

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



As part of the Integrated Primary Mental Health and Addictions Service (IPMHA), Health Coach Bella Medeiros strives to improve community health outcomes by offering holistic health services and encouraging people to take control of all aspects of their health and wellbeing.

Holistic health

New Health Coach empowers patients to take control of their wellbeing.

"As a Health Coach, I support people in improving their well-being using a holistic approach to explore all lifestyle aspects, such as physical activity, eating, sleeping, and stress levels.

"I also encourage patients to see nurses or specialists, provide support throughout appointments, and create plans to increase exercise, improve social skills, reduce poor eating habits, and more. Another highlight of what I do is connecting whaiora to housing, WINZ, Support Net, and other services," Bella says.

Looking ahead to the future, Bella is excited about growing the IPMHA team, contributing to the success of PHO led projects and helping the PHO achieve its goals.

"I am sure that the IPMHA programme will significantly impact health and access to health services within the community. I am happy to contribute to the development of the programme and support the new health coaches arriving next year."

"The PHO is an amazing workplace. I feel supported and appreciate my managers' trust in my work. Having an independent role can be very isolating, and it's great that I have a fantastic team to be part of," says Bella.

Embracing the challenges that come along with working with such a diverse range of people in the healthcare sector, Bella says that every appointment is different.

Story continues next page ...

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“What amazes me about my role is that every person comes with challenges, but also so much potential to take ownership of their health journey, and supporting them in this process is extremely rewarding. I learn so much from the people I see daily.

“The challenge I have as a mental health worker is making sure whānau can connect or reconnect to the community, whānau and health services. I love seeing patients come out of their shells, gain confidence, and achieve the ability to take their health and wellbeing journey into their own hands.”

With the goal of empowering patients to learn how to look after their wellbeing and gain confidence to navigate the system, Bella says she knows that she’s done a good job when patients don’t need to see her anymore.

Originally from Brazil, Bella has always been interested in working with people and assisting them in gaining the confidence they need to take control of all aspects of their lives.

“Back home in Brazil, I worked as a Social Worker supporting individuals and families to connect with services and improve their quality of life. In addition, I worked for a few years at the equivalent of Oranga Tamaraki in Brazil, assisting children and their families in living in a violence-free environment. I then became an Exercise Physiologist, where I worked in a hospital, supporting patients in improving their levels of physical activity, exercise and rehabilitation.

“A few years ago, I came to Aotearoa to study for a master’s degree in Applied Health Science which I just finished in August last year. When I first came here, I also worked at the YMCA with senior and fall prevention exercise classes and as a health coach. I have always loved working in the social and lifestyle fields, and when I saw the health coach role coming up, I found it would suit me very well with my background. I’ve worked as a health coach since August 2021, firstly in Southland and then in the Bay of Plenty.”

Arriving in New Zealand only a few years ago, Bella now considers Tauranga Moana home.

“I love living in Tauranga for so many reasons. The beaches, Mauao, the leisurely pace (compared to big cities) and the people all make Tauranga a great place to live.”

WBOP PHO appoints new General Manager Locality Development

The Western Bay of Plenty Primary Health Organisation (WBOP PHO) is preparing to support and progress locality development in the Bay of Plenty and has appointed a new General Manager Locality Development.

The brand-new role will focus on building and maintaining strong connections with community, locality partners and providers across the district and ensuring quality in delivering locality development programmes and projects.

Following a successful internal call, Bharat Mahajan accepted the position of GM Locality Development and stepped into the role on Monday 30 January.

“A key focus of the role is to address inequity, see where synergies align and understand where gaps in services might impact equity,” says Lindsey Webber, CEO at WBOP PHO.

“As localities are developed, Bharat will bring partners together to achieve a collective impact, so we are ready to invest, develop, and move services at the right time.”

Working closely across network services and advisory teams, Bharat aims to strengthen and build connections by increasing capability, capacity and integrating models of care within the community.

“Over the last year the leadership team has been proactively meeting with potential locality partners, NGOs, allied health, social services, hauora iwi partners and others to see how we can work together to create a collective impact.

“This role is deliberate and operational, helping us put strategic thinking into action. I’m looking forward to contributing to this pivotal work,” Bharat says.

