

December 2020 Newsletter

# Neonatal Nurses College of Aotearoa (NNCA)

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Neonatal Nurses College Aotearoa

New Zealand Nurses Organisation

# Editorial

Looking back over 2020 its clear that no-one would've ever predicted the events that have unfolded. A quick Google search for a summary of 2020 world events includes everything from bombings and terrorist attacks, to impeachment proceedings against the US President (and eventual acquittal), the progress of Brexit, movements such as #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter, devastating bushfires here and abroad, and general elections nationally and internationally. And woven throughout all of our lives has been the ongoing challenge of Covid-19 that saw businesses and schools closed, events cancelled, people learning new ways of working from home, and phrases such as 'lock down', 'social distancing', 'alert levels' and 'bubbles' becoming part of our everyday language.

As noted in the last issue of this newsletter, neonatal nurses found themselves delivering care close to "business as usual" during national alert levels with units around the country running at 100% occupancy. All this while many other inpatient and community services were dramatically reduced. Neonatal nurses balanced the needs of families facing restricted visiting, worked on the development and review of guidelines for Covid-19, managed continual coordination with other services, and supported each other, our own whānau and those around us.

New Zealand has been lauded for its response to Covid-19 and the relative safety we are experiencing as other nations face second and third waves of infections and deaths. As we head towards the summer break there is a tangible sense of the fragility of our situation with the Ministry of Health issuing contingency plans for possible scenarios as New Zealanders begin to move around the country. The economy and well-being of people will benefit from a holiday break and increased numbers at holiday spots and summer events such as music festivals. We are indeed fortunate to have the freedom to do these things, and the message is clear – enjoy your rest and recreation but do so safely and with awareness that alert levels may change quickly in response to any community transmission.

As we approach 2021 there are many opportunities for nurses to influence our healthcare system and the health and well-being of our communities. The newly appointed Minister of Health, Andrew Little, has signalled his intention to move quickly on the health reforms outlined in this year's review of the health system. This includes a new health authority ("Health NZ") to take responsibility for the health system; reducing the number of DHBs to between 8 and 12; creating a Maori health authority alongside Health NZ with equal representation of Maori and the Crown on the Board of Health NZ; and creating a "fully integrated health system".

What the proposed changes look like for neonatal care is not clear, and it will be up to us all to continue to advocate for the implementation of the recommendations of the review of neonatal capacity that was completed in 2019. The neonatal review recommendations identified the most important priorities as getting more funded cots spaces along with the associated staff time, specialised equipment and resources to bring occupancy levels down to 85 per cent most of the time. Overcrowding in our units has led to significant budget overspend, and in many cases families being moved away from their home DHB for the care and capacity needed. The cost to those families in relation to the impact on their lives is rarely quantified, and their stories aren't often heard. Our patients and their families are a powerful source of evidence when arguing for resources – as neonatal nurses we can support and encourage families to share their experiences to help influence decision-making about services.

Stay safe, be kind. I hope we can all find some rest and relaxation, and come back together in 2021 ready to continue to influence and shape healthcare in New Zealand.



# Chairperson's Report: Merophy Brown

Kia ora koutou katoa, warm greetings to you all

As we come to the end of 2020, I want to firstly acknowledge you all for the amazing work you continue to do caring for the most vulnerable patients and their whānau. Throughout the country we have continued to see high capacity and acuity, our units have been bursting at the seams.

This year has brought many challenges, the biggest one being a global pandemic which changed the norms of how we practice, especially with our whānau centred care. We have become more creative and flexible in the way we deliver care to best meets the needs of the baby and their whānau. Although many people will be glad to see the back of 2020, we can celebrate the positives that have come from such an unprecedented time. We have formed closer relationships with our colleagues far and wide as we have navigated through 'lockdowns and levels' throughout New Zealand.

Despite there being many challenges we still saw success in being able to hold a face-to-face symposium. "Go with the Flo – changes and challenges in neonatal nursing today" was held in Christchurch in October. This was a great opportunity for face to face networking and a welcomed change from the new norm of "Zoom".

As a committee we continued to work behind the scenes, supporting neonatal nursing and planning for 2021. I am looking forward to having our next symposium in the sunny Hawkes Bay. It will be a great educational and social opportunity, and I look forward to meeting some of you there.

Wishing you and your whānau a safe and happy Christmas and New Year. Over summer I hope that you all get time to rest and recuperate and spend time with your loved ones. I look forward to the opportunities that 2021 brings.

