

6/4/2020

Chief Nursing Officer letter to Nurse Leaders

Tēnā koutou katoa,

Once again, I want to begin this pānui with a thank you to all our frontline health care workers, in particular our nurses and midwives, who are going above and beyond during this unprecedented time. I want to acknowledge the sacrifices that you are all making to keep our communities safe.

As I stated in my last pānui, I will endeavour to update you regularly on key themes and issues related to nursing. In this pānui I will update you on developments within the areas I touched on previously, and update you on recent developments. I meet regularly with key nursing leadership groups to update directly, so feel free to pass this pānui on to a wider audience.

Nurses expressing an interest to assist in the COVID-19 response

The Ministry of Health (the Ministry) has so far received over 6,100 expressions of interest from healthcare workers, including many nurses, to assist with the COVID-19 response. We are extremely grateful for this response, and ask you to please pass on our gratitude to your networks. The call for expressions of interest is still open, please direct nurses to register their interest through the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/COVID19nz>

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

I want to once again reassure you that the Ministry is doing everything we can to ensure consistency of access to PPE across our health and disability workforce and we will do everything we can to give you the information, guidance, equipment and support you need.

The latest guidance on the appropriate use of PPE has been published on the Ministry's website. We are working with the Infection Prevention and Control TAG to refine this further for maximum effectiveness, including face mask and hygiene advice. In addition to this guidance, we are developing posters to show what PPE should be used for the prevention of COVID-19 and when it should be used. These posters are for community care providers, hospital staff and essential non-health workers. These are available on our website.

There is good stock of PPE in the country right now. The Ministry has good stock in the national reserves and DHBs also have their own reserves. It was announced last Tuesday that the Ministry is releasing seven million standard surgical masks over the coming weeks starting with 1.2 million from the national stocks, for DHBs to issue to community and disability health workers. We are working hard to find ways to replenish the stock we have already, and are setting up a nationally co-ordinated approach for sourcing and distributing additional PPE to the health sector and essential workers whose work requires it.

It's important that everyone receives the necessary training and guidance for using PPE correctly. We also need to make sure that PPE is used responsibly alongside other essential infection control practices, particularly handwashing and within the guidelines provided. Responsible use of PPE will mean that we have enough now and throughout the response.

State of the World's Nursing report

On 7 April 2020, World Health Day, the WHO released the State of the World's Nursing report. The report was developed in collaboration with the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and the Nursing Now campaign. 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".

This report is an opportunity to reflect on nursing globally; to celebrate successes and identify areas to improve moving forward. New Zealand contributed to this report, and I am excited to see how nursing in Aotearoa compares with nursing around the world. The Ministry of Health will be holding a webinar next week for the launch of the report, invitations will be sent out shortly.

As we come to the end of second week of Alert Level 4, we need to continue do our best to keep our whānau, communities and workforce safe. I urge you to continue to check the official NZ COVID-19 website and the Ministry's COVID-19 website pages to keep up-to-date on the fast-evolving situation. Thank you again for everything you are doing to ensure services continue to be delivered to the highest standard.

Naku noa,

Margareth Broodkoorn
Chief Nursing Officer
Ministry of Health