Recruiting for the role internally, the WBOP PHO continues to showcase its commitment to growing its own talent, supporting career development, and providing internal opportunities for up-and-coming leaders.

“We found a very strong applicant in Bharat,” says Lindsey. “The work he’s been doing in the IPMHA programme and the networks he’s established have certainly given him a good head start. His work in previous endeavours with iwi providers in the community will help him stand good stead.”

Described as a values-based leader with outstanding communication and relationship-building skills, Lindsey says that Bharat faced a full interview panel and earned the position fair and square.

“Bharat is keen to get out there, build relationships and look for solutions. These attributes really made him stand out.”

As part of the role, Bharat will continue to hold the IPMHA portfolio, where he is working to appoint a Health Improvement Practitioner (HIP) and Health Coach team leads.

“It makes sense that Bharat continues to lead and support the IPMHA programme as part of the locality portfolio as it is a network service which will continue to grow,” Lindsey says.

Stepping into the role, Bharat will be joining the leadership team and taking on senior responsibilities.

“This is an opportunity for leadership development which Bharat is ready for. He will be fully supported in the new role as part of the PHO leadership team.”

Taking a helicopter view to support the team and enable locality development, Lindsey is eager to help Bharat lay the groundwork, bringing bigger pieces of the puzzle together.

Ready to face the challenge head on, Bharat is looking forward to joining the leadership team and making an impact in the locality development space.

“A big mihi to everyone for their support, especially Lindsey. I am super excited, to say the least,” Bharat adds.

WBOP PHO promotes a three-pronged approach to staying sun smart

The Western Bay of Plenty Primary Health Organisation (WBOP PHO) is highlighting the Bay of Plenty's significant capability for managing skin lesions with a three-pronged approach to staying sun smart.

Encouraging Kiwis to seek funded skin lesion treatments, as well as promoting the benefits of private treatment centres, and providing advice to help New Zealanders stay sun smart, WBOP PHO is on a mission to limit the damaging effects of skin cancer on the nation.

General Practice referrals

With the aim of lowering the burden on hospitals, the WBOP PHO provides funded Skin Lesion Services to eligible patients in the Bay of Plenty.

Providing essential treatments for patients in a timely and cost-effective manner, the WBOP PHO Skin Lesion Service allows specially trained GPs to perform surgery on patients with skin lesions.

"There is such a huge burden of skin cancer in New Zealand," says Dr Tracy Dixon, GP at Ōtūmoetai Doctors. "If all cases had to go through the hospital, there's no way every patient would get seen or treated."

"Allocating these jobs to GPs through the WBOP PHO's Skin Lesion Service is a win-win because less public money is spent, and patients are treated more efficiently."

"Instead of relying on hospital resources, this service sees most patients go through the system within about five weeks."

Performing skin checks, diagnostics, providing second opinions, and carrying out surgery – these services allow GPs to step up and take care of patients with skin cancer.

"Throughout the process we see the patient and talk them through what we are going to do, before performing surgery and following up to make sure everything is on the right track," says Tracy.

To access the WBOP PHO Skin Lesion Service, a patient must be referred into the programme by their GP, before their



information is graded to assess whether they are eligible for the funded treatment.

"Eligible patients are referred to the Skin Lesion Service by their regular GP and then referrals are triaged and allocated by the service to a specialist skin GP who can carry out the surgery," Tracy adds.

While there is no public funding for a skin check itself, patients can reach out to their regular GP and book in with a contracted skin specialist, who can conduct checks, walk the patient through their options, and refer them into the programme if eligible.

With six diplomas, a Master of Medicine in Skin Cancer from the University of Queensland, and a range of extracurricular achievements, Tracy loves helping patients through this service.

"The Skin Lesion Service is excellent. I absolutely love what I do and take pride in completing surgery with as little scarring as possible to provide patients with the best experience they could hope for," Tracy says.

Privately funded treatments

Private clinics offer a great alternative for those who don't qualify for funded services. With advanced treatments and comprehensive detection techniques available, Skinspots skin cancer clinic, one of a number of clinics operating in the Bay of Plenty, uses revolutionary technology to provide services to anyone who wants a check-up.

"Our team of trained experts carry out complete skin assessments to ensure we treat any lesions of concern," says Dr Franz Strydom, Chief Medical Officer at Skinspots.

