032.

The new ASB is planned to be located where carpark 16 currently is, stretching from Hospital Rd to West End Ave and include the following zones:

- Emergency Department
- Intensive Care Unit
- Coronary Care Unit
- Cardiac Catheter Laboratory
- Operating Theatres
- Whare cultural zone
- Rooftop helipad
- Front and back of house support functions.

Included in the \$759m approved funding is an allowance to design a 158 bed Ward Tower for Stage 2 of the site redevelopment.

Work is underway to seek further funding for construction of the ward tower – if this funding is approved, the team intends to build this in parallel with the ASB.

Te Kotuku

The Te Kotuku extension project is one of many projects underway on the Whangārei Hospital campus. The project has health capital funding of \$49.5 million.

Construction commenced in January 2022 and is progressing well and on track to be completed in the April 2024. The extension is expected to be operational by May 2024.

The facility will accommodate a new 26-bed paediatric ward, a new neo-natal unit, and a new medical laboratory.

SAU Overnight (SAUON) Project

The project addresses the backlog of patients waiting for elective surgery and the shortage of beds in the Whangārei Hospital. An Extended Day Unit (EDU) will be developed within the Surgical Admissions Unit (SAU) post-op area, and the SAU Overnight Unit (SAUON) will be incorporated within the current peri-operative service facility.

SAUON will provide eight beds for patients requiring admission for one night only, which will allow an increase of in-patient bed numbers for adult planned care surgical patients requiring overnight admission for post-operative care. The SAUON project offers the benefit of late evening discharge for patients and a guaranteed bed available if a patient requires an unplanned admission.

Key elements of the SAU Overnight Unit (SAUON) are:

- Predictable access to surgical beds
- Enabling standardised patient care with better outcomes
- Appropriate patient selection
- Support surgical waitlist management
- Improved patient experience
- Efficient use of hospital resources.

Construction and fit out works have commenced and are scheduled for completion mid-2024.



Whānau House – Te Whaea o te Iwi

First Class Cardiology Training

at Whangārei Hospital – Learning in the ‘heart’ of the North



Dr Robert Michael

Last year, Whangārei Hospital became a fully accredited advanced training site in cardiology.

Dr Robert Michael is the first advanced trainee in cardiology at Whangārei Hospital, after completing basic medical registrar training. Advanced trainees in cardiology are required to undertake three years of full-time training.

Robert jumped at the opportunity to apply for the trainee position after previously spending six months of his registrar training working in the Intensive Care Unit at Whangārei Hospital, where he met Dr Marcus Lee, who initiated the Cardiac Catheter Laboratory (Cath Lab) at Whangārei Hospital.

Robert said it was no easy feat being the first advanced trainee here at Whangārei because there was no blueprint to work from. However, he fully embraced this unique situation as an opportunity and enjoyed working with the Auckland and the Northland teams to help carve out a programme that is suitable and sustainable for future trainees.

“A lot of time goes into the supervision I received, especially in the Cardiac Cath Lab. It’s very structured because procedures such as angiograms are invasive, so we must work as a team to achieve the best outcome. I can now do the basics, like assessing someone’s heart arteries for major blockages that might require advanced therapies. However, more complex cases, for example, implanting stents in people’s hearts, were undertaken by the senior medical officers. Sometimes, this could also involve patients going directly to Auckland via helicopter if an unstable picture evolved. It was all great to witness and learn from first-hand.”

While the cardiology trainee role was a Monday to Friday position, he also undertook shifts in the emergency department or medical wards out of hours, which he believes is vital for a trainee post because all the services are integrated.

“All specialities come under the general medicine service, so it’s important to understand the hospital, know what services are available, and how the wards work. It is easy to submerge yourself into your chosen speciality, but that can lead to a lack of understanding other hospitals pressures.”

After spending a year in Northland, Robert believes the main benefit of training in a smaller centre was having the option to split his time across different fields of cardiology, depending on inpatient demands. In contrast, at larger centres in Auckland, trainees typically spend six months solely focused on a single module such as cath lab, echocardiograms, and electrophysiology.

Robert found no barriers to achieving mandatory procedures, including over 400 angiograms, 200 echocardiograms, cardiac MRIs, and CT scans. This should help lay solid foundations for training success on his return to Auckland.

“At present, because the Whangārei Hospital programme is new and thus relatively unknown by other trainees, I felt very fortunate with this placement as I was able to seize all opportunities for learning.”

Another main insight into the year was having the chance to work inside the local community and understand the diverse needs of Northland patients. The region has a significant burden of cardiovascular disease in New Zealand, and he hopes for continued training, research, and educational growth in the district. In particular, he enjoyed the opportunity to attend rural clinics at Bay of Islands, Dargaville, Kaitaia and Rawene Hospitals. These clinics help reduce the need for people living rurally to travel for basic assessments.

“Until you work in Northland, it is difficult to understand the geographical spread of patients, their cultural environment and the inequity they face on a daily basis.

We find some phone calls to Auckland are answered by people who are unaware of the local resources. Training roles such as this will help to bridge that gap because people are starting to talk about what the cardiology unit is doing here, how we're developing the service, and how essential it is."

Although every day is different in the cardiology unit, Robert said he would typically start with procedures, like an echocardiogram or cardioversion. Then, he would attend clinics or ward reviews.

"There was flexibility in the timetable, which I liked. For us, it is all about our patients and being able to provide them with as much as possible."

Robert said the Cath Lab at Whangārei Hospital is unique because of the numbers that are seen and the small waitlist. In addition, the services include cutting-edge cardiac MRI, which is a vital investigation for patients of this size population.

"I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the Cath Lab but am very aware you need a whole family to run a cardiology department. It includes sonographers, radiographers, admin staff, porters, healthcare assistants and experienced nurses who together really run the show."

Robert is excited for the next trainee to experience this role and the fantastic people who make up Whangārei Hospital.

For him, though, the next six months will be spent working as a research fellow at Middlemore Hospital. After this, he will undertake several other posts in the Auckland region to complete his training.

This programme has been a substantial project accredited to Dr Peter Ruygrok at Auckland City Hospital. Locally, Dr Raewyn Fisher has also been instrumental in ensuring Northland was part of the Regional Training Scheme. Similar one-year programmes are offered in the Tauranga and Nelson districts.

Acknowledging Jeanette Wedding



Jeanette Wedding with Jacqui Westren

In March, the Public Health and Rural Hospital teams gathered to acknowledge Jeanette Wedding, who was heading off for her well-deserved retirement at the end of the month.

Jeanette commenced as Orthopaedic Secretary, moving to roles of Board Secretary, EEO Coordinator and Staff Development Training Officer, and Hotel Services Manager, then moving into more senior leadership roles as Executive Officer in Community Health Services and becoming General Manager for Rural Family and Community Services in June 2003.

Along the way, Jeanette gained her business studies degree and held portfolios such as Lead GM for two years within the Northland DHB.

Jeanette oversaw the public health team during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and was the senior responsible officer for the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Jeanette spent time thanking the kaimahi within her directorate and across the organisation. In turn, people talked about how much they valued Jeanette as a leader and a friend.