Nāku noa

Merophy Brown  
NNCA Chairperson

# Thank you and farewell

## *Chairpersons farewell*

Tēnā koutou,

I have now finished as Chair of NNCA and welcome in your new NNCA Chair Merophy Brown.

It has been an honour and privilege to be your Chair for the past 5 years. I would like to thank the NNCA executive, our PNAs Kate and Catherine, and you all for your support, friendship, hard work and commitment over this time.

We continue to achieve much as a college to support the growth of neonatal nurses and promote neonatal care, but we are nothing and can achieve nothing without the skills and support of each other.

This year more than any other has demonstrated just how important collegiality, family and friends are to our functioning and welfare both personally and professionally.

It has been a changed, challenging and hard year due to Covid 19. I count my blessings that we are indeed in a privileged and protected position down here near the bottom of the world in Aotearoa as we continue to see healthcare workers and communities across the world battle and be hit relentlessly and hard by this pandemic.

So, as we head into what is still going to be festive season for us, I would like to take the opportunity to take a moment to acknowledge our overseas front-line healthcare workers, nurses and midwives.

It is not such a festive season for them and they have been and continue to tirelessly wage war against this insidious virus. We wish them safety and relief soon from the tough situation they find themselves in.

As for us? Grateful as we are to live where we do, I would also still like to acknowledge despite being in better situation down here this year has still left us challenged and changed as a nation. It has been a tiring and tough year.

So, thank you for all the hard work you have continued to put in despite the times to ensure that pēpi and whānau all around Aotearoa that have needed neonatal care, got great care. I would like to wish you some festive relief and respite, time to replenish the mind and body with great friends, family, and food.

Be kind, be safe, and thank you.

Meri Kirihimete  
Ngā mihi o te tau hou  
Gina Becroft

# NICU Christmas scrubs

Staff in Dunedin NICU decided to bring some Christmas cheer to the unit at the end of an intense year. Our wonderful nurse Jess Kelly had a brilliant idea for Christmas scrubs and drafted some patterns based on the usual scrubs worn in the hospital.

Staff purchased their own choice of Christmas themed fabric and over a few weekends in October and November there were some very social sewing sessions held.

Even better, left over fabric from the scrubs were made into tiny little Christmas stockings for the babies - too cute!

Some of our NICU nurses in their festive scrubs...

From left: Annie Marshall, Julia Gilbert, Cathy Phillips, Alison Pile and Olivia Stevens



# 2020 ANZNN Corner



Nathalie Robinson (Nelson), Alice Bigwood (Palmerston North), Trish Graham (Christchurch), Audrey Yu (Middlemore), Smitha Joseph (Rotorua), Susan Law (Waitemata)  
Missing: Barbara Hammond (Whanganui) and Claire Jacobs (Wellington) Jacqui Koberstein (Rotorua) Anna Hayns (Bay of Plenty)

Thank you all who attended the Christchurch based ANZNN workshop on Oct 15/2020. It was great catching up and seeing some new faces. Some curly questions came from the group with Claire Jacobs from Wellington helping answer some and Sharon Chow from Sydney offering great support via text.

New Zealand data collected is currently supporting over 17 studies in Australia, New Zealand, and Hong Kong for 2020.

Some examples from 2016-2018 ANZNN data collected:

- Rates of sepsis in term or near-term neonates,
- Effects of increased oxygen saturations target rates of Retinopathy in preterm infants
- Nutritional outcomes of infants less than 32 weeks and/or less than 1500 grams birthweight

Internationally the ANZNN data is also supporting a very wide in-depth study on "Variations in neonatal length of stay of extremely preterm babies: an international comparison" with data from the years of 2014-2016. This study is comparing the neonatal LOS across a range of 10 countries and healthcare settings for the first time. This study is based on the extreme preterm of 24-28 weeks' gestation and to consider the survival status. The most recent data used in EPICE was from 2012 and as survival has improved, LOS may also have changes.

ANZNN is also working on data collection forms for the potential Covid-19 positive baby and mother. These forms are still in draft and will be distributed once all ethics/approvals have been completed. Luckily not needed just yet.

I had the opportunity to tour the Christchurch Neonatal unit with ANZNN Data Manager Trish Graham. For staff information, she has displayed some of her statistics on the education boards on admissions/birth weights for the various gestations and number of ventilated babies over the last few years. Then on the Monthly Quality Improvement boards, the positive outcomes such as % of babies exclusively breastmilk feeding at discharge. Fantastic ideas to keep the data alive for all staff. Great work Trish!