"We use special software that can compare a spot from years ago to a spot now to track changes over the years. Software using artificial intelligence (AI) also helps us compare one spot to another and evaluate the current risk for malignancy. It's a comprehensive process that helps us detect concern quickly and early."

By offering different options, Skinspots can remove lesions or treat them superficially.

"If you can treat a spot before surgery is required, you can cure 70 to 95 percent of early cancers before they turn into something nastier," Franz says.

Skinspots can treat sun damage and pre-cancerous cells over the entire body with the use of ointments, chemotherapy creams, or photo dynamic therapy (PDT).

"We've pioneered PDT to treat large areas of the skin such as the whole face or back, whereas normally most clinics only treat an area of about 250 square centimetres."

As one of only two places in New Zealand that offers this treatment, PDT involves applying a natural substance onto the skin.

"This substance contains a molecule that accumulates in cancerous cells."

Story continues next page ...

When you shine a bright light on it, it energises the molecule. When it touches oxygen, it turns into a free radical which kills the cancerous cell from within."

As an effective way of killing cancer cells, the treatment takes three hours and has high success rates.

"It's very popular, but not funded," says Franz. "That's why we have been innovative in our approach and can treat a much larger area at the same price."

As well as PDT, Skinspots can surgically remove cancers that don't require a general anaesthetic.

"As a day stay unit, we can complete surgery with local anaesthetic without the patient feeling a thing," Franz adds.

With no referral criteria, patients can call or email Skinspots to book an appointment. Skinspots is easily accessible and has clinics in Ngongotahā, Pyes Pa, Fraser Street, Mount Maunganui, and Pāpāmoa.

General safety advice

While the Bay of Plenty is equipped with advanced skin cancer treatment options, using protection to avoid sun damage is the best course of action.

"Research has proven that the daily application of sunscreen reduces skin cancer excisions by 40 to 50 percent and helps the skin immune system heal pre-cancers (solar keratoses) by about 50 percent. This is compared to the intermittent use of sunscreen.

"I give this advice to anyone with evidence of sun-damaged skin, solar keratoses or a history of skin cancer," Tracy says.

Although many Kiwis understand the basic rule of slipping on protective clothing or slipping into the shade, stopping on and reapplying sunblock, slapping on a hat, and wrapping on a pair of sunglasses, Franz from Skinspots says a lot of people misunderstand how to detect skin abnormalities in the first place.

"Google says that to find skin cancer you need to use the ABCDE algorithm which looks for asymmetry, border, colour, diameter, and evolution in your spots. However, as most melanomas appear as new spots, this algorithm misses them.

"Scanyourskin.org is a good site that promotes a more effective and easier technique to assess whether you need to visit a skin clinic," Franz says.

The SCAN (Sore, Changing, Abnormal, New) technique tells people to look out for spots that are slow to heal, scaly or sore, changing in size, shape, colour, or texture, abnormal spots that look different to others, and new spots.

"Another sun safety misunderstanding occurs as many Kiwis think they are safe from the sun after applying sunscreen.

"Sunscreen acts as a screen and allows you to stay in the sun for longer, but it doesn't block UV rays completely. If you want to spend a day in the sun, whether working in the garden, fishing, golfing, or doing anything outside, the best way to protect yourself is to get something between you and the sun," says Franz.

From a hat to a long-sleeved top, light pants, or finding shade, Kiwis are urged to take precautions.

"A lot of damage occurs by just doing daily activities such as walking or driving, especially during peak UV hours between 10am and 3pm.

"The UV ratio in the New Zealand winter is close to the UV ratio in the Northern Hemisphere's summer, so it's important to remember that you aren't protected from damage, even on cloudy days," Franz adds.

WBOP PHO acknowledges the significant support of Pete Chandler

After years of genuine and significant support to our team at the Western Bay of Plenty Primary Health Organisation (WBOP PHO), we are saying a sad farewell to Pete Chandler, who stepped down as CEO of Te Whatu Ora Bay of Plenty District at the end of last year, writes Lindsey Webber.

As a charismatic people person who was great at building strong relationships, Pete brought the local health system together and dismantled organisational silos between hospital services and Primary Care, using his position to advocate for positive change within the healthcare industry.