We wish Jeanette all the best in her retirement and sincerely thank her for contributing so much to our organisation and the community we serve throughout her 45-year tenure.

Green Prescription Success

An Inspiration to Others

When Northland woman Kim was told by her health team that she needed to lose weight before she could have life-changing knee surgery, she was referred to Sport Northland for a Green Prescription.

The team worked with her to set a goal and motivate her. Because she was limited in what sort of exercise she could do due to the immense pain in her knee, she chose hydrotherapy as she knew the benefits of the pool and had done a few classes before meeting with her Green Prescription support person.

During the Programme, she had one slight setback that almost made her give up until she reflected on how far she had come in her lifestyle change journey and realised that was not an option. Pushing through those barriers reminded her how badly she wanted surgery and how life-changing it would be to be able to return to a somewhat normal life.

Thanks to the continuous support from the Green Prescription Programme, Kim keeps a positive mindset and is working towards her final goal.



Dennise Pehi's Inspiring Journey

Fitness professional and instructor Eva Magrath first met Dennise Pehi in September 2022 when she visited the Kensington Fitness Green Prescription clinic in Whangārei for an assessment. Dennise was the recipient of a new kidney gifted to her by her brother, and after years of dialysis and having her father caring for her, she now had a second chance at living life to the full and wanted to maintain the health of her new kidney.

Dennise's brother inspired her after successfully losing weight by following healthy lifestyle changes, and she was highly motivated to get started. After her initial assessment and receiving a programme, she began attending once a week, then built up to one hour three times a week as she gained her confidence, often enjoying a sauna after her workout. She now also does Pilates classes and goes walking, which helps to give her variety and enables her to reconnect with herself and enjoy the fresh air.

Dennise has found that working on her attitude to get more organised has helped with prioritising her health, which helps keep her on track in the long term.

The Green Prescription provided her with nutritional information, resources, advice, and support during monthly check-ins, which has been helpful, along with support from her whānau, particularly her brothers and sisters, who have all started their own health journeys and are now sharing their wins together.

Since commencing Green Prescription nine months ago, Dennise has noticed that she feels lighter inside, like a weight has been lifted. She feels stronger, her energy levels have increased, and her overall mood is happier.

"The changes I have noticed in Dennise since she first stepped foot in the gym are amazing. Her confidence has improved significantly, and she always comes into the gym smiling, ready to go and smash her session," said Eva.

"Not only has Dennise achieved physical results during her fitness journey, as seen on the scales, she has also improved her cardio fitness, which is awesome! The most important progress to note is her mindset and the positive changes she has achieved mentally. She is really motivating, and I can't wait to see where she goes next.

"Since taking Dennise through her initial programme and assessment, I have continued to motivate and support her when she comes into the gym to complete her sessions. She comes to me with questions about her training or to check in now and then to see if she's on the right track. We recently had a re-assessment to check her progress, and we were so proud of the results. It shows that the effort and consistency she's been putting in has made an impact."

Sport Northland exists to enrich Northlander's lives by inspiring and enabling more movement. One of the ways they support people on their journey is through the Green Prescription, which Te Whatu Ora funds. If you would like some support with your activity goals, give Sport Northland a call on 0800 GET ACTIVE ... They are here to help!



First Crays of My New Life



After beating cancer, Whangārei local Rob Tyndall is taking the expression “living life to the fullest” to new heights – and depths.

The former patient of the Jim Carney Cancer Treatment Centre at Whangārei Hospital was only too happy to share his heartfelt appreciation recently to the local team and hopes to inspire others that face similar situations to get out and grab life.

“I sincerely hope that I can assist even one person to get over what appears at first to be very high and unachievable hurdles,” he says.

Following 10 months of treatment for bladder cancer, Rob had a few concerns before travelling with his urostomy bag and its limited capacity on a four-hour flight to Melbourne to see family for Christmas.

“My wife Kim booked seats close to the front of the aircraft and prioritised an aisle seat for ease of access,” Rob advises.

Back across the ditch, they have a year to catch up on and have no intention of letting the grass grow under their feet, so are starting with a sailing session on their boat, Sweet As.

“Going where the wind takes us if the silly weather patterns allow, which is the only cloud on the horizon,” he smiles as the pun was intended. “The fishing has been patchy, but we’ve still had a few good feeds of snapper and sure don’t have any complaints,” he says.

“Then came my first cray dive since this little medical issue started playing with my life, and I was in heaven from the moment I descended, and the two crays were just a bonus to an amazing dive.”

This provided Rob with the reassurance that there is indeed life after surgery. “As I am only seventy-four, this leads me to believe I can do anything; within reason you might add, but I don’t quite get that bit,” he says.

Rob points out, that all of this plus more has only been made possible by the professional, unselfish, and dedicated efforts of the wonderful team involved at the Jim Carney Cancer Treatment Centre. “Including but not restricted to: Dr Kathy in the first instance, Vince in his cave out the back, Jonathan, Tom, the entire staff at the Centre, not forgetting the volunteers, Radiology and bloods and of course the truly dedicated nurses and hospital staff,” shares Rob.

“We just want you to know that we are eternally in your debt and our gratitude is boundless. Thank you all so much, you are truly amazing,” he adds. “Ten out of ten to the entire medical system from beginning to end and continuing on with follow-up checks.”

Their next adventure is to sail the yacht to Fiji, Tonga then down to New Caledonia and back to New Zealand later in the year. Rob’s sole goal right through this cancer journey was to sail from New Zealand to New Caledonia, but now he has expanded his horizons and is pushing the boundaries that little bit more.



2022/23 Ngātahitanga Pulse Survey

Te Tai Tokerau Action Snapshot (As at 23 Feb 2024)



The first Ngātahitanga Pulse Survey was held in December 2022.

Results were released in February 2023.



1306, or 27% of kaimahi in Te Tai Tokerau participated in the process. Nationally 29% of the kaimahi participated.



Te Tai Tokerau had the most individual comments – 76% of respondents left a comment. Some things we knew, some we didn't. Grouped into eight themes.

Te Tai Tokerau Themes & Actions

1 You said - we have critical workforce shortages

We...

- Advocated nationally to create visibility of critical workforce pressures, and barriers to appointment of internationally qualified staff.
- Hosted a visit from National Workforce Team to discuss implementation of National Workforce Plan 2023.
- Fully implemented CCDM through budget 23/24. Some areas now fully staffed with nursing and approval to over recruit.
- Implemented a SMO job sizing programme across all services – commencing with rural hospitals, Paediatrics, Obstetrics & Gynaecology and Mental Health.

2 You said - we need the pay equity settlements

We...

- Implemented all national Pay Equity Settlements.
- Aligned with Northern Region on SMO CME Policy.
- Continue to work constructively and proactively with Unions.

3 You said - we need more staff wellbeing

We...

