

# Te Rerenga

News from the Western Bay of Plenty Primary Health Organisation



Western Bay of Plenty  
Primary Health Organisation

TŪNGIA TE URURUA KIA TUPU  
WHAKARITORITO TE TUPU  
O TE HARAKEKE



Kate Vaalu, a school nurse at Ōtūmoetai College, is helping to screen all Year 9 students using the YouthCHAT digital portal.

## School nurse takes on new challenges

**Students starting Year 9 at Ōtūmoetai College will benefit from more targeted health and counselling services this year thanks to an online survey designed to pick up the most at-risk students earlier.**

School nurse Kate Vaalu is supporting the school to survey students via the YouthCHAT portal, a health screening digital tool designed by medical researchers at the University of Auckland.

About 470 students are expected to complete the health survey before the end of Term 1. It will be the first time an entire cohort of students will be surveyed via YouthCHAT in the Bay of Plenty.

A previous attempt at Ōtūmoetai College was thwarted due to disruption

caused by the first COVID lockdown in 2020. An earlier trial carried out in 2019 involving a smaller group of students demonstrated a number who required support for depression, anxiety or self-harm.

Following that survey, the PHO allocated extra funding for a school counsellor to work one day a week. Students 'red-flagged' after completing the survey are seen by a counsellor that same day.

*Story continues next page ...*

[wboppho.org.nz](http://wboppho.org.nz)



Cover story continues ...

Kate says students will be set up to complete the survey securely and confidentially in the school's IT room. The survey's findings will help the school's Wellness Team, including its two nurses, two doctors, four counsellors, physio and two first aiders, quickly identify students who need help.

"We already know we have students coming through from intermediate with issues stemming from trauma in childhood. The survey helps us to get support in place for them earlier in the year."

Students needing mental health support will be directed to counsellors. Kate and her colleague Annalise Thomas will provide support to students with other issues, such as vaping, smoking, drugs, and eating disorders.

"We have a lot of hope for what YouthCHAT can help us achieve for students."

This year Kate will juggle her YouthCHAT work with other school clinic responsibilities, including contraception and sexual health support for students.

In 2021, she became the PHO's first school nurse to become a Janelle practitioner, which allows her to offer and insert long-acting contraception to young women at school. Last year she completed 26 contraceptive implants.

Having worked at Ōtūmoetai College for four years, Kate says she received backing from the school and fantastic support from Dr Margaret Chavasse and Dr Tracy Ball to provide the best-practice service.

"Because it's a fit and forget option, implants are great for girls who are sexually active but aren't great at taking a pill every day. They last for five years, and provide effective contraceptive control."

PHO school nurse coordinator Paula Ngatai says Kate was a role model. "A valuable nurse, she works quietly in one of our biggest schools with passion and courage to improve services to students by trying new initiatives."

"Her hard work in these spaces is so appreciated as she strives to improve youth health services in our school-based health services team."

## Systems all go in Omicron response

**It was all hands to the pump for the COVID Primary Response Team over Christmas/New Year, with new systems tested and a wealth of experience gained along the way.**

Now, with Omicron cases expected to increase workloads, efforts are under way to recruit more team members and finetune the response model.

The PHO team, led by Sarah Johnson, says the first weeks were "crazy busy" for her and Network Services Development Manager Trish Anderson.

"We took advantage of a quiet period mid-January to work on service development, staff recruitment, and to simplify processes and make them really robust, so we've got everything in place when more pressure comes on."

The team picks up referrals of COVID-positive patients and their household contacts from Toi Te Ora Public Health, and connects them with General Practices across the Bay of Plenty. GPs provide clinical care for patients and their household contacts during their time in self-isolation.

Operational since early December, the team works closely with all three Bay of Plenty PHOs, as well as Toi Te Ora, Bay of Plenty District Health Board and additional providers to provide a seven-day service, responding to all referrals as they come in.

Locally enrolled patients receive support from their local practice and a duty doctor at weekends and public holidays. Non-enrolled patients, or people registered with a practice outside the Bay of Plenty, are assigned a duty doctor.

During the first few weeks, Trish says they handled a lot of positive referrals involving people visiting the region.