The forum participants also shared many different cares and treatments for babies across the country which was so interesting. The use of Human milk fortifier vs hind milk was one topic that led to discussion of baby's sore bottoms, and the possibilities of NEC, of which both will be explored I'm sure. Family centred care and what it means for each unit was another diverse discussion.

The group's lively conversation was great to hear and led to the benefits of sharing in a group vs ZOOM meetings. The group agreed this yearly forum was a great opportunity to improve their data collection, explain those interesting situations and to share ideas. The next opportunity to meet will be in Hawkes Bay the day prior to the Neonatal Nurses College of Aotearoa symposium Oct 2021. Date to be confirmed.

Thank you again for your interest in the ANZNN workshop and data collection. You are contributing to research which gives positive changes for your precious neonates.

Thank you again for coming and sharing your ideas at the forum

Barbara Hammond  
NNCA and ANZNN representative



# A new resource from the New Zealand Nurses Organisation to inform and support nurses wanting to enter or progress governance roles

Could you use your skills, experience and decision-making ability to positively influence health and social care through leadership?

Whether you are in clinical practice, policy, research, funding, education – or any other setting – your nursing education and work roles provide a rich array of knowledge, skills and experiences to bring to governance.

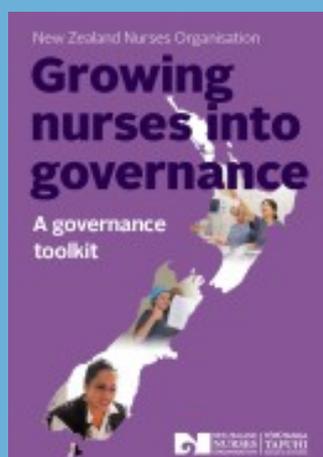
NZNO is proud to introduce this resource which is an outcome from the NZNO Strategy for Nursing 2018-2023. It is primarily designed for online use and is full of relevant information and advice – with many links to supplementary ideas and material. Growing nurses into governance: A governance toolkit is practical and sensible. It critically informs the reader while providing a competence and confidence pathway for nurses either in, or planning to be in, governance roles.

As a nurse, the toolkit is your call to reflection and action. Ask yourself:

- Could I be involved in governance?
- If not me, who could I support to grow into governance?
- What can I do and with whom could I work?

The toolkit pays particular attention to Kaupapa Māori with its unique governance environment that can inform governance in all organisations. NZNO Te Poari and Te Rūnanga members have been key to its progression.

The toolkit will become the 'go-to' resource for nurses wanting to engage in governance roles in the unique context of Aotearoa New Zealand.



[https://www.nzno.org.nz/resources/governance\\_toolkit](https://www.nzno.org.nz/resources/governance_toolkit)

# Member Contribution

## *Tackling Inequities – Are we part of the problem by not addressing bias within us, or part of the solution?*

We attended the 'Tackling Inequities – To Improve Outcomes' conference in Wellington in early December. This was a confronting conference to attend. We all like to believe we are doing our best, but are we really? We discuss having a skill set about 'difficult conversations'- this is often viewed from a health practitioner perspective regarding patients, but we should be having those difficult conversations with ourselves, our colleagues and extended circles.

The ideals of a bicultural partnership are those of reciprocity and of mutual benefit (NZNO Constitution, 2018). Nurses in NZ have an obligation to act reasonably, honorably, and in good faith for the provision of care for all. In the delivery of equitable healthcare, there is a need and emphasis on recognition, respect, accountability, compromise and balancing of interests. However, is this enough? Do we need to have a better understanding and implementation of that unequal input to achieve equal and equitable outcomes? In our places of work and everyday life, the actions that we choose to take have an impact on health consumers whether we realize it or not. In order to create a more equal environment and close the gap of inequity, our actions need to be more than tokenism and the act of benevolence.

We all have 'bias', and implicit bias is our unconscious bias towards any social group. Implicit bias often results in racism. Racism doesn't always mean we are 'bad' people. Disparities are often the result of systemic and unconscious racism.

NZ is considered to be a fair and equal country. Our recent election resulted in a very diverse parliament being more representative of our people than previous parliaments. However, our leadership and governance have strong connections to colonialism from a monocultural platform, leading to potential bias within the political parties.