- Continue to offer and promote comprehensive individual and team wellbeing support programmes
- Implemented a Serenity room in Whangārei hospital for staff to be able to remove themselves altogether from the ward to reset and re-enter the workplace.
- Provided 15-minute massages across the district, both as a gift to say thank you and as a moment in time for you to reflect and breathe.
- Continue to host the wellbeing steering group Tū Tangata to advocate for staff wellbeing and continue to provide the Wellbeing fund for teams.

4 You said - we need more exposure of Māori culture and Te Reo

We...

- Are continuing the Journey into Te Reo, Tuakana and Teina classes in 2024.
- Offer bespoke workshops are provided to teams by the Cultural Educator.
- Offer Honouring Te Tiriti and Engaging with Māori courses provided by Te Poutokomanawa.
- Are rolling out the Takarangi framework in departments.
- Have had an equity lead and Kaiarai kaupapa Māori positions approved.

5 You said - we need better facilities and equipment

We...

- Confirm Whangārei Hospital redevelopment (Project Pihi Kaha) is underway by relocating moving some of the existing buildings/services, including the Whānau House and Child Health Centre.
- Acknowledge Bay of Islands Stage 2 building named Paparātā opened on 12 October which connects directly to the existing Stage 1 facility.
- Confirm approval for a new Radiation Oncology facility has been granted for Te Tai Tokerau with building works to begin shortly.
- Confirm Te Kotuku extension is near completion that houses the Neo-natal Unit, Paediatric Ward, and the Laboratory. This will free up some much-needed real estate within the existing hospital building while project Pihi Kaha is underway.
- Built new secure bike storage for 28 bikes at Whangārei Hospital and outdoor seating has been put in place.

6 You said - we need more communication about what is happening nationally

We...

- Host Group Directory of Operations all-staff online hui every fortnight to connect with staff and provide the latest updates and an opportunity for staff to ask any questions.
- Publish an all-staff weekly update distributed via email and on Snapshot.
- Established a dedicated place on Staff Central where all transition news can be found.
- The Chief Executives of Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora and Te Aka Whai Ora regularly provide all staff hui whereby staff to share strategic updates, information as well as local stories.
- Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora produce the weekly pānui Tū Mata Kōkiri. Te Aka Whai Ora produce the weekly Nga Karere pānui. Both publications are hosted on the StaffCentral portal.

7 We need more visibility of our senior leaders

We...

- Have a formal patient safety walk around programme led by Quality Team, Group Director of Operations, clinical and service leads.
- Ensure that Te Tai Tokerau is well represented on regional and national groups, including fortnightly Regional Senior Leadership team meetings and daily Regional Provider Group meetings.
- Support Directorates to develop initiatives relevant to their services.
- Confirm a new national Leadership Institute is currently being developed to set a consistent approach for all new and existing leaders to attend.

8 You said - we want bullying and harassment addressed

We...

- Encourage you to continue reporting your concerns to your line manager, DATIX, a trusted colleague and/or HR.
- Advocate on behalf of staff for this matter to be addressed on a national level from a staff-to-staff perspective including adequate funding.
- Respond to the adverse events that happen between patients and staff through the Workplace Violence Prevention Advisory group.



2022/23 Ngātahitanga Pulse Survey

Action Snapshot (As at February 2024)



National priorities – As a direct result of the survey ELT committed to three national priorities:



We held our first Ngātahitanga Pulse Survey in December 2022. Results were released in February 2023.



27,743, or 29%, of kaimahi participated in the process.



A number of priorities and actions were identified.

1 Improving resources:

Continuing to step up our plans to grow the workforce and fill vacancies alongside the workforce initiatives already underway to relieve pressures in the short-term.

Actions supporting this priority have included:

- 1,250 Internationally Qualified Nurse Competency Assessment Programme reimbursements, as at 15 November 2023.
- 84 additional Bachelor of Nursing students have enrolled in programmes at Ara Te Pukenga.
- 288 additional applicants for the Return to Nursing programme.
- Funding for 50 additional medical school places from 2024.
- Funding for 20 additional trainee doctor places on the Rural Medical Immersion Programme.
- Increasing the number of Nurse Practitioner Training Programme places from 50 to 80 in 2023, and to 100+ in 10 additional New Zealand Registration Examination (NZREX Clinical) places to ensure international clinicians are suitable to work in NZ.
- Settling all outstanding pay equity claims lifting the pay of more than 65,000 employees.
- A new Anaesthetic Technicians retention payments incentive package.
- Establishing a nationwide system for managing clinical student placements.
- Refreshed international campaign to attract Radiation Oncologists to New Zealand.
- Expanding the Voluntary Bonding Scheme for 2024 to include Anaesthetic Technicians and Pharmacists.
- Launch of the 2023/24 Health Workforce Plan.

2 Communicating change better:

Setting up channels to get more information out to staff more frequently on change, as well as giving staff ways to provide feedback and seek support as we go through these changes.

Actions supporting this priority have included:

- Change communications plans developed and implemented for each change undertaken.
- Virtual hui to keep leaders and staff informed about change.
- Facilitated 'Leading Through Disruption' workshops for more than 1900 people.
- Dedicated resources on transition and next steps, including comprehensive FAQs and Leaders' packs.
- A new Expression of Interest (EOI) factsheet developed to better support leaders to understand the EOI process, and to help significantly affected kaimahi when applying for roles in the new structure.
- A dedicated e-newsletter for significantly affected kaimahi eligible for the Expression of Interest (EOI) process.
- A new Leaders' Guide to help managers onboard, offboard and recruit new staff as an outcome of change.
- Development of a change tool kit to cover all aspects of how to deliver effective people-related change that will be delivered in early 2024.

3 Addressing discrimination and building cultural safety:

Supporting ways of making our workplaces inclusive, and friendly to diversity so everyone can come to work and feel safe that they will be heard and can contribute to their teams without prejudice.

Actions supporting this priority have included:

- Development of a digital learning kete to support our strategy to roll out consistent, national cultural safety and Tiriti o Waitangi supports. This includes:
 - review and update of our te Tiriti o Waitangi mandatory e-learning modules (adapted from Bay of Plenty)
 - e-learning modules for pepeha, karakia and tauparapara (in final development).
 - Scoping is underway for development of national e-learning covering racism, privilege and cultural safety.
- Introduction of Te Mauri o Rongo | NZ Health Charter.

ELT will carry this priority over, with more action to follow in 2024.

Out & About





B4 School Check

Free Health and Development Check for 4 to 5 year-olds

The B4 School Check is a free comprehensive health and development check for all four-year-old children.

It aims to promote health and wellbeing and identify behavioural, developmental or other health concerns that may affect your child's ability to learn at school.

Leanne Hulse, Acting Clinical Nurse Manager, Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora Northland says, "Our aim is for tamariki to get the best start at school and to be able to participate to the best of their ability and receive additional support if needed.

"It is pleasing to see that during the last quarter (Oct – Dec 2023) 786 tamariki attended a B4 School Check at one of our clinics based throughout Te Tai Tokerau. Currently, the service has reached 51% of its annual target of 1400 tamariki to be assessed by the end of June 2024," she points out.