"On Christmas Day, I sent my first referral at 6.30am. New Year's Day was a 12-hour day; it was so busy."

Sarah adds that the team's early success came from collaboration, as they have the ability to call on extra support through providers Tunstall Healthcare and Evolve when required.

"Tunstall is a provider with local nurses who can support General Practices that don't have the capacity to look after patients, or their household contacts. They can handle some of the out-of-town caseload when resources are stretched."

"If Tunstall has clinical queries, they can escalate them to Evolve for clinical guidance. They have been so responsive and a real lifeline."

Equally valuable has been the DHB's Welfare Hub, which has provided much-needed non-clinical support to people isolating at home.

"They were delivering everything from kai, nappies, pet food and prescriptions to organising campervans so index cases stay isolated from whānau in a large household," says Trish. "They've been incredible and really accommodating."

They also checked patients at home, reminding them to answer calls from General Practice.

"People get daily calls and some feel overwhelmed with those. But the Welfare Team can visit their home and explain that a GP is trying to release them from isolation. They need to answer their phones."



Sarah Johnson (CPRT Lead) and Trish Anderson (Network Services Development Manager).

# Serving a growing population

## A new General Practice has opened its doors in Te Puna.

Built on a newly developed site opposite Nourish Café on Te Puna Road, Te Puna Doctors started welcoming new patients on 6 December.

Its opening fulfils the vision of Dr Maxine Beetham who, with her colleague Dr Ken Caldwell, wanted to better cater to the primary health needs of Te Puna's growing population.

"Until now, people have always had to travel to either Ōmokoroa or Bethlehem to see a GP close by," says Maxine. "This gives local residents and new families moving to the area another, more accessible option closer to home."

Maxine was brought up in Te Puna from a very young age, attending Te Puna Primary School as a child. Having previously served as a doctor at Tauranga Hospital and as a general practitioner in Ōtūmoetai and Mount Maunganui, her new practice feels like a homecoming.

"I've had a vision to create a medical practice here for a couple of years, so it feels very special to finally start treating patients and meet the community's very diverse health needs.

"Te Puna is a diverse community, and



*Te Puna Doctors team (from left): Practice manager Jax Lucas, nurse Gemma Shirley, nurse Helen Hoyle, nurse lead Katie Beck, Dr Maxine Beetham, receptionist Lisa Arrol, and Dr Ken Caldwell.*

we aim to cater to everybody's needs. Our location means we expect to treat a lot of casual seasonal workers who come here for work in the kiwifruit orchards."

The practice is operating Monday to Friday and has the capacity to care for 2000 enrolled patients.

Ken enjoys delivering the full range of general practice medicine, and has previously worked in Te Awamutu, as well as practices on Waiheke Island and at Waihi Beach as a locum.

He says it's exciting to be working in an entirely new practice as part of small, hard-working team.

"We're enjoying meeting new faces and

building relationships with families over time."

The practice team includes two administration staff and three nurses. A fourth nurse, Emily Bell, will join the team in February.

Nurse lead Katie Beck says feedback from patients in their opening week was very positive.

"They love the fresh, new facilities and especially the smaller practice feel."

Her nursing team provides the full range of services, including immunisations and cervical smears, support for diabetes management, weight loss, and palliative care.

# Positive vibe at iwi-led max vax event

## A 'mass vaccination' event led by Ngāti Ranginui has created a blueprint for further collaborative events involving kaupapa Māori health providers.

Ngāti Ranginui Iwi Society organised the Te Kupenga Hao drive-through vaccination event at Sulphur Point Marine Park on December 5. On the day Ngāti Ranginui iwi were joined by Poutiri Trust, Te Manu Toroa, and Te Pare ō Toi nurses from the Bay of Plenty District Health Board's outreach team.

Collectively, they vaccinated a total of 170 people throughout the day – 90 per cent of them Māori. About one-third were first doses.

Chief executive Mel Tata says there were more than 100 participants in the first

hour of opening.

"It was quite a complex operation that was bumper to bumper at first, but we managed well because we had a great site plan that handled the pressure in that first hour of entry."

One the day, there were spot prizes, ice-creams, and kaimoana vouchers.

