

5/6/2020

Chief Nursing Officer letter to Nurses across Aotearoa

Tēnā koutou katoa,

As it has been a short week, my letter to you all may also follow the same theme. I do hope though that for many of you, the long weekend was enjoyed and you took some time to relax and connect with your whanau and friends. For those that worked during the long weekend, thank you for holding the fort and continuing to provide the much needed care to our community.

New Zealand has now had two weeks of no new cases, with only one case still active. Cabinet will review the Alert Level settings on Monday 8 June, and the Ministry is working hard on guidance around what Alert Level 1 will look like for the health sector so that we can continue to keep patients, health workers, whānau and communities safe.

Keep an eye on the MoH and the COVID-19 websites which will provide regular updates on what the move to Alert Level 1 means to us in the health sector and across our communities.

Three nurses receive Queen's Birthday Honours

On 1 June 2020 it was so pleasing to see three nurses were appointed to The New Zealand Order of Merit:

Officers (ONZM)

Dr Daryle Elizabeth Anne Deering, of Christchurch, for services to nursing, particularly mental health and addiction nursing

Dr Anthony John O'Brien, of Auckland, for services to mental health nursing

Members (MNZM)

Jacqueline Leigh Edmond, Brooklyn, Wellington, for services to sexual and reproductive health

It is wonderful to see these nurses recognised via this prestigious award for the vital work that they do. I want to pass on my congratulations, along with a big mihi, to these three nurses and the contributions they have made and will continue to make to patients, whanau and communities lives.

The full list of Queen's Birthday Honours Recipients can be found [here](#).

Emergent models of care

While being clear not to downplay the significant global and local impact of COVID-19, there have been some silver linings within the reality of the pandemic.

Innovation has occurred where previously this was stifled by over-analysis and structural barriers, with more permissive opportunities and in some cases by matter of urgency and need – models of care have changed to meet the needs of the community.

Community – Maori, Pacific, Rural and other communities and providers have stepped up and created innovative ideas to respond to the pandemic crisis, telehealth and remote consults burgeoned, digital technology and the development of apps have featured. Above all we have had to do things differently, and even though a lot of what was planned was not put to the test – we are in a better position for being prepared should we need to apply and stand up these plans again.

As we reflect on the past twelve plus weeks, we have learnt so much, there is a lot to be thankful for here in Aotearoa, New Zealand but we are not out of the woods yet. While we have some breathing space the ability to look back over this time to assess what went well, what didn't go so well, and what we can take further; it will be important to capture all of the learnings.

Please let me know if you would be willing to share any of these learning and innovation. Nursing has been at the forefront of the COVID-19 response so I am sure there will be a lot to share.

Updated IPC advice

As I have mentioned in previous pānui, the Ministry continues to review our IPC advice as the COVID-19 situation evolves and based on feedback from the health and disability sector on how our existing advice can be strengthened. Updates and new documents have been published on the Ministry of Health's website over the past few days. These include:

- New guidance around cleaning and disinfection, including updated frequently asked questions, which can be found [here](#).
- Updated *Infection Prevention and Control Procedures for DHB acute care hospitals* document, which can be downloaded from the Ministry's website [here](#).
- Updated *Alert Level 2: Risk assessment questions if COVID-19 status is unknown* flowchart document as well as the document for determining PPE for those known of suspected, probable or confirmed COVID-19 status, can be downloaded from the PPE web page on the Ministry's website [here](#). This advice will continue to be updated as needed during Alert Levels based on the COVID-19 context in New Zealand so keep an eye on the website for regular updates.
- Updated *Frequently asked questions about PPE* document, which can be downloaded from the Ministry's website [here](#). The wording of the key risk assessment questions in this document has been updated to be consistent with the updates to the Alert Level 2: Risk assessment questions if COVID-19 status is unknown mentioned above, and the use of N95/P2 respirators has been clarified as required for aerosol generating procedures (AGPs) only when working with a person whose status is COVID-19 suspected, probable or confirmed.
- Updated *PPE use for community care providers: requirements for providing care in people's homes*, which can be found [here](#).
- Updated *PPE use for disability support and care workers: A guide when working in client's homes*, which can be found [here](#).

Health and disability system review

I wanted to give a quick update on the Health and Disability System Review report. The final report has now been received by the Minister of Health, and it will be considered by Cabinet in the next few weeks.

As more information comes to light I will be in touch to advise.

More about the background to the review can be found on the [Health and Disability System Review website](#).

Influenza vaccinations

In an earlier pānui, I provided an update on influenza vaccinations and the work that was being done to ensure that the vaccine was available and accessible for all New Zealanders. Well, for the first time, a million doses of the influenza vaccine are recorded as having been administered on the National Immunisation Register (NIR). For 2019, the total was 838,798 over the entire season. It is great to hear that more New Zealanders than ever are seeking protection against the flu.

I urge you all to continue to do what you can to encourage New Zealanders to get vaccinated, particularly priority groups such as pregnant women, older people and people with pre-existing conditions, along with Māori and Pacific communities whose immunisation rates have historically been significantly lower than those of the wider population.

Where possible, we ask that health providers continue to make sure they record influenza vaccination on the NIR. The NIR is the most accurate source of information for the Ministry about how many vaccines have been administered and how many are still likely to be in circulation and guides our decision-making.

I hope that the updates I provide in these letters is relevant, interesting and informative. If there is anything that you would like to know more about, please feel free to email the Office of the Chief Nurse at chiefnurse@health.govt.nz.

Now that we have had several weeks at Alert Level 2, I hope you have all been able to reconnect in person with friends and whānau, or have plans to do so.

Nāku noa,

Margareth Broodkoorn
Chief Nursing Officer
Ministry of Health