Local Mother, Mitchani Kopa-Harris attended a B4 School Check with her twins, Selena and Lauryn-Faith saying that she didn't know about the service until she booked her children in for their vaccinations recently at a separate appointment.

"I had never used this service before with my other two children. It's really great, and it's free," said Mitchani.

"They are really excited about starting Whangārei Primary School."

The B4 School Check is carried out by a registered nurse. It takes about 45 minutes and covers general questions about your child's health and development, assessment of social and emotional strengths and difficulties, measurement of height and weight, vision and hearing tests, oral health assessment and a review of their immunisation status.

It is ideal to have your child checked when they turn four so any additional support can be arranged before your child starts school.

B4 School Check clinics are held throughout Te Tai Tokerau in Whangārei, Dargaville, Ruakaka, Kerikeri and Kaitiaki. Bookings can be made by phone or online.

Te Whatu Ora Public Health (Northland wide) – 0800 247 246.

If you do not have easy access to health services, please contact us and someone will reach out to ensure your child is seen.

Whānau have the choice of booking through Health NZ or their Iwi Provider.



Selena and Lauryn-Faith Kopa-Harris excited about their free take home bags after their B4 school check.

In April 2023, Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora Te Tai Tokerau signed an agreement with Aotearoa Clinical Trials (ACTT) to form a partnership to manage novel clinical trials based at Whangārei Hospital.

ACTT, formerly Middlemore Clinical Trials, has over 20 years of clinical trial experience in Aotearoa, New Zealand. ACTT is an independent charitable trust that specialises in running commercial (Phase I to III) and grant-funded trials (investigator-initiated and collaborative group trials) in partnership with public hospitals in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

At Middlemore Hospital, the ACTT team works across 25 different therapeutic areas and manages, on average, over 150 clinical trials annually.

ACTT has established relationships with funders, sponsors, and Contract Research Organisations (CROs) and a proven track record of managing and delivering high-quality commercial and investigator-initiated research.

The first Whangārei Hospital-based team member,

Ann-Marie Ford, Research Nurse/Coordinator, started in November 2023.

Ann-Marie is an experienced Registered Nurse and Research Nurse/Coordinator and is based in Maunu House on the Whangārei Hospital campus.

The first of many clinical trials in Whangārei was set up in December 2023, with Principal Investigator Michelle Locke, Sub Investigators Dr Usha Shan and Dr Will Anderson, and ACTT Research Nurse Coordinator Ann-Marie Ford. The team have randomised their first patient to the novel surgical device trial within five weeks of the trial starting, an outstanding achievement.

This trial's initiation is a testament to Whangārei and ACTT's commitment to medical innovation and a beacon of hope for patients seeking advanced surgical solutions.

This new partnership between ACTT and Health NZ opens the doors to more opportunities, with the aim of providing improved and innovative healthcare to the community of Northland.

An Absolute Game Changer

Mobile Ear Clinic

When Maisie Burns was one, she loved music and had the groove. Over time, that started to disappear, and Maisie's parents noticed that her language and balance were not developing.

"She was constantly waking up in the night with her fingers in her ears and had solid wax stuck, as well as snoring," say parents, Alana Lewis and Robbie Burns.

"We went to the Mobile Ear Clinic and saw Jan. We were advised to try to loosen the wax with oil and keep coming back to see if she could get it out. Over a few visits, she decided Maisie needed to be referred to the Ear, Nose and Throat clinic to get the wax out as the oil wasn't really working.

"She advised we would probably have to wait a few months for an appointment. But the next day we had a phone call, an appointment was made for within three weeks, which was amazing," Alana says.

On the day of Maisie's second birthday, the family went to Whangārei ENT at Whangārei Hospital where Maisie had an audiology test.

"We then went through to ENT where we were greeted by Ben and his lovely nurse. They were amazing with Maisie and made her feel very relaxed. They then removed the wax from Maisie's ears and discovered she had glue ear in both ears, and she would need grommets as well as her adenoids removed.

"Maisie also had sleep apnoea, so the team advised they wanted her to go onto an urgent list as she was so young and at a crucial age for her hearing. Her first appointment was in October and her surgery was in December at Kaitiā Hospital." The staff were incredible, Alana points out.

"My daughter would also take her baby doll and all the doctors we saw, would always give her baby an ear check.

This reassured her that she was safe. It is the little things they did to make it special.

"Jan at the Mobile Ear Clinic is wonderful, kind and caring and really knows her stuff and we have been lucky, to have regular check-ups with her. The team at Audiology at Whangārei Hospital were amazing and the wonderful team at ENT. We are so grateful to Kaitiā hospital and their wonderful staff, and it is a beautiful hospital," says Alana.

Now three, Maisie does not have grommets anymore, she is sleeping through the night, talking amazingly and can also ride her bike.

"It felt like an absolute game changer and overnight experience. We will continue to have regular ear checks to make sure it doesn't come back, and if so, will go down that path again," Mum guarantees.

The Mobile Ear Clinic is a free service for children and teenagers from six months to 18 years of age. While there are drop-in clinics some weeks, the service is transitioning to booked appointments. For availability and to book, please phone 0800 MY EARS (0800 693 277) or speak with the Public Health Nurse connected with your child/children's school.



A Day in the Life

Camron Muriwai



Tehea Te Whatu ora – Te Taitokerau. E mahi ana koe? / Which Te Whatu Ora – Te Tai Tokerau service do you work for?

I am very proud to share with everyone that I work in the Te Poutokomanawa – Māori Health Directorate Team

He aha too mahi? / What's your role?

Takawaenga (Māori Health Liaison Officer). When I came into the team, it was a precious time to be amongst our esteemed Rangatira & Kaumātua who were still with us: Matua Pona & Whaea Lizzie Matenga, Matua Hare & Sue Rihari, Matua Werahiko Shelford, Matua Hughie Nathan & Whaea Bella Hutchinson, Matua Kopa Tipene, Matua Puni & Peggy Makene, Matua Rob Sarich, Matua Wi Waiomio, Whaea Wehe Palmer and Whaea Akinihi (Aggie) Christianson who is now retired. Others of the Kaunihera (Council of Elders). They instilled within each of us a deep respect for the kaupapa – Te Poutokomanawa and the importance of the Takawaenga (Māori Health Liaison Officers) in providing Tautoko and Manaaki between the patient, family and clinical teams. The ultimate kaupapa – Whanaungatanga.

At the beginning of our journey, we each received a taonga (replica) of the Pounamu commissioned by Michael Mason of Ngāi Tahu and warmly assured of the need for great strength & courage to navigate the health journey of a people. Whatever happens – Go into your work with brave heart & Spirit. Kia kaha kia maia kia manawanui

He aha te momo tiaki me te tautoko ka homai e tō Ratonga? / What kind of care and support does your Service provide?

Our care and support involve providing cultural support/ Tautoko to Māori Turoro/patients and their whānau / family. We work alongside clinical teams to advocate best practice pathways that meet the needs of our people whilst admitted to a hospital in Northland. In our day-to-day conversations, we encourage our people to participate actively in their Hauora journey – Tu Māori mai.