The fisheries entity belonging to Ngāti Ranginui made vouchers available through its distributor Takitimu Seafoods in support of the vaccination kaupapa, says Mel.

"As an iwi we have the ability to draw

on all our resources, including our kaimahi working in health, to create opportunities for our whānau to make the choice to get vaccinated."

Mel says the event site next to the moana and with the vision of Mauao in the background contributed to the relaxed atmosphere.

"It was a great example of kotahitanga with everyone coming together with a common goal. We have this event as an example of what can be achieved when we all work together."



# Nurse upskills to support rangatahi

**Leah Dixon has become the Western Bay of Plenty PHO's first practising nurse prescriber, and she isn't finished with study yet.**

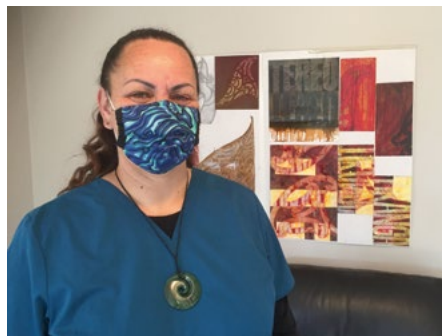
A registered nurse in community health (RNPCH), Leah officially achieved nurse prescriber status last August after powering through her studies while working for the Eastern Bay of Plenty Primary Health Alliance as a school nurse at Whakatāne High School.

She started the training in November 2020, and although she had one year to complete the course, planning a move to the Western Bay of Plenty made her committed to finishing it earlier.

"Dr Helen McDougall was my awesome, beautiful supervisor in Whakatāne and she supported me from start to finish. It was a lot of work, but I knew what I was up for."

The training included clinical supervision and 30 hours of online learning, including two-hour Zoom sessions once a week.

Leah became a nurse prescriber on August 4 and started work for the PHO as a school nurse at Te Wharekura o Mauao in Bethlehem on August 9, providing clinics to students two days a week.



*School nurse Leah Dixon.*

Working with rangatahi was her passion, and her extra qualification enhances her clinical practice, she says.

"There's now some medication that I can prescribe under a limited schedule, so I can prescribe it without having to go through a GP. That covers a lot of sexual health contraception and treatment for minor skin infections. It will help to reduce barriers to healthcare for rangatahi and their whānau.

"Anything that addresses health inequities for Māori and bridging those

gaps is important to me."

The first Bay of Plenty nurse to complete the nurse prescriber training from the November 2020 cohort, Leah is now encouraging other nurses to upskill as well.

"You need to be in the right frame of mind to take it on. It can be quite exhausting, both mentally physically because you have to complete it within your normal work week, but I definitely recommend other nurses do it as well."

Outside of her work as a school nurse, Leah works for Poutiri Trust. In August she joined their COVID-19 vaccination team during the Delta outbreak, and enjoyed the experience, acquiring an extra set of nursing skills along the way.

Ongoing learning is on the agenda for Leah in 2022. She is enrolling in a Level 5 course at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa to pursue her other passion – Rongoa Māori, or traditional Māori healing.

"After completing that I hope to achieve a Bachelor's degree, covering Levels 6 and 7, in Rongoa Māori. My long term goal is to become a nurse practitioner in Rongoa Māori, and provide a clinical service that integrates both Western and traditional Māori medicine.

"I'm really thankful that we're seeing a revitalisation of Rongoa Māori within the culture now because it can provide so many benefits to people of all ages and help Māori to re-engage with healthcare services."

## A time to celebrate

We kicked off 2022 with some whakawhanaungatanga at a staff BBQ brunch on January 17. It was a great way to reconnect as a team, meet new colleagues, and energise ourselves for the mahi ahead. This follows festivities celebrating Christmas and the company of whānau in December. 2021 was another demanding year for everyone involved in primary care, so it was a pleasure to take some time away from the coalface and enjoy some hospitality during a gorgeous evening in Tauranga Moana.



*Hunting for clues during the Christmas party scavenger hunt at Memorial Park.*



# Removing barriers to access mental health services

**Bharat Mahajan is leading the PHO's rollout of a new primary healthcare model that aims to better support patients with mental health issues and addictions.**

The Integrated Primary Mental Health and Addictions (IPMHA) service is still in its infancy locally, with the Bay of Plenty DHB among the last five of 20 DHBs to implement the programme.

