



# **New Zealand Nurses Organisation**

## **Comments to the Ministry of Health**

**on the**

## **Proposal to develop national cancer & palliative nursing specialty education programmes**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. NZNO's response to the discussion document (prepared by Nick Polaschek, Wayne Naylor and Jackie Robinson) is supportive of the proposal to develop national specialty education programmes for cancer and palliative care nurses in response to identified current and future workforce requirements.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The New Zealand Nurses Organisation recommends that you:
  - **note** the developed visual framework (see attached) could contribute to the wider understanding of the intended co-ordinating and research pathways described in developing these education programmes,
  - **note** that the Ministry of Health data regarding patient numbers and needs for cancer and palliative services should be used to inform the process(es),
  - **agree** that an in-depth workforce needs analysis of the current and future workforce should be effected and completed.

## ABOUT THE NEW ZEALAND NURSES ORGANISATION

3. The New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) is a Te Tiriti o Waitangi based organisation which represents 39,000 health workers. NZNO is the professional body of nurses and the leading nursing union in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our members include nurses, midwives, students, health care workers and other health professionals.
4. The NZNO vision is "Freed to care, Proud to nurse". Our members enhance the health and wellbeing of all people of Aotearoa New Zealand through ethically based partnerships. Our members are united in the achievement of their professional and industrial aspirations. Within this context NZNO considers that raising awareness of medical conditions, symptoms and the need for medical assessment of conditions which may require interventions is

a positive in advertising. However pushing a particular medication to treat a condition is not always in the best interests or outcomes of the patient.

5. NZNO has consulted its members in the preparation of this submission in particular NZNO staff (Professional Nursing Advisors and Policy Analysts) and NZNO members (Colleges and Sections).

## **NZNO COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSAL**

6. The New Zealand Nurses Organisation does, overall, support the proposal for the development of national specialty education programmes for cancer and palliative care nurses. With the aim of encompassing both Cancer Nursing and Palliative Nursing care needs, the areas for definition (through survey) are wide. The NZNO Cancer Nurses Section's constitution indicates representation of cancer nurses across the spectrum of care and is inclusive of: "... all nurses delivering care to cancer patients / clients in haematology, oncology, surgical (including gynaecology and ENT) medical units and in hospitals, in the community, in hospices and other areas of palliative care and paediatric units (Section 1)."

The pathway forward reflects the current health climate, and sector changes (for example, CTA postgraduate nursing training specification(s), and the direction indicated by the DHB Future Workforce Nursing and Midwifery Group) that are / will impact on nursing education needs in achieving integrated and comprehensive cancer and palliative nursing services.

With the changes in CTA funding, it is noted that Directors of Nursing will be required to produce plans for workforce development covering all nurses within their DHB area. These DON workforce development plans, alongside the proposed cancer and palliative nursing workforce survey results, will help to inform negotiation of agreements with education providers for required courses.

NZNO recognizes that given the objective of achieving successful nursing education outcomes, the distribution of the CTA funding monies will reflect patients' cancer and palliative nursing needs within the DHBs. This equitable distribution of CTA monies (with the decision-making process being a reflection of each DHB's nursing leadership) is consistent with providing accessible and affordable education programmes for nurses.

## **NZNO Contribution to process**

7. The implications for NZNO and its members are that NZNO / members are able to make valid and valued contributions to this development process. The objective for this representation is to secure adequately trained and educated nurses in these specialty fields to improve health outcomes. This objective is in keeping with *The New Zealand Cancer control Strategy Action Plan 2005 – 2010* where under Goal 5 Action 91 refers to "improved capacity and capability of the cancer nursing workforce". As well, the *New Zealand Palliative Care Strategy (2001)* cites gaps in post graduate palliative care training and the need to develop the palliative care workforce. NZNO would anticipate that nurses from the Cancer Nurses Section, District Nurses Section, and the Respiratory Nurses Section would be well placed to be (representative) members of the working group.

## **Education Needs**

8. NZNO supports the workforce survey being effected as this will bring context and validity to the ensuing decisions made about competencies; curriculum development; and the skill mix required in meeting the needs of cancer and palliative care patients. NZNO would support the survey containing questions that focus on the nurse's individual intentions for education in terms of: level (700, 800), access and affordability. NZNO agrees that a range of pathways will be necessary in order to provide education programmes and clinical mentoring support that meet nurses' needs.

### ***Palliative Nursing Care Needs***

9. Palliative care has had several post graduate education programmes on offer in different parts of the country, and has, consequently, been directly resourced through past CTA fundings. However, palliative care is a developing specialty, extending beyond cancer to non-malignant diseases and is, therefore, expanding with increasing patient need. This trend has real implications for the nursing workforce and the numerous settings where this care is provided. Programmes and funding will need to be matched.

9.1. NZNO supports the principle that palliative care is to be a required component of all undergraduate nursing programmes. It is clear that given changing disease patterns, treatments and extended life expectancies - all nurses should have the requisite skills and knowledge to provide palliative care across Sectors. The aim is that an integrated comprehensive palliative nursing care service will be available nationally and not just at a specialist and/or regional level of nursing service.

### ***Cancer Nursing Care Needs***

10. The area of cancer nursing currently is not clearly defined in terms of the vast clinical settings in which it occurs both in hospital and the community. The educational needs of nurses for cancer nursing knowledge and skills, whether in a specialist or generalist capacity are required to be addressed. Cancer nursing care necessarily involve a wide range of competencies in order to address the many and evolving treatment modalities at the individual patient level. The psychological and cultural aspects of cancer compound an already stressed interface with the patient receiving treatment requiring skilled and knowledgeable nursing care. Also, the major cancer centres, as well as those places of treatment in the rural areas, need to be individually assessed in order to identify their differing needs. Ultimately, the survey will contribute to a much greater understanding of what is required in educational programmes in order to meet these complex needs.

## **CONCLUSION**

11. Overall, NZNO believes that this discussion document reflects a clear path forward in meeting the objectives of this proposed Project.

NZNO recommends that representatives from both the Cancer, District and Respiratory Nurses Sections be included in the proposed Cancer & Palliative Nursing Workforce Group.

Anne Brinkman  
**NZ Nurses Organisation**

## **REFERENCES**

NZNO Cancer Nurses Section Constitution, established 1996.