

# A shared voice for primary care

A diverse range of primary health care providers – some more used to being opposed to one another on certain issues – met in Wellington last week in the first of a series of meetings aimed at “devising proactive solutions that are primary healthcare-led”. Representatives from the various organisations (a list of attendees is attached) agreed to the formation of the NZ Primary Healthcare Forum, which will provide an opportunity for the groups to air issues with one another regularly.

The meeting was chaired by Royal NZ College of GPs CEO Claire Austin, though the Forum itself has no permanent chair. “It’s the first time that such a diverse range of groups has come together to be proactive about policy development,” Ms Austin explained. “We already have three working groups who will look at workforce issues, funding of primary healthcare, and the structure of the Forum itself.

“Whilst the initial meeting was just of providers, the Forum recog-

nised the critical importance of engaging consumers – including Tangata Whenua – in the Forum to ensure they have equal input into policy development also,” she said.

“We gained a greater knowledge of each other,” Ms Austin says of the first Forum meeting, “and while there was diversity of views there, there’s also a commitment to finding ways of working together. We were all agreed that there’s a necessity for policy to come from the primary health sector rather coming down to it from above.”

The group “identified areas of shared commitment” at its inaugural meeting, including a recognition that primary care is very fragmented, and that provider organisations needed to demonstrate leadership and drive reform. The Minister of Health and the DHBs are to be officially informed of the creation of the Forum and invited to work with it to strengthen the key role of primary healthcare in providing for the well-being of all New Zealanders.

## Treaty Audit complete

Dr Ranganui Walker has now completed his Treaty of Waitangi audit report on the College.

Te Ora have not had the opportunity to comment on the audit report

so the group will feedback at the next Wha me Wha meeting on 23 August 2001. The report will be published in NZFP after Te Ora have reviewed and commented on it.

## Who?

Along with the RNZCGP, represented at the Forum’s inaugural meeting:

Australasian Faculty  
of Public Health Medicine  
College of Nurses, Aotearoa  
Department of General Practice  
and Primary Health Care,  
Christchurch School of Medicine  
Department of Primary Care,  
Faculty of Medicine, University of  
Otago  
Dietitians Board  
Division of General Practice and  
Primary Health Care, University of  
Auckland  
Family Planning Association  
First Health  
Health Workforce Advisory  
Committee, Ministry of Health  
Immunisation Advisory Centre  
IPAC  
Ministry of Health  
National Health Committee  
NZ Association  
of Occupational Therapists  
NZ College of Midwives  
NZ College of Pharmacists  
NZ College of Practice Nurses  
NZNO  
New Zealand Defence Force  
NZMA  
NZ Nurses Organisation  
NZ Society of Physiotherapists  
Pegasus Health  
Pharmaceutical Society  
of New Zealand  
Practice Managers and  
Administrators Association  
Treasury

## CEO visits faculties

The Chief Executive visited four of the College Faculties in May. The primary purpose of the visit was to meet with Faculty members and seek views about members expectations from the College in the coming year.

General feedback to date has indicated the importance of greater coal-face, one-to-one support of members, engagement in the development of policy, the importance of advocacy on behalf of members and the reduction of bureaucratic demands placed upon general practitioners (including those from the College). Issues of low morale and burn-out were also of considerable concern. A proposal has gone to the Professional Development Committee that awards members more MOPS points in the areas of self-care. It was felt that this was one mechanism by which the College could provide some direct support for mentoring.

The Chief Executive has received positive feedback about future engagement with members and follow-up meetings are planned with the Auckland Faculty and North Canterbury rural GPs.

## College gains Policy Unit

The Unit is now under development, and former Executive Officer Cathy Webber's role has been reviewed and her position title has been changed to Senior Policy Analyst. A part-time Policy Analyst has also been recruited. The College is working to strengthen its information systems and liaison both internally and externally.

The Policy Unit will be examining and analysing the following issues to present to Executive and to Council:

- Examining the feasibility of providing facilitators and support at a local level in both AVE and MOPS
- Investigating reducing the College's demands on members
- Development of the College Policy Manifesto with members
- Health Professionals' Competency Bill
- Information is currently being sought from other medical colleges about the level of their recommendations for clinical practice to maintain competence, their evidence and rationale for those recommendations.

## Primary Health Care Strategy

At a recent meeting with the Chief Executive, Dr John Marwick, Principal Technical Specialist with the Personal and Family Services Directorate of the Ministry of Health updated the College about latest initiatives by the Ministry of Health in implementing the Primary Health Care Strategy.

Members of the Ministry of Health have been providing workshops to DHBs outlining six key directions:

- Community involvement
- Identify and remove inequalities
- Access to range of essential primary services to improve, maintain and restore health
- Co-ordinate care
- Develop the right workforce
- Improve quality with good information.

The Ministry is also recommending what to look for in a primary health organisation:

- Funded by DHB for provision of essential services to enrolled population
- Must involve communities in governing processes and be responsive to needs
- All providers/practitioners must have a voice
- Not for profit – fully open and accountable.

DHBs have been told to "start where the need is greatest" and to develop primary care contracts. John Marwick has agreed to involve the College in all implementation consultation and be given the opportunity to provide comment from here on. The College has since negotiated a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry to provide early input into the development of the Primary Health Care Strategy implementation. There will be range of workstreams – public health organisations, rural, sector engagement, nursing, communications. It is understood that the turn-around time for comment is likely to be very tight.

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## Cautious welcome to new maternity plan

GPs are pleased with the Ministry of Health's new maternity plan, and are optimistic that it forms "the foundations of a constructive approach", says RNZCGP President Dr Helen Rodenburg.

"The fact that organisations will be able to continue to contract – meaning organisations such as Wellington's Matpro, Southlink Health, Pegasus in Christchurch and similar services will survive – is very good news," Dr Rodenburg said, "as is the crucial decision that price equity will be achieved by moving the rate paid to all providers upwards rather than down to the lowest common denominator.

"That means innovative and effective programmes built on multi-disciplinary quality care for women won't be forced to close their doors, as was going to happen under the initial proposal," she said. "We're pleased the Ministry has decided to avoid further disruption to maternity services, and has decided to build upon the work of existing providers.

"We look forward to working with the Ministry and providers on workforce development issues – work still needs to be done around valuing the different areas of expertise that the various members of an obstetric care team bring to the process."