

# Taking the fear out of palliative care



*“Palliative care is about living life to the fullest...”*

Palliative care is the support of patients and whānau who are living with a life-limiting illness. It does not mean the end of life but is about living life to the fullest, which is something Dr Robyn McArthur wants people to understand.

Dr McArthur works at Rimutaka Prison and aged residential care facilities in Hutt Valley.

She helps care for people who have chronic or life-limiting conditions and those who are becoming frail. She has a special interest in palliative care and in removing

people’s fear of the term, which often comes from misunderstanding.

“People are living longer these days with chronic or complex conditions such as organ failure, lung disease and dementia, as well as terminal cancer.

“Palliative care is about having the best quality of life within the restrictions of a disease.

“There’s a great deal of help you can access, from physiotherapy to dietary advice, and it’s really important that people aren’t

afraid to have a conversation about making early palliative care plans with their doctor or a health professional.

“If you are in this situation it makes sense to make decisions beforehand about what sort of care you might want later. Making plans early helps avoid a situation where things can only be decided for you”.

Sarah Shellard works for Te Omanga Hospice as a Palliative Care Nurse Specialist and says that people are often surprised when they find she is based at Hutt Hospital.

“My role is offering support and advice to patients and their whānau. Those who need my help could be admitted into any area of the hospital so each day can be very different.

“It’s really important for people to know that good palliative care is available in all areas where you get healthcare and from a variety of health professionals.”

## Myths and facts about palliative care

Palliative care ...

*Myth... is only for people dying of cancer*

**Fact... is for patients and their whānau who are living with a life-limiting illness**

*Myth... hastens your death*

**Fact... empowers patients and their whānau by allowing them to have as much quality of life as they can while managing their illness**

*Myth: ...is only given in a hospice and means your GP has given up on you*

**Fact: ...is provided throughout a patient’s illness in their home and community, and in hospitals, hospices and residential care facilities, by GPs, specialists, social workers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, counsellors, dieticians, district nurses, chaplains....**

**Hospice is just one part of palliative care.**

*Myth....means getting you dependent on pain killers*

**Fact...offers an approach suited to each patient to support you and your whānau through your illness with medications right for you**

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## Vital services when infectious diseases strike

*Campylobacter...Measles...*

When infectious and notifiable diseases strike our community, Regional Public Health (RPH) steps up to the fight.

Recent outbreaks of measles and campylobacter in the North Island are timely reminders of the need for the vital services that RPH provides in the fight against infectious diseases.

The organisation is based at Hutt Hospital and works across the Wellington region to make our community a healthier, safer place to live.

Dr Annette Nesdale, Medical Officer of Health explains what happens when

there is a case of a notifiable disease like measles in the community.

“Part of our job is following up people who may be infected during outbreaks of notifiable diseases and we use an electronic patient management system as an invaluable tool for this. The system has the ability to link patient records with information about flights, GP surgeries, public places and other things that can help in limiting potential outbreaks.” The system was put to the test recently to help follow up two people who were infected with measles while overseas.

RPH staff also travel out of the Wellington region if

needed to assist other public health units in managing outbreaks. When the recent campylobacter outbreak affected over 4000 Hawke’s Bay residents, several Wellington RPH staff members travelled to the area to lend a hand. Other RPH projects that you may be familiar with in the Hutt Valley include the well-supported Fruit and Vege Co-op, with around 1200 Hutt Valley families now signed up, Well Homes; Hutt Valley Youth Survey reports; and Water in Schools.



From left: Regional Public Health’s Barbara Eddie, Public Health Nurse, and Dr Annette Nesdale, Medical Officer of Health, demonstrate an electronic patient management system.

### Hutt Valley District Health Board meetings open to the public

Friday, 18 November 2016, 3DHB CPHAC-DSAC, 9.00 am Boardroom, Pilmuir House, Hutt Hospital campus, High Street, Lower Hutt



Virginia Hope



John Terris



David Ogden



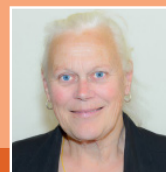
Sandra Greig



Ken Laban



Wayne Guppy



Katy Austin



Yvette Grace



David Bassett



Peter Douglas