However, Bharat's experience at rolling out the Waikato's IPMHA service is helping to drive efficiency as the model becomes embedded within local practices.

"The benefit in rolling out a programme like this later is that we have the opportunity to learn from the experiences or challenges that other regions have faced."

The service is already operating at Pāpāmoa Pines Medical Centre and Chadwick Health Care at all four of its local sites.

It was developed by the Ministry of Health in response to He Ara Oranga, the Report of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction. The Government allocated \$455 million in its 2019 Budget over four years to expand primary mental health and addiction services nationally, enabling people with mild to moderate needs to access free and immediate mental wellbeing advice and support, when and where they need it.

No longer do patients need to meet specific criteria to access support – services are available for anyone whose thoughts, feelings or actions are impacting their health and wellbeing. The service aims to reduce barriers to treatment by reducing waiting times for care, and ensuring the patient faces no additional costs.

Under the IPMHA service, Health Improvement Practitioners and Health Coaches work as part of the general practice

team to provide patients with immediate support and tools for wellbeing. The programme builds on the mental health and addiction expertise that already sits within practices, and strengthens collaboration between those practices, community health providers and DHB-led secondary mental health and addiction services.

Bharat, a former nurse, also supports the team as a Health Improvement Practitioner. Before joining the PHO as the programme manager late last year, he was employed as a service manager to support, manage, and lead secondary mental health services across the eastern Bay of Plenty (BOPDHB).

He says the IPMHA service is innovative, and is focussed on delivering greater support to Māori, high health needs, youth, and rainbow populations.

"Support often starts with primary health. Most of us go to GPs as a first point of contact, so if we provide greater support there, we can minimise the risk of issues becoming much bigger or turning into a crisis."

He says the demand for mental health support and addiction services had increased since the start of the COVID pandemic. "We're seeing a lot more re-referrals, and increased demand for child and youth referrals.

"That can come from extra anxiety and other complications at home. We know the rainbow community, and the transgender community, can experience a great deal of social isolation, which impacts their mental health."

Health Improvement Practitioners have a clinical role and are often qualified nurses, occupational therapists, and counsellors. They work with patients to encourage behaviour and lifestyle changes through primary health interventions, such as cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) and focused acceptance commitment therapy (FACT). Practices with 10,000 enrolled patients qualify for full-time practitioner support for five days per week.

Health Coaches have a non-clinical role, using their life experiences to provide support. They can provide transport for patients and are more mobile to remove any barriers to access the service, resulting in increased access to health services, which addresses inequity.

"If a young Mum, for example, is stressed with a new baby, a health coach can visit them at a time and place that best suits them," says Bharat.



*Bharat Mahajan, a program manager for the PHO and Mr Gay NZ for 2021, says the new service will improve support for all patients, including rainbow youth.*

PHOTO SUPPLIED

# Reflecting on long career in medicine

Long-serving GP Dr Roger Ward has hung up his stethoscope after working more than four decades at Te Puke Medical Centre.

He follows his former colleague and partner Dr John Almond into retirement, with John departing the centre in August last year. Dr Scott Rieper and Dr Lisa Wain are working in Te Puke as their successors.

Reflecting on his career in primary health, Roger says it feels like the last 43 years caring for patients in Te Puke just flew by.

"1978 seems like such a short time ago when my wife Jan and I with children Marc and Melanie arrived in what was then a little country town to be part of a four doctor rural practice.

"The automatic telephone exchange had just replaced the manual operator exchange, the Te Puke maternity unit was busy with deliveries, and the exact rural address of some patients in order to visit them was, at times, rather vague.

"Appointments were slightly haphazard because rural accidents and maternity calls got in the way. Handwritten notes were in 'doctor's' handwriting. Now, we have smart phones, better roads, precise addresses and the maternity unit closed in 1988. Appointments and patient notes are also computer driven."

Roger adds that while being a general practitioner has changed immensely since the late 1970s, the role still requires having the same human qualities that enable you to bond with patients and their families.