Forming a close relationship with Primary Care teams from day one, Pete played an instrumental role in bringing the three PHOs in the Bay of Plenty

together to find common ground and look at how we could work collaboratively while still maintaining our own independent identities.

Upon his appointment, Pete put a lot of effort into building bridges and worked closely with Primary Care to keep us all connected. Showcasing his commitment, Pete ensured Primary Care voices were heard at an executive level and that we were always considered in decision-making impacts across the whole system.

We appreciate Pete's hard work and are very sorry to see him step down from the district leadership role. We look forward to remaining connected within our communities and building on the relationships, projects, and strategies that Pete advocated for, so we don't lose the incredible knowledge and vision he brought to the Bay of Plenty health system.

COVID Primary Response Team provides ongoing support to unenrolled patients

The Western Bay of Plenty Primary Health Organisation (WBOP PHO) is continuing to provide COVID healthcare support to both enrolled and unenrolled patients across the Western and Eastern Bay of Plenty.

Set up at the beginning of 2021, the small but perfectly formed COVID Primary Response Team (CPRT) sits within the WBOP PHO, acting as a touchpoint between patients, GPs, and telehealth services.

"The role of the CPRT team is to connect COVID positive patients with healthcare providers who can give them the additional and ongoing support they need to make a full recovery," says Sarah Johnson, Clinical Service Lead at WBOP PHO.

"When someone in the community registers a positive RAT test online, their details come to us through the National Contact Tracing System (NCTS). If they are enrolled at a General Practice, the GP gets notified and can touch base with the patient to provide ongoing care.

"However, if an unenrolled patient comes through on the system, we refer them to Tunstall, a telehealth provider who connects with the patient to make sure they are okay.

"This system is especially important for COVID positive hospital releases. Coming out of hospital can be daunting at the best of times, but from what we know about different recovery rates, long COVID and other complications, it's essential to provide support after patients are discharged, especially for those who are unenrolled," Sarah adds.

Tunstall provides clinical oversight for unenrolled populations and follows up with the patient through a phone call, before implementing further action if it is required.

"If a patient is unwell and needs further support, Tunstall can refer them to Evolve, another telehealth service that has GP support and clinical assistance."

Ensuring that patients don't relapse, the CPRT team forms an integral part of the wellness hub which supports welfare, social, and manaaki needs.

"The amazing thing about the process is that when Tunstall connects with an



Telehealth services join forces with the CPRT team to support unenrolled COVID patients.

unenrolled patient, they can help them register and re-engage with the GP of their choice," adds Jen Moore, CPRT Coordinator at WBOP PHO.

Connected within the wider PHO and working alongside external providers, the CPRT team assists with equity challenges and engagement among clinical services.

"Our role was huge initially. There were a lot of manual processes involved and we started by working on just one Excel spreadsheet, but as COVID continued and we worked our way through together, the processes have become more automated," Sarah says.

"The team has shrunk since the start of COVID because there isn't as much demand anymore, but we still provide a seven day a week service," Jen adds.

"It's been a long journey through COVID and while we might feel like we are coming out the other side, it's important for both patients and healthcare providers to know that our team is still here assisting COVID positive patients in the community.

"In the ever-changing environment in which we operate, we like to remind ourselves that we are building the plane as we fly," says Jen.

Family violence advocates come together to support the Atawhai research project

Encouraging the collaboration of different voices, knowledge and skills is how the Atawhai research project aims to reframe the way we respond to family violence in healthcare.

As a direct response to the limited resources available within the primary health care sector, Atawhai facilitates a participant-led research process that involves working with Primary Care health and social workers to develop tools, resources, knowledge, and connections, with the goal of making it easier for them to respond to whānau impacted by family violence.

Atawhai research participants and network members, including Western Bay of Plenty Primary Health Organisation (WBOP PHO) representatives Emma Skellern, Network Liaison and Laura Penny, Network Services - Development Facilitator, came together at Mount Maunganui Surf Club on November 21 last year to connect, learn, share ideas, and increase confidence when responding to and helping those seeking care for family violence.

"The group is about forming connections and relationships, supporting each other to travel alongside patients and help them through their journey, rather than trying to solve a problem on the spot," says Dr Claire Gear, Atawhai Project Lead.

"Participants are helping to grow and evolve conversations around family violence, bringing different skills, knowledge, and heart to the table to contribute to our mahi."

