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Call to Action

The recent audit of Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) nursing practice in New Zealand has revealed a severe shortage of nurses' country wide (O'Connor et al, 2021). The audit was developed and disseminated by NZIBDNG and sent for electronic completion to the 25 IBD nurses across the country (response rate was 60%). The audit revealed that 100% of nurses were working in part-time positions (typically 0.4 – 0.6 FTE) and 70% had other clinical responsibilities such as liver care, endoscopy, and general gastroenterology.

With increasing numbers of IBD patients being diagnosed each year, there is an increasing demand on the nurses' time. In the UK the model for IBD nursing positions is 600 patients to 1 full time IBD Nurse (Leary et al, 2018). With an estimated 20,000 patients with IBD across NZ, applying this model, we fall very short on this skilled nursing resource which poses a risk to the quality of care for patients. IBD specialist nurses provide education to patients, access to care and clinical review and recent evidence demonstrates that when an IBD Nurse is in position that they can prevent / reduce ED attendances (HSJ, 2017).

Since our audit was published, we have had 6 IBD nurses resign from their positions across the country, which has demised our workforce further. This again creates further concern to patient care.

As a committee, we are keen to highlight this issue to the District Health Boards throughout the country so that this shortfall in nursing posts can be addressed. In addition, we are also keen to work with other key organisations, including CCNZ and the New Zealand Society of Gastroenterology, to urgently address this issue to ensure that we can provide our patients country-wide with the necessary care they deserve.

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For and on behalf of NZIBDNG

Merrilee Williams

Chairperson

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