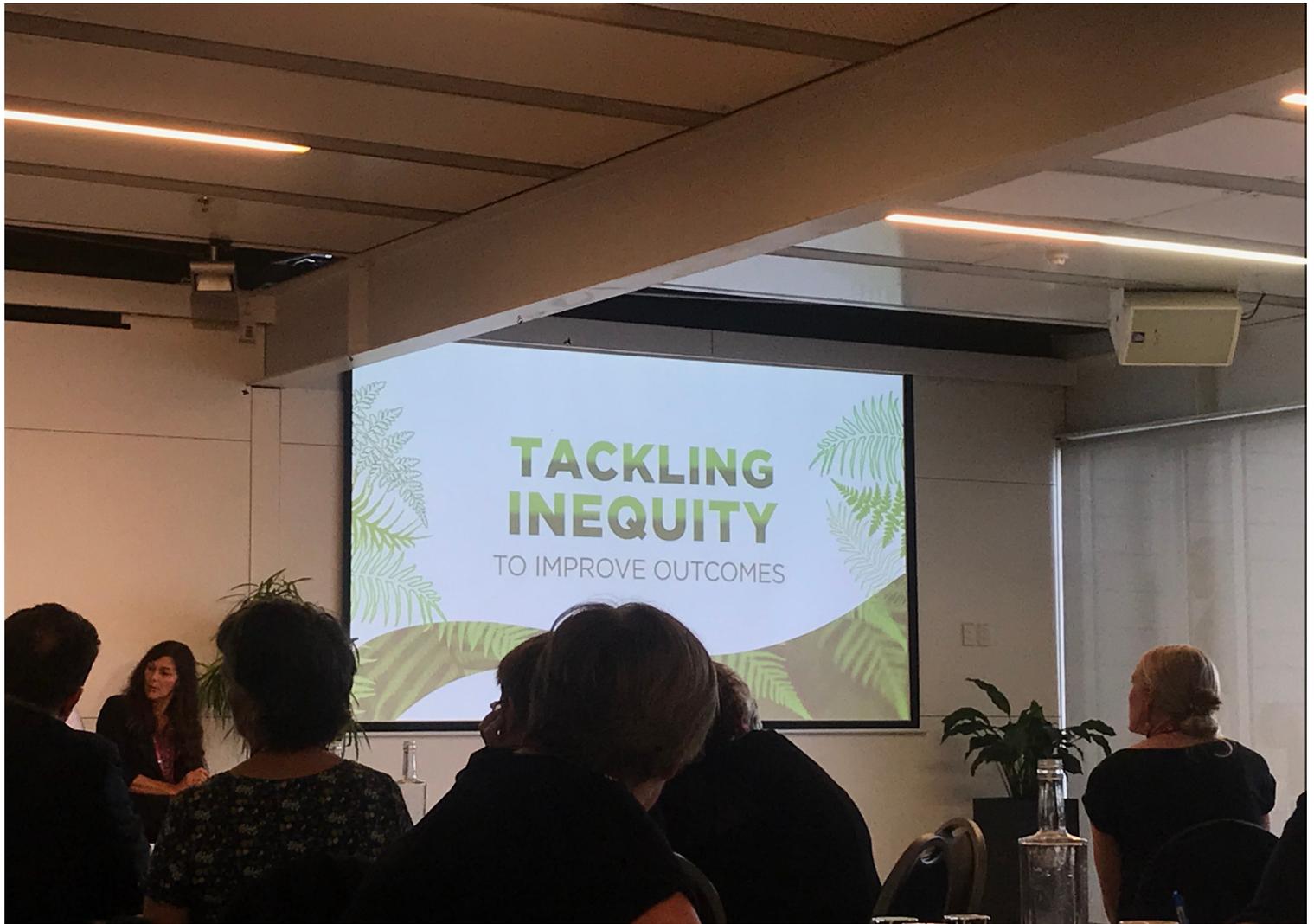
Maori access to NICU varies throughout New Zealand as Maori populations vary widely by region and area. This results in disproportionate health consumer numbers and leads to decreased interaction; this can result in staff being less competent and less aware of appropriate language and cultural practices. It is clear that Maori infants and whānau are being disproportionately disadvantaged – Maori are 16.5% of New Zealand's population but each year 28% of all babies born are identified as Maori. Maori are over-represented within the health system, with 60% of admissions to Gisborne Hospital being Maori, therefore, we need to have 16,000 more Maori nurses in New Zealand to be representative of the population.

During the Covid19 lockdown a strong message came through about 'doing it' for the team of 5 million. Although this sentiment seemed to unite NZ very effectively for the winter Covid19 period can we really consider that we are functioning well as a team of 5 million?

We have a plethora of data highlighting the inequities but are we able to show that we are responding to be part of a solution?

Owing to colonization, historical and current racism, implicit bias and many other factors, the current state of health within New Zealand's minority groups is far from ideal. We need to address the fact that the healthiest and wealthiest people receive the greatest care, and the poorest people receive the poorest care. We as a country, a health system and health professionals need to understand and implement the need for unequal input to achieve equitable outcomes.