He estimates to have carried out between 200,000 and 250,000 consultations during his career in Te Puke.

Another notable retirement in 2021 was that of Dr Murray Hay, who retired last March after serving 25 years as a GP at Ōmokoroa Medical Centre. His long



PHOTO: NZME

Dr Roger Ward (left) and Dr Scott Rieper.

career in primary healthcare also saw him supervise registrars as they went through their training, as well as support Ngāi Te Rangī's mobile health unit HbU since 2009.

## Tribute to Dr Jill Caisley

On Wednesday 12 January Dr Jillian Caisley from the Farm Street Family Health Centre team passed away peacefully at home, surrounded by family.

Dr Caisley was one of the founding clinicians at Tautoko Mai Sexual Harm Support (formerly BOPSASS) and, for many years, shared a roster with Dr Joanne Simpson as sexual assault clinicians in the Bay of Plenty before the establishment of BOPSASS.

Memories of Jillian from former patients have flooded Farm Street's Facebook page, with many people acknowledging her empathetic, caring nature and commitment to going 'above and beyond' the call of duty.

Jillian started as a GP at Arataki before setting up Farm St Family Health Centre with Dr Kerry Willoughby and Dr Kevin Giles 30 years ago.

Kerry says Jillian was a kind and



Dr Jill Caisley is remembered for her empathy and 'above and beyond' commitment to patients.

caring person who was adored by her patients.

"Jillian and I both did GP obstetrics; she delivered twice as many babies as I did, and she loved it. Night call outs and long hours, disrupted work schedules – she took it all in her stride

"Jillian kept on delivering babies when every other GP in town had thrown in the towel. She singlehandedly carried on being midwife and doctor.

"The many tributes we've received overwhelmingly talk about her empathy, her going above and beyond, her listening skills, and her passion for her work and her patients."

Kia okioki ia i runga i te rangimarie; may she be at peace.



# Inspiring positive health changes

Māori tāne (men) have shared their stories of resilience and hope at an iwi-led event organised to celebrate their achievements in reaching their fitness and fundraising goals.

The December event at Fraser Cove capped off a month of activities and encouragement led by Mauri Ora coordinator Te Aihe Toma in support of men's health charity Movember.

A total of \$10,000 was raised by the individuals and groups who signed up to support the Mauri Ora challenge, Hurungutu.

Te Aihe says the commitment and discipline from Movember participants in 2021 was outstanding.

"We had groups from all over the Western Bay of Plenty, including staff from Ngāti Ranginui Iwi Society, join in on the kaupapa of Movember.

"People could take part in the official Mauri Ora activity challenge, or get involved by donating money or simply growing a moustache.

"Everyone had their own motivations for participating, and what was so rewarding was seeing people smash their personal goals and share with whānau and team members their health experiences, either good or bad. It's about encouraging men to have those conversations and be there to tautoko (support) them."

Teams and individuals were awarded prizes, with the event also a chance for men to share their personal health struggles.

John Brown, 44, and Jack Te Moana, 52, both battled bowel cancer and shared how they had initially delayed seeking treatment after experiencing symptoms.

"My father died of cancer in 2020 then I started experiencing my own symptoms in May, but I put off seeing the doctor," says John. "Eventually my wife persuaded me to have a colonoscopy and the doctors caught it in the nick of time."

He had surgery last year to remove a portion of his bowel.

Jack experienced bowel pain last summer, but ignored it, choosing to spend time with whānau over the holidays. "Then



Te Puke High School teachers (from left) Ray Ryan, Sophie Mercer, Ivan Munkedal, Tayla Toma and Kamal Nair, raised the most money as a team.

my aunty died of cancer and the week we buried her was the week I found out I had bowel cancer.

"My experience has made more of my family get checked."

Brandon McIndoe, 23, shared his mental health struggles and says he used fitness as part of his strategy to overcome them. He raised \$2,500, running from Welcome Bay to Mauao while wearing a weighted vest.

Staff from Te Puke High School raised nearly \$3,400 – the most money as a team.

Tayla Toma says they completed the challenge by running, walking and biking, and were motivated to support tāne and be role models for students.

Head of the Movember NZ charity, Robert

Dunne, says encouraging storytelling among participants is a focus every Movember.

