

MEDIA RELEASE

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International Nurses' Day, 12 May: A voice to lead

International Nurses' Day is celebrated around the world on 12 May, the anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth.

The theme for this year is 'A voice to lead'.

Director of Nursing and Midwifery Pamela Kiesanowski says it's the biggest day on the calendar for nurses – and really a chance to thank them and recognise them for the work they do.

Nelson Marlborough Health acknowledges the tremendous work nurses throughout our health system do every day.

Nurse Practitioners – the 'new wave' of nursing professionals

When Jenny Kane started her original nursing training back in the 1980s she never imagined she would go on to become a Nurse Practitioner, reaching the highest clinical qualification possible in her chosen career.

Jenny attained her registration as Nurse Practitioner with the Nursing Council in March this year. Her specialty area of practice is 'older adults', chosen because of experiences gained both growing up and during her nursing career.

"I was fortunate to have positive role models when I was young, which encouraged an interest in older adults and their contribution to society and family life."

Jenny began her postgraduate study in 2009 when she was working as a Nurse Educator at Nelson Marlborough Health. She completed her Master's degree in Nursing Science in 2014 and joined the Nurse Practitioners pilot training programme in 2016.

She says becoming a Nurse Practitioner has broadened her knowledge of the whole-of-health system, as well as fine tuned the skills and knowledge in her area of practice.

"I couldn't have done it alone as it requires huge support from nursing and medical colleagues, family and other networks," she says. "I am looking forward to being able to make a difference and hopefully influence service development."

Nurse practitioner role well accepted in Marlborough

In 2015 Diane Williams became the first Nurse Practitioner (primary health care) to work widely across general practice settings and the GP After Hours service in Marlborough. There are now 10 Nurse Practitioner employed throughout the region, with at least five more in training. Diane says the nurse practitioner role is successful in many locations and is becoming well accepted in Marlborough as a new way to provide health care.

Diane trained as a nurse in Sydney, then moved to New Zealand to focus on remote, rural and community nursing. "It's 'cradle to grave' work and helping everyone that walks in the door," Diane says. "You are in a very privileged position – being involved in people's lives and helping to make positive outcomes."

Diane believes primary health professionals have many opportunities to change not just one person's life but whole families and communities.

She's been registered as an NP for over ten years and is one of the early pioneers of the role.

What it takes to become a Nurse Practitioner

Nurse Practitioners (NPs) are expert nurses, with advanced knowledge and skills, who work within a specific area of the population.

NPs need to have a clinical Master's degree in Nursing Science plus a minimum of four years' practice as a registered nurse working in a specialty area before beginning the stringent assessment and interview process with the Nursing Council of New Zealand.

Applicants must compile a portfolio to meet the Nursing Council competencies for the NP 'scope of practice'.

They must meet competencies in clinical leadership, management of nursing care, prescribing practice and quality improvement practices.

A NP has the authority to hold clinics and diagnose, order tests and prescribe medication and treatment. The role improves access to healthcare, especially in rural communities and can help bridge gaps in healthcare delivery.

They practise both independently and in collaboration with other healthcare professionals and in partnership with individuals, families, whanau and communities across a range of settings.

The number of NPs gaining registration in New Zealand is continuing to increase. There are currently 247 nurses in New Zealand registered as nurse practitioners, with nine working in the Nelson Marlborough region. NMH employed its first NP in 2011.

NPs work with all population groups throughout NZ - providing expert care from neonates to end-of-life. Half of all NPs work in primary health and generally work with patients and populations who are the most vulnerable patients due to their complex health needs, geographical isolation or socio-economic deprivation.

Contact details for follow up interviews:

Jenny Kane (Nelson)

P: 027 2460939

Jenny.Kane@nmdhb.govt.nz

Diane Williams (Blenheim)

P: 03 520 6200 ext 760 or 027 206 4696

dianew@marlboroughpho.org.nz

Ends

Contacts:

Stephanie Gray, Communications Manager, Nelson Marlborough Health
03 546 1824 / 027 4466 799 / stephanie.gray@nmdhb.govt.nz