Our Care and Support is to show the greatest compassion and aroha to another human being when they are at times in their most vulnerable place in life. A kind word, smile, song or a prayer can be the best medicine of care. All of this and more we coin as the relationship of connecting. Our model of care is guided by the principles of Whanaungatanga.

Me pēhea te uru a te tangata ki tō ratonga? / How do people access your service?

Our services can be accessed by self-referral (phone call, text, email) or directly from any staff member. As a

service, a daily report is generated, which helps to inform us of service areas where our people are located. The Multi-Disciplinary meeting is another pathway. The main entrance service desk staff are a wonderful resource of support to patients, carers or visitors needing information about our service. We are all part of the family of health, and someone will always help you along the way to find the right person.

He aha tō papamuri mahi? / What's your career background?

I started my career as a fencer in Kaikohe. I was fortunate to meet a kind-hearted family with ties back to Holland & France who took a keen interest in my life and invited me to live with them in exchange labourers work in their market gardens. I eventually started working three jobs over six days, including the evenings. The Van Gaalen family were extremely caring and kind to me as well as focused on their work, and I will always be indebted to them for teaching me the value of working hard with a commitment to the task at hand.

They also imparted to me how to respect money, helped me with my first savings account, and to purchase my first car. In those days, I would hitchhike from Hokianga to Kaikohe early on a Monday morning, stay with my employer and then return home to Hokianga the same way at the end of the week. So, a car was like a gift from the universe and a positive boost to the working career. It's all been about meeting good people at the right time in my life.

My mother was a great influence on my career and life. She grounded me in understanding that it's not about what we have in life but the gift of life itself that is important. Her emphasis was that there are many things that we will do for ourselves, but what about the world beyond self?

She introduced me to the Ringa Atawhai Community Health Workers Trust, which was established initially to support public health nurses in rural, isolated communities. I trained in 1989 as a community worker, working voluntarily and later as secretary, and then held a Trustee role leading to a coordinator position for the Whangārei, Kaipara area.

These roles formed the basis of my work with people and Community Development. In 2005, under the leadership of General Manager Kim Tito & Operations Manager Desmond Martin and with the blessing of Kaumātua/ Reverend Matua Hare Rihari, I was invited to join the Takawaenga service for a one-year term whilst my dear friend & colleague Lorraine Tauī was on maternity leave. This was extended for a further two-year period. Then General Manager Neil Beney took over the care of the Directorate and promptly sealed my employment into a permanent position.

Quote: Life is like a kaleidoscope. Ever changing, intricate and beautiful.

Individual Placement

Support Helps Secure Full-Time Role



From left, Lee and Shawn of Northland Interiors Whangārei with Deb, MSD Employment Co-ordinator, and Leanne, Te Whatu Ora Employment Specialist.

Shawn is a trade-qualified builder, but some personal challenges were impacting his ability to hold down employment. With help from our Individual Placement Support (IPS) programme, known as Employment Works, Shawn was able to secure a full-time role with Northland Interiors in Whangārei.

The IPS programme is a co-funded partnership between Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand and the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) Northland region. It's an intensive, individually tailored programme that integrates employment and mental health services to support people to find and stay in work.

Not long after securing the role, Shawn was promoted to Site Foreman, and he credits the achievement to his determination to keep at it and a workplace environment that fosters success.

"None of these opportunities were available to me when I was making the choices I was making before. I decided to make a change, focus on my health and now my thinking has shifted to the big picture," says Shawn.

General Manager of Northland Interiors, Lee Sigley says he's seen the personal growth in Shawn since he started last year and as an employer, it was important to acknowledge his past and support him to remain focused on achievable goals.

"Shawn has a presence and mana about him that our clients and younger staff members respond well to. We're proud to see his growth not only career wise, but outside of work as well."

Two-day Paediatric

Palliative Care Workshop a Success

In early March, 40 Te Tai Tokerau nurses, doctors, and allied health staff from Health NZ | Te Tai Tokerau, Hospice, and community health providers came together for a two-day paediatric palliative care workshop.

Held at the Scenic Hotel, Paihia, presenters from Auckland University, the Starship Paediatric Palliative Care team, and Health NZ Te Tai Tokerau staff provided information sessions that helped practitioners develop further skills and knowledge in Paediatric Palliative Care.

Sessions covered the fundamentals of paediatric palliative care (principles, goals of care, advance care planning, communication, culture, spirituality, grief and bereavement and self-care for professionals) and symptom management (pain, neurological, gastrointestinal, respiratory, emotional, and behavioural).

The workshop was very well received, with lots of new learning and connections made.



Workshop attendees

Enabling Parents to Take a Break

The Whangārei Hospital Talipes (also known as Club Foot) Clinic team has found a way to support parents of their young patients when their babies have an Achilles tendon release.

The Clinic's Paediatric Orthopaedic Surgeon, Mr Lyndon Bradley, said because it can be traumatic and upsetting for a parent to hear their child cry when they are not in control, it is far better for the parents to be occupied somewhere well away from the clinic.

They often suggest that parents head to the café for a break. However, because not all of them can afford to spend money in the café, the team decided to apply to Health Fund PLUS to fund coffee cards, which was approved last month.

Mr Bradley explained that on the day of the procedure, parents have an extended appointment, essentially taking the whole morning, including cast removal, bathing, and applying anaesthetic topical cream, which meant waiting for this to be effective.

Then, they have the procedure and must wait to confirm that there are no complications before leaving.

"A break at the café is very reasonable in this situation. We will know where to find the parents if needed (after the procedure and in case of emergency).

"Most of our families have to travel frequently, take time off work, find transport, etc, so any support we can gain to help them with this treatment journey will bring benefit."

Slide Sheets Make Life Smoother

Thanks to a successful application to Health Fund PLUS, our Allied Health team now has a stock of slide sheets to offer carers of palliative patients in Northland.

The slide sheets make repositioning patients while on the bed smoother, making life easier for the patient and the carer, and reducing skin issues from manual handling. The sheet aids in moving patients from a bed to a chair, bed to bed and repositioning patients up to the bed.

The slide sheet is made of special silicon-coated polyester taffeta and works by sliding under the user rather than having to lift them.

The sheets are incredibly light and durable and easy to store away.

Allied Health Assistant Pauline Klay made the application and reported to the Northland Foundation that they had already received an excellent response from the first person she delivered one to.

"He had just returned home after a stay at hospice and was pleased to have the slide sheets at home.

"The carers had used them when he was at hospice, and he found they helped with the transfers and moving in bed."

How to Donate

If you would like to support any of our services, Health Fund PLUS is a partnership between Northland Community Foundation and Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora Te Tai Tokerau, focusing on raising funds for projects that sit outside the scope of government funding. For more information email:

info@northlandcommunityfoundation.org.nz

You can give directly for something specific or contribute to a larger, much needed project. We can help to guide you if needed, by sharing what we are currently fundraising for that might be of interest to you. Donations over \$5, made in your lifetime, qualify for a 33.3 percent tax rebate.