"We're about raising awareness of men's health and mental health. Storytelling can inspire people to make changes and be proactive about getting treatment. Early detection is the best prevention, and everyone can relate to those shared experiences."

The Movember fitness challenge capped off a full year of Mauri Ora programme activity. This month's activity includes Mai Wairoa Ki Waikareao, a trail bike ride combining exercise with cultural stories relating to local landmarks.

The Western Bay of Plenty PHO has funded the programme since 2016.



John Brown (far left), and Jack Te Moana (far right) shared their experiences battling bowel cancer with Head of the Movember charity Robert Dunne during the Mauri Ora event.

# Smokefree 2025: Local coalition welcomes action plan

**Bold new policy that looks set to create New Zealand's first-ever smokefree generation has been welcomed by the Western Bay of Plenty Smokefree Coalition.**

In December Associate Health Minister Ayesha Verrall announced a world-leading plan to ban tobacco sales to a generation, as well as lower the nicotine level in all tobacco products and drastically reduce the number of places that can sell them, through the new Smokefree 2025 action plan.

It is a major shift from policy that had, until now, sought to influence people's individual behaviours to lessen tobacco demand. Instead, it seeks to regulate what is available and reduce the likelihood of a young person taking up smoking altogether.

The government plans to have a bill supporting the changes introduced by June 2022, then passed by December this year to take effect in 2023.

Once adopted, the law changes are expected to bring \$5 billion in health savings.

PHO health promotion coordinator Tiana Bennett, who is a member of the coalition, says members are supportive and encouraged by the Smokefree Action Plan.

"It is ground-breaking for Māori, as it will create a smokefree generation whereby our tamariki and our mokopuna will never smoke."

These proposed laws would be supported by a new Smokefree 2025 Taskforce and an increase in the number of smokefree enforcement officers.

The overall action plan has six focus areas:

- Ensure Māori leadership and decision-making
- Increase health promotion and community mobilisation
- Increase evidence-based stop smoking services
- Reduce the addictiveness and appeal of smoked tobacco products
- Reduce the availability of smoked tobacco products
- Ensure manufacturers, importers and retailers meet their legal obligations



*PHO health promotion coordinator  
Tiana Bennett*

The proposed policy changes are aimed at achieving the overall goal of reducing the number of people who smoke daily to 5 percent of all population groups in New Zealand.

Currently, Māori and Pacific people are disproportionately represented in smoking and mortality statistics. Data shows lung cancer is the leading cause of death for Māori women, and mortality for lung cancer is four times higher among Māori women than in non-Māori women.

Lung cancer is also the second-leading cause of death for Māori men.

The action plan's focus on the establishment of Māori governance, which will transition to the Māori Health Authority creates greater Māori leadership, which will inevitably bring more Māori providers back into the tobacco control spectrum, says Tiana.

"Having clear goals and outcomes, targeting priority groups, supporting whānau to quit in an encouraging manner, having access to more health promotion and resources, is key to creating smokefree environments."

## IN BRIEF

### Full dose vaccine target milestone struck

The Bay of Plenty hit a major milestone on January 4 for COVID vaccinations, joining other regions that were 90 percent fully vaccinated with two doses.

Our district reached its 90 percent first dose COVID vaccination target on 30 November.

On January 5, people aged 18 and over became eligible for a booster dose. People can get their booster vaccinations three months after their second shot.

On January 17, just over 25,000 5-11 year olds in the Bay of Plenty also became eligible to access the vaccine. Tamariki receive their vaccinations eight weeks apart.



### Get your running shoes on!

In memory of PHO whānau member Lizzie Nichols who sadly passed away last year, we are once again holding our Fun Walk/Run in Mount Maunganui on Saturday 5 March.

Our wider PHO network and staff are encouraged to take part, with 5km and 10km routes available. Options will take participants around Mauao, or up Marine Parade as far as Tay St, returning to Pilot Bay, for those who can handle the longer distance.

Registration fee is \$5 and prizes will be available.

To get everyone event-fit, training is being held every Wednesday until 2 March, from 5pm at the PHO office on 87 First Avenue.

[wboppho.org.nz](http://wboppho.org.nz)