Atawhai research participants have begun widening their networks by inviting interested colleagues to participate in the conversation. Over 20 participants from different backgrounds, locations, ethnicities, and professions attended the eighth Atawhai workshop, kicking off the session by introducing themselves, and explaining what they do and how they became involved in the project.

"The group builds confidence, creating peer support and resources through sharing ideas, experiences, and findings, with the common goal of limiting family violence and improving health system responsiveness.



Atawhai research participants champion for change in family violence responses.

Participants have a passion for being involved in the project, contributing to transformational findings, and working together to find a way forward," says Claire.

The group advocates for kōrero about family violence to be many shared moments in time between Primary Care professionals, whānau and families, underpinned by tika, pono and aroha.

"Without adequate system support, it can be hard for GPs to know what to do and how to help. Having so many participants with different experiences is helping us shape conversations and create much-needed resources that GPs can use to help patients."

Recognising there is a gap between medical practitioners and community providers, Atawhai's mahi improves connections, generating empathy between services and creating shared accountability for whānau.

"The network of peer support means practitioners can discuss ongoing care options with someone they trust, whether they are a front-line worker or someone behind the scenes," Claire adds.

"As a voice of whānau, Primary Care

providers have the ability to promote change within the family violence space, but this responsibility doesn't fall only on them. It takes confidence and time to talk to patients about family violence and when you have more people involved in whānau care it takes an individual burden off the health professional. Atawhai is a small part of a much bigger puzzle."

Having already held seven one-day deliberative dialogue workshops where participants came together to identify system pathways and tools that make it easier for professionals to respond to family violence, a series of practice gems as well as four key pathways to responsiveness have been developed, providing healthcare workers with useful resources.

With the aim to grow their network, Atawhai brings around tangible change, incorporating all aspects of hauora including te ao Māori.

The focus is now on turning research findings into action.

For more information and to join the network, visit www.atawhaitia.co.nz

Asthma and Respiratory Management Centre highlights improved facilities and advanced services

The Asthma and Respiratory Management Centre (ARM) in the Bay of Plenty aims to improve services, provide education, and enhance community outreach with new facilities and increased support for staff.

Joining ARM in November 2022, Andrew Tattle has taken on the dual role of Centre Manager and Pulmonary Rehabilitation Physiotherapist, with the aim of providing timely, accurate testing and educational services.

“My immediate goal has been to recruit more nurses, decrease wait times for lung function testing and assessments, and initiate planning to increase our community outreach clinics,” Andrew says.

“We seek to enhance respiratory health and general wellness, particularly within Māori health, by forming relationships with relevant groups throughout the Bay of Plenty, providing education and advice, and performing testing where appropriate. One of the ways in which we do this is through community education talks which deliver messaging directly to relevant groups and improve respiratory health and awareness.”

Facilitating the pulmonary rehabilitation programme, which includes input from dieticians, psychologists, nurses, and physiotherapists to ensure patients are supported, Andrew is showcasing his commitment to improving the centre with the renovation of the rehabilitation gym.

“The gym is brighter, more motivating, and fitted with modern equipment, providing a safe and uplifting environment for pulmonary rehabilitation patients to build their confidence and fitness,” Andrew adds.

With a growing team of four registered nurses, one physiotherapist, one rehabilitation assistant and an administrator, ARM provides specialist knowledge on respiratory conditions such as COPD and asthma, whilst providing a safe environment where patients are encouraged to ask questions.

“We are focussed on quality interactions where patients receive



New gym facilities provide patients with greater rehabilitation options.