Payroll Giving

Some staff give to Health Fund PLUS, through Northland Community Foundation, by way of payroll giving. If you would like to give to a service or department at Northland DHB complete the request form and send it to payroll payroll@northlanddhb.org.nz

You can make regular donations through Payroll Giving. Not only is it an easy way to donate, but there is also the bonus of an immediate tax benefit. If you donate \$7.50, the government pays \$2.50 of that, meaning only \$5 is deducted from your pay packet (only one coffee per week).



If you would like to support any of our services, Health Fund PLUS is a partnership between Northland Community Foundation and Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora Te Tai Tokerau, focusing on raising funds for projects that sit outside the scope of government funding. For more information, visit:

<https://northlandcommunityfoundation.org.nz/giving/funds/health/>

Multiplying the Blessings



When Rosie Ponifasio-Hughes found out she was having twins, she made a point of connecting with as many Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora services as possible while pregnant. Her midwife recommended the drop-in Lactation Consultant Centre, Te Puawai Ora Whangārei, to see Helen Wellington. Here she visited twice before the babies even arrived, to get some reassurance and advice.

Eight years ago, there was no formal 'multiple birth club' or 'twin group' here in Whangārei when the couple welcomed their twins Asher and Melani, so after it

was suggested to organise a monthly get together, Rosie and her husband Ben Ponifasio, grabbed that opportunity with both hands.

The couple started with a monthly coffee group and then things slowly expanded from there.

"Rosie and her partner Ben also have our lending library in their basement at home - cots, prams, bassinette, clothes, you name it, it's there. They are one incredible whānau, and it is all voluntary," Helen says.

After they had their twins, the couple found out quite early on that borrowing baby gear was far better than buying - not just because of the double or triple expense, but also because most items are often only used for a small window of time, and then parents are stuck trying to sell them.

"My husband and I joke that the only reason the lending library got started was because we were too exhausted to list all the items on Trade Me," she laughs.

Their free lending library has been built entirely upon donated items.

They now have a Facebook group 'Multiples Whangārei & Northland' full of Multiple birth whānau between Wellsford and Cape Reinga who are welcome to join.

The multiple birth group usually runs on the 2nd Friday of each month 10am until midday at Te Puawai Ora, 18 Commerce Street Whangare.

Allied Health Services

Greets New Kaimahi

In January, our Allied Health Service held a pōwhiri to welcome 18 new staff to their team to work across Te Tai Tokerau.

Among the new staff are six new graduate Oral Health Therapists and three Dental House officers working from Kaitaia, the Mid North, Kaipara and Whangārei.

In addition, we have the following staff employed across the district:

- One Dental Assistant who will be working in the Whangārei Community and Hospital
- One Dietitian who will be working in Whangārei Hospital and acute settings
- One Social Worker who will be working in community maternity and Child Health Centre
- Two Occupational Therapists who will be working in the Bay of Islands Community
- Four Physiotherapists are working with inpatients at Whangārei Hospital.

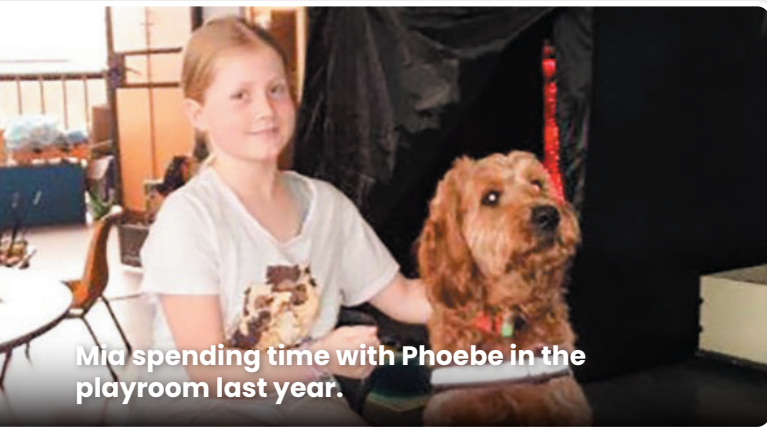
"We are very grateful to have the new staff, many of whom have moved back to Te Tai Tokerau after living away from the district," offered Pip Zammit, Director - Scientific, Technical and Allied Health.

"We greatly appreciate the support from Te Poutokomanawa and Te Aka Whai Ora for facilitating the pōwhiri and thank everyone who attended to ensure that the new staff were warmly welcomed."



Pet Therapy

Making a Difference to Children's Lives



Mia spending time with Phoebe in the playroom last year.

Mia the therapy dog is only new to her role, yet she has assisted many in the Whangārei Hospital's children's ward on their pathway to health.

Mia started visiting ward two last year, passing her therapy dog training assessment in October with flying colours, taking over from her older brother Kambi. Two-year-old Mia is a gentle soul who loves kids and believes all humans are good.

"Children often comment on how she looks like a teddy bear, they love touching her fur," says Mia's owner Hannelise Le Lagadec. Hannelise takes time off work for the visits.

"The Aroha of an animal can reduce stress and put a smile on everyone's face. They give comfort to people who are sick or lonely, or even children with learning needs. Sometimes it can even help with physical pain," says St John who provide the training.

Two visits that stand out in Hannelise's mind were when a young boy was discharged as Kambi arrived. The boy was so excited to play with the dog that he would not go home from the hospital until Kambi left.

Another was when the parents of a child who was badly bitten by a dog wanted their child to not live in fear. "The change from being so frightened to being able to cuddle a dog will always be in my heart," she fondly recalls.

"My favourite part is seeing children fall in love with Mia and the joy she brings to their day," she smiles. Their popular programme brings loving pets to healthcare facilities and classrooms around the country.

The Diabetes Centre

In the Spotlight

Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora Te Tai Tokerau have an excellent dietitian team that support our patients with their nutrition.

Diabetes is a condition that affects the way your body deals with sugar. The amount of sugar in the blood is controlled by insulin, which is a hormone produced by the pancreas, an organ that lies near your stomach.

Patients with diabetes have too much sugar in their blood. Lowering the blood sugar is important for the prevention of serious complications. For many, they underestimate the benefits of good nutrition education and unlearning past habits and diet trends.

Clinical Nurse Specialist Angie Blundell shares the journey of a patient in his seventies who was admitted with symptoms of worsening Type 2 Diabetes.

This experience is just one of many examples of how important good nutrition is and how awesome the diabetes dietitians are.

"It can be a challenging role and disheartening at times, but the team are always motivated, available and an integral part of our hospital. It is great to give my colleagues some acknowledgement," Angie says.

"When we met our patient, his HbA1c was 100, that's very high, and he was started on insulin. He was referred to the dietitians and received education and support to incorporate a lifestyle that will improve his diabetes," she

adds. "We saw him in clinic nearly four months later and his HbA1c is now 50, he is off insulin and is thriving."