Cherie McKenzie and Georgia-Rae Flack.



# The State of Child Health in Aotearoa NZ

This recently released report draws together national statistics on the state of child health to provide a snapshot in 2020 of the health of children in our communities. The report is a starting point for comparisons to be developed over time and between groups, and to highlight data gaps. Over time there will be a series of reports to raise awareness of the burden of disease for children, and of the need for medical and scientific research in priority areas to inform the provision of preventative services and healthcare delivery.

The child health report is a confronting and disturbing snapshot of the health of our children. First and foremost, it shows about 40,000 children are admitted to hospital each year for what are preventable illnesses. Early access to parent education and effective engagement with healthcare providers has a demonstrated positive influence on health outcomes for children. As neonatal nurses we are well placed to provide care that fosters parental trust and confidence in healthcare.

The report can be accessed here:

[https://curekids.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Cure-Kids\\_State-of-Child-Health-Report\\_2020\\_FINAL.pdf](https://curekids.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Cure-Kids_State-of-Child-Health-Report_2020_FINAL.pdf)





## Neonatal Nurse of the Year Recipient 2020

Every year the Neonatal Nurses College Aotearoa recognises and awards at annual symposium the Neonatal Nurse of the Year in recognition of exemplary service and contribution to neonatal care in Aotearoa New Zealand.

At this years Symposium held in Christchurch the award went to Bernard Hutchinson, an Associate Clinical Nurse Manager (ACNM), Neonatal Services, Christchurch Women's Hospital.

Bernard began his nursing career as a Psychopaedic Nurse before going on to complete his General Nurse training . Bernard has had a long career in Paediatric and Neonatal Care, having worked in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, in various positions, RN, Charge Nurse, Nurse Manager, and now ACNM.

Bernard has been working in the Neonatal Service, Christchurch Women's Hospital since 1991 and has contributed to multiple activities that have resulted in significant improvements to service delivery that has benefited neonates, their families and neonatal staff.

Bernard quietly goes about his work, always trying to make things better for those needing neonatal care or working in neonatal care. Bernard belongs to the category of nurse that makes such a big difference behind the scenes with contributions that often go by unnoticed. Bernard's colleagues know he will be both humbled and embarrassed by this award but are extremely proud on his behalf of his contributions to improving neonatal care and conditions, and he is a very worthy recipient.

Bernard has held several portfolios as an ACNM for the Neonatal Service; Research, Transport, Parent education and currently helping oversee Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative requirements for the Neonatal Service.

Bernard has been a NZBA board member, a BFHI Auditor for NZBA, and is currently on the CWH Human Milk Bank executive and was involved in the steering group that established this milk bank. This is a significant achievement being the first milk bank back in NZ after several decades.

He is passionate about supporting parents through their neonatal journey and lessening the impact of the experience on them. He is part of the parent information group, Family Integrated Care Psychosocial support section, and has been instrumental in developing several policies that help support the integration and inclusion of parents into the care of their babies.

He is a neonatal history buff and helps in the tracking of changes to practice over the years. This helps us remember where we have come from, what we used to do, and just how far we have come. These lessons and our stories from the past are invaluable as a reminder of our lineage and how this has helped shape us today.

But of equal importance is contribution that Bernard makes day in, day out when he is on duty. Bernard is always available to support and soothe (both staff and parents!) and is the consummate professional. He is always watching and supporting the three key components in NICU - parent, nurse and baby. You never ever feel unsupported or indeed, you are never unsupported, as either a staff member, or parent or baby when he is about.

So, this is why we say thank you Bernard "you make neonates better place to be"

Gina Beecroft

Outgoing Chair, Neonatal Nurses College Aotearoa.

# Events 2021

## Trial Development Workshop 2021

Register for FREE now!

The workshop will help to develop promising clinical trial concepts in maternal, perinatal and neonatal health through the steps to competitive grant funding. If you have a trial idea, are interested in learning more about the development of quality clinical trials, or just want to contribute your experience then don't miss this fantastic opportunity! Registrations are filling up. Or visit our website: <https://ontrack.perinatsociety.org.nz/>

## PSANZ Annual Congress Sydney 10 – 13 Feb

<https://www.psanz.com.au/meetings-and-events/psanz-annual-congress/>

## PSNZ 72nd Annual Scientific Meeting 2021 Rotorua 2 – 5 November

<https://www.paediatrics.org.nz/events/>