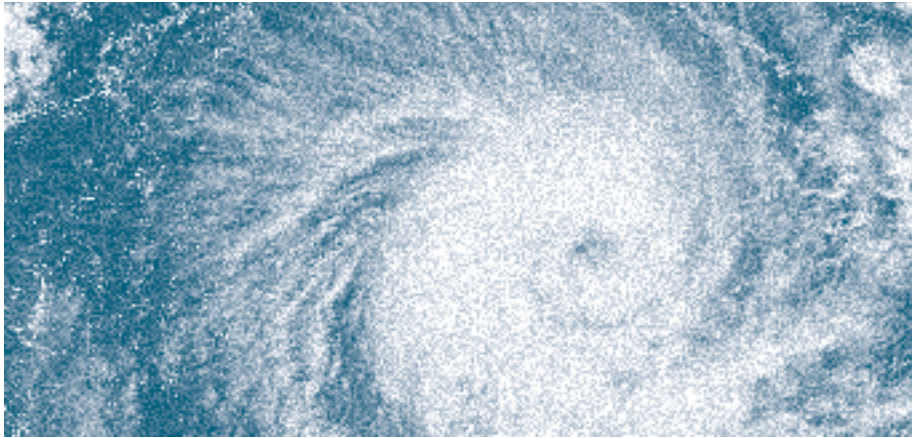
accurate testing and are empowered through increased knowledge of their condition and correct use of medication.

“A key part of our service involves educating patients on the use of inhaled medications. Correct techniques allow a patient to manage their condition with greater independence, improving their quality of life,” Andrew says.

“We also provide telehealth services to answer questions and bring patients into the clinic if necessary.”

Supporting GPs with respiratory advice, ARM facilitates professional learning by allowing practice nurses, student nurses and GP registrars to sit in on clinics, as well as encouraging nurses to engage in ongoing professional development.

ARM can consult with adults and children who have shortness of breath and may have suspected COPD or Asthma. GPs can refer patients directly to ARM, or patients can self-refer after nurse screening is completed.



WBOP PHO leaders show their support amid cyclone Gabrielle damage

As we come to the end of an extraordinary week for Aotearoa New Zealand, it feels like no words can possibly describe the emotional and traumatic scenes we have been witnessing, writes WBOP PHO CEO Lindsey Webber.

The recent extreme weather events, topped off by cyclone Gabrielle have caused unfathomable damage to some regions of our country as the biggest natural disaster this century.

I know that many of you have whānau and friends that have been impacted and some of you are yet to be in contact with those that are still cut off. Our hearts go out to you, and please know we wish to help in any way we can.

For those who want to show support, there are a number of ways to help people who are struggling. The most useful thing to do at this time is to donate money to help the areas that need it most. The Red Cross Disaster Fund has commenced an appeal for donations, with no amount being too small.

With Aotearoa New Zealand pulling together to help each other through this tough time, other ways to help include:

- Donations of food or money can be made to Auckland City Mission.
- To help animals, texts can be sent with HUHA to 4463 to instantly donate \$3.
- To volunteer, visit Volunteering Hawke's Bay, Volunteering Northland, Volunteering Bay of Plenty, Volunteering Auckland or Volunteering Waikato.
- To help with the clean-up, you can join the Student Volunteer Army.
- Orange Sky offers laundry and shower services and welcomes donations of toiletries (but not towels or blankets as they have no storage).

One of the things that has stood out to me this week is the unconditional pulling together of communities to help each other, even when some have lost everything themselves. To see the power of human connection and the outpouring of compassion is truly humbling.

Brené Brown sums it up beautifully when she defines this connection. It reminds me that without human connection there is nothing.

"The energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgement; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship," Brené Brown.

IN BRIEF

WBOP PHO CEO reflects on the importance of Waitangi Day

February 6 marks the anniversary of the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and gives us the chance to reflect on what Waitangi Day means for us, writes WBOP PHO CEO Lindsey Webber.

As a UK immigrant and New Zealand citizen, each year I use Te Tiriti o Waitangi values to better myself.

Arriving in New Zealand in 1998, I felt a sense of familiarity with my home country and an awareness of the uniqueness of this special place. As a newly registered nurse, I was sent information about my obligations to tangata whenua as the indigenous people of New Zealand.

The importance of Māori language, culture and customs became embedded in my psyche. My boss and mentor, Trish Wright, taught me that to provide culturally safe care, I needed to be critically reflective and examine my cultural identity, positioning and power.

Understanding my personal values, attitudes, and biases, and acknowledging the impact of these on patients was a key step in my nursing journey and personal life.

The visual depiction that Trish used to explain the concept is Escher's 'Drawing Hands' lithograph, showing two hands in the paradoxical act of drawing themselves into reality.

I still think of this image when reflecting on my unconscious biases and find comfort in accepting that the drawing (learning) never ends.



DRAWING HANDS BY M. C. ESCHER, 1948, LITHOGRAPH.

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