When he was asked how he had such great results he replied, "It was my eating. I followed what I learnt from the dietitian and cut out the sugar. I feel like a new person."

The patient said he credited the dietitians and their information around food, he has followed all their recommendations and re-learnt how to eat healthy. He has more energy, lowered his cholesterol, and has a new lease on life.

You will receive lots of information about what you can do to manage your diabetes when you attend your general practitioner and if meeting referral criteria, the Health NZ Te Tai Tokerau diabetes service.



Bella, Megan and Danni who are our Diabetes Dietitian team for Northland

Strengthening Te Tai Tokerau's

Oral Health Workforce



Third Year AUT Students

A collaboration between AUT and Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora Te Tai Tokerau is addressing the oral health workforce shortage by supporting oral health bachelor students to work remotely and close to home.

The local Bachelor of Health Science (Oral Health) programme is now in its third year and has 21 students enrolled: 10 in their first year, five in their second year, and six set to graduate as oral health therapists at the end of 2024. Many of these students are adult students with families, and around 50 percent are Māori.

Three students on the programme are supported by local Northland scholarships this year. One student received a scholarship from the 2024 JR.BM Unregulated Health Workers Fund that provides 60 percent of a student's course fees, and two others received \$2,500 each from the Oral Health Therapist Fund.

A member of our community generously provides both funds to support kaimahi who have no previous qualifications and are seeking to study at the certificate, diploma, or bachelor level.

The scholarships are administered by Health Fund PLUS, a partnership between Health NZ Te Tai Tokerau and Northland Community Foundation. The fund focuses on raising funds for projects outside the scope of usual government funding. Since 2018, it has been providing opportunities for Health New Zealand and Te Aka Whai Ora kaimahi in Te Tai Tokerau to receive financial support for their tuition fees.

Chevau Johnston, a recipient of the JR.BM Fund, is originally from Kaikohe and has worked for Health NZ in Te Tai Tokerau for five years as a dental assistant. She became interested in becoming an oral health therapist after seeing first-hand the value they bring to the local community. This experience has also made her committed to returning home to Kaikohe once she completes her training.

"My goal is to contribute to my community's health and well-being by working for Health NZ, where I can apply my expertise and skills to improve oral health outcomes and make a meaningful impact in Kaikohe, bridging the oral health disparities, access to care for those in need and change oral health habits," Chevau says.

Pip Zammit, Director of Scientific, Technical and Allied Health, says that the AUT programme has been incredibly successful in providing the region's service with skilled oral health professionals.

"The success of this support enables tairā to study remotely and close to home with proven academic and clinical results so far."

Six new oral health therapists joined the Te Tai Tokerau team this year after completing the AUT Bachelor of Health Science (Oral Health) degree.

The new team members will significantly contribute to providing care to the community, treating adults and some of the 37,266 children and adolescents enrolled across Te Tai Tokerau.

Professor Judith McAra-Couper, Head of School - Clinical Sciences at AUT, agrees.

"In the past, students had to travel to Auckland to become oral health therapists. As a school, we are committed where feasible and appropriate - and where the community has identified a need - to see if we can provide education that enables students to study close to home.

"We were pleased to be able to support Health NZ Te Tai Tokerau and their partners in addressing longstanding workforce needs in oral health to meet the community's needs," McAra-Couper says.

"We have a long history of delivering education in this way in Northland, and it shows AUT can be part of the solution to meeting health and workforce needs."

Karen Lansdown, Head of Department - Oral Health at AUT, says the response to the programme highlights the remarkable level of national and international interest in AUT's 'flipped chair' model of dental education.

"We have fantastic students who are community-focused and genuinely appreciate the experience of learning at home in their community," Lansdown says.

"Students are passionate about their community and addressing service challenges, and, at the end of the day, they are there for the people of Te Tai Tokerau."

Witnessing the success of this initiative, other regions are showing interest in replicating the programme in their area as one way of addressing the workforce shortage.

Health NZ provides oral health care services for children, adolescents, and eligible adults in Te Tai Tokerau.

Oral health care is provided by 18 school-based mobile dental clinics that visit up to 80 sites across Te Tai Tokerau, community dental clinics in Whangārei, Kerikeri, Kaitaia, Kaikohe, Hokianga, Mangawhai, and Dargaville, and at Whangārei, Bay of Islands, Dargaville and Kaitaia Hospitals.

The community-based dental service is free for children under 18 years. Adults who are Community Service Card Holders and live in Northland can also access the service (note that a \$40 co-payment charge applies for each appointment).

To learn more about the service or make an appointment, call **0800 MYTEETH** (0800 698 3384) or visit: northlanddhb.org.nz.

Gout Stop Programme’s ambition to reduce ED presentations

Northland’s population suffer from the highest rate of gout in Aotearoa New Zealand.[i] Gout is a painful condition and if unmanaged it is a risk factor for developing cardiovascular disease and diabetes.[ii] By taking regular medication to regulate uric acid levels patients can get their symptoms under control and improve their quality of life.

The Gout Stop Programme was first introduced by Mahitahi Hauora in 2016 to support and fund general practices and pharmacies to treat and manage gout, reducing presentations to hospital emergency departments. Further funding meant that Mahitahi Hauora were able to roll out improvements to the programme from May 2023. Gout Stop referral is now measured as a clinical indicator and Mahitahi Hauora provides additional funding to practices that follow-up with patients, ensuring the patient receives the long-term support they need to manage their condition.

More Māori and Pasifika are now receiving the treatment they need to manage their condition

We know from the data that Māori and Pasifika peoples are genetically more at risk of developing gout and tend to develop it at a younger age than other ethnicities.

Over 40 percent of all Māori and Pasifika patients referred to the Gout Stop Programme are aged under 40, the youngest patient being just 17 years of age. In comparison, just 15 percent of patients from other ethnicities were aged under 40.

A 2019 report found that 42percent of Māori 39.5 percent of Pasifika in Northland diagnosed with gout regularly received urate-lowering medication, however, recent data from the Gout Stop Programme shows that in 2023 66 percent of Māori and Pasifika gout sufferers are now regularly receiving the treatment they need.[iii]

Monthly referrals to the Gout Stop Programme have increased by 400 percent

Cristina Ross, Network and Service Improvement Manager at Mahitahi Hauora said, ‘Prior to the changes we saw on average 10 referrals a month, and from May 2023, after we automated the referrals process and saw the average monthly referrals reach over 50, an increase of 400 percent, which was wonderful to see. It means that

fewer people are slipping through the cracks and are now receiving the support they need to manage their gout.’

Now, whenever a doctor at a Mahitahi Hauora general practice prescribes a Gout Stop pack, that patient receives regular clinical and kaiāwhina check-ins from a registered nurse to help guide them through the programme. A Registered Nurse at Mahitahi Hauora has spent almost 500 hours co-ordinating the care of gout patients. Each patient who successfully completes the programme receives on average 5.5 points of contact and patient satisfaction with the programme is 4.5 out of 5.

With regular medication, there is life after gout

Gout Stop Programme Registered Nurse at Mahitahi Hauora, Theresa Chapman said, ‘Throughout the programme I develop rapport and connections with patients and become invested in their journey. I tailor my approach to each patient and provide the extra support and encouragement they need. I have picked up prescriptions, made visits to their worksites over tea break, and even taken my phone on holiday.’

The real successes of the programme are the stories of patients who have completed the programme.

‘One of my patients had presented to ED 18 times in a 12-month period, and since completing the programme and remaining on medication he is no longer having flares,’ said Theresa.



[i] 2019 Health Quality and Safety Commission report on Gout. Comparing Mahitahi Hauora to PHOs serving a similar sized population.

[ii] Cai, K., & Wu, B., & Mehta, S., & Harwood, M., & Grey, C., & Dalbeth, D., & Wells, S., & Jackson, R., & Poppe, K. (2022). Association between gout and cardiovascular outcomes in adults with no history of cardiovascular disease: large data linkage study in New Zealand. *The British Medical Journal*. <https://bmjmedicine.bmj.com/content/bmjmed/1/1/e000081.full.pdf>

[iii] 66% of Māori and Pasifika patients who were diagnosed with gout, and coded as such by their GP, before January 2023 received allopurinol and Gout Stop medication regularly during 2023

Welcoming a New Generation of Doctors to Te Tai Tokerau

Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora Te Tai Tokerau welcomed another group of fifth-year medical students to the Pūkawakawa training programme with a pōwhiri at Terenga Paroa Marae in Whangārei.

In the 16th year, Pūkawakawa, the regional-rural programme at the University of Auckland, is a training initiative to encourage more graduating doctors to Northland, giving them valuable experience in regional and rural healthcare.

“It is our whānau birth-right to kia pai te hauora (to be in good health) and this is something we must nurture,” offered Peter Thomas, Pou Taki ā-Rohe (Director), Te Aka Whai Ora.

“I encourage all students to learn from the communities and colleagues around them, find out what matters to people as individuals, whānau, iwi and hapū.”

During their fifth year, each student spends time in Whangārei Hospital and one of the rural hospitals in Kaitaia, Bay of Islands, Dargaville or Rawene.

The students also experience working with GPs in outpatient settings and a range of community health expert practitioners.

In addition to helping them understand the unique skills and challenges in practising rural medicine, the placements help students develop their links with the Northland region.

“Our vision is that medical students who participate in the Pūkawakawa programme forge relationships and a heartfelt desire to return and practice medicine in the north,” Dr Jenny Walker, Chief Medical Officer said. “There are opportunities throughout the health sector in Te Tai Tokerau, particularly in the fields of rural medicine and primary care.”

The University of Auckland’s Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences and the Northland District Health Board established the ground-breaking partnership in 2007.

Pūkawakawa placements are highly sought after, with 24 students selected based on their interest in regional or rural medicine.

A group of newly graduated doctors were also welcomed to Te Tai Tokerau in January with a pōwhiri and learning sessions at Whakapara Marae, just north of Whangārei.

This is the fourth year the event has been hosted by Dr Chayce Glass, at his whānau marae, with support from his partner Brittany Haitana, other Māori doctors and the Health Advisory team.

Dr Glass says the transition from medical school to mahi at Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora Te Tai Tokerau requires an appropriate welcome and introduction to the region, which has a high proportion and profile of Māori and rural people.

“The hui whakatau is the start of our regions intern orientation and provides us with an opportunity to welcome our new cohort of house officers on a marae-based setting, to emphasise the importance of Te Ao Māori in Te Tai Tokerau and provide an opportunity for whakawhānaungatanga” he said.

Following the initial pōwhiri, attended by whānau and invited guests including Chief Medical Officer Dr Jenny Walker, there were several learning sessions held, including introducing members of the Takawaenga team.

In the afternoon the new doctors visited Te Ruapekapeka where Dr Glass shared the history of the site and significance to Te Tai Tokerau iwi and Aotearoa.

“For some this was an opportunity to experience something completely different and admire the view to the Hokianga on the clear day, while others commented on the feeling of reconnecting to their whenua,” he said.

The day concluded with “awa time”, a walk across farmland to cool off with a swim and a return to the marae for final farewells.



Te Rewharewha Flu

(Influenza)



The flu (influenza) is a virus that spreads quickly between people. Flu causes symptoms like a fever, runny nose, cough or upset stomach. There can be different types or strains of flu that can make you sick each year.

Symptoms of flu

The flu virus infects your nose, throat, and lungs. It is normally worse than a cold.

It can take between 1 to 4 days to feel symptoms after you catch flu. The worst symptoms usually last about 5 days, but coughing can last up to 2 to 3 weeks.

Symptoms of flu start suddenly and can include:

- fever or feeling feverish
- chills
- muscle or body aches
- headache
- runny or stuffy nose
- cough
- sore throat
- upset stomach, vomiting or runny poos (diarrhoea).
- illnesses with similar symptoms

Flu symptoms can be like other illnesses like COVID-19 or meningococcal disease. If you suspect someone in your whānau has meningococcal disease, seek urgent medical attention.

How flu spreads

Flu (influenza) spreads quickly from person to person through touch and through droplets in the air. This includes:

- direct contact with people who have flu
- contact with surfaces that have the flu virus on them
- coughing
- sneezing
- talking.

You are most likely to get the flu during 'flu season' – May to October in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Adults are most likely to be contagious in the first 3 to 5 days of illness. Young tamariki can be contagious for more than 5 days.

Preventing flu

The flu virus changes often. This means the vaccine must be adjusted each year to match the new strains of the disease. Your best defence against flu is to get a yearly flu vaccine and follow basic hygiene practices.

Some people can get flu vaccines for free. Find out about flu vaccines and when to get them.

Flu (influenza) vaccine

Other ways to avoid flu

You can also protect yourself and your whānau in other ways.

- Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds and dry them for 20 seconds – or use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Do not share drinks.
- Avoid crowded places.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.

The 2024 flu vaccine is free for some people

The flu vaccine is free for people at higher risk of getting very sick, including:

- people aged 65 years and over
- people aged 6 months and over who have a long-term medical condition like diabetes, asthma, or a heart condition
- pregnant people
- tamariki (children) aged 4 years and under who have been hospitalised for respiratory illness, or have a history of significant respiratory illness
- people with mental health conditions, including schizophrenia, major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, or schizoaffective disorder
- people who are currently accessing secondary or tertiary mental health and addiction services.

The funded flu vaccine for tamariki and adults (6 months of age and over) available in Aotearoa New Zealand is called Inluvac Tetra.

Book your vaccine

Flu vaccines are available from your doctor, nurse, or healthcare provider. Everyone over 3 years old can get a flu vaccine at many pharmacies.

You can now book your 2024 flu vaccine on [Book My Vaccine](#).

You can also book over the phone: 0800 28 29 26 (8:30am to 5pm Monday to Friday, except public holidays).

Group bookings for the flu vaccine will be available from Tuesday 2 April.

Te Whatu Ora
Health New Zealand

Te Tai Tokerau

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