



Dietitians Board

Te Mana Mātanga Mātai Kai

Unite
against
COVID-19

18 April 2020

Kia Ora,

I hope you are all safe and well and finding some positives in living in your bubbles. Certainly for me I am enjoying spending more time with my adult children (they might not think the same of course), sharing the kitchen as a family to create some great meals and taking some wonderful walks along the South Coast of Wellington.

We are still at Alert Level 4 – Stay Home, Save Lives!

During 'Lockdown' the Board has been liaising with the Ministry of Health, Education Providers, Dietitians New Zealand, DHB's, other Health Regulatory Authorities and a number of other stakeholders to ensure the dietetic health workforce is available, prepared and supported during these uncertain times.

One thing that **is** certain is that the landscape is fluid and changes happen often before you get time to put things in place. We are working to ensure you get up to date, evidence based, information just as soon as it is available - the [Ministry of Health](#) and [COVID-19](#) websites are the best places to go in the first instance. If you haven't heard from us, it might be we don't have anything more to tell you than what the Government and its Ministries are disseminating. Be assured we will be in touch with any breaking news directly relevant to Registered Dietitians just as soon as we have something to share – and will let you know when we change it.

We now have a dedicated [COVID-19 page](#) on our website and we are building up resources on a daily basis and our Board COVID-19 Communications are stored there as well for your easy reference.

Recent announcements from the Prime Minister & the Director General of Health indicate it may not be long before we will need to prepare to move between the COVID-19 Alert Levels. **WHAT MIGHT THAT MEAN?**

At [Alert Level 3](#) we are still required to **maintain physical distancing**, and whilst some businesses are able to open there is still a lack of clarity for those working in Allied Health outside of the designated [Essential Services](#) and for some, what constitutes emergency or acute care (life or death). The Ministry of Health are working on what it all means for health care and we should get information on this next week.

A meeting on Friday 17 April chaired by Martin Chadwick (Chief Allied Health Professions Officer) was attended by 90 representatives from across the Allied Health professions. Martin's key messages were:

- The aim remains the same at any level - **Stop** transmission of COVID-19
- Continue to apply **physical** distancing
- Unless it's an emergency make your consultations and delivery of health care **virtual**
- **Act like you have COVID19**
- If you work in health care you **MUST** get a flu vac – ask your employer to pay – the Government has no plans to provide free vaccinations for health workers at this point in time
- Increase your **collaboration between DHB and private practice** – share your resources, make connections – outline what Allied Health practitioners working in **private practice** can deliver on

The Ministry of Health has advised that Telehealth should be undertaken. Virtual consultations and Apps will be the preferred options for health service delivery for quite some time outside emergency and acute settings.

To follow are some updates and information:

1. **Dietetic Practice**

The Board is aware that the COVID-19 situation may present many challenges for health practitioners who may be called on to act in unfamiliar ways. You are encouraged to use your professional judgement to deliver safe care informed by the [Professional Standards & Competencies for Dietitians](#) and [Code of Ethics & Conduct for Dietitians](#). As we have mentioned previously the key principles which should be followed include the need to work cooperatively with colleagues to keep people safe, to practise in line with the best available evidence and to recognise and work within the limits of your competence and to have appropriate indemnity arrangements relevant to your practice. If you have any concerns please talk to your employer in the first instance or contact the Board's office if required.

2. **Telehealth - Guidelines**

With messaging from the Ministry of Health that '**virtual is the preferred option**' the Board has been developing more comprehensive guidelines around **Telehealth for Dietitians** – we will soon have these available on our [COVID-19 page](#) for your reference.

In the meantime please refer to the guidelines and resources provided by [New Zealand Telehealth Forum and Resource Centre](#). Follow this [LINK](#) to set up your telehealth programme.

3. Self-Care during Lockdown

Being in lockdown can create a lot of emotion and anxiety and the Board is aware that times of uncertainty can cause stress and impact on mental and emotional wellbeing.

If you need any support or advice you can call or text **1737** to access the national Telehealth support line anytime day or night to talk to a trained counsellor. Alternatively reach out to a trusted friend or colleague.

An important role of the Board is to ensure practitioners are safe and fit to practise, especially at a time like this. The Board acknowledges this is a sensitive topic but under Section 45 of the HPCA Act 2003 if a registered health practitioner has reason to believe that another health practitioner is unable to perform the functions required for the practice of his or her profession because of some mental or physical condition, they must promptly give the Registrar of the responsible authority written notice of all the circumstances. This is for the safety of both the practitioner and the public. The Registrar can be reached by email: dietitians@dietitiansboard.org.nz.

4. CPD

A reminder that if you haven't already, your CPD logs must be uploaded for the 2019/2020 practising year by 30 June 2020 – whilst there is still quite a while until that deadline we hope you don't leave it until the last moment. Make sure you log it in the correct year as the 2020/2021 period is also open for logging any CPD you might undertake from 1 April 2020.

The Audit team are over halfway through the CPD Audit process for those who were selected for 2019/2020 CPD Audit. Many of you will already have received the outcome. There have been a small number to date who have been asked to address deficiencies. One of the key concerns the Auditors have commented on is related to the application of Credit Values to activities – you are reminded to refer to the Credit Value key and ensure your reflection and evidence are appropriate for the credits you are applying.

5. Annual Declarations for the 2020/2021 Practising Year

There are still some practitioners who are still to make their Annual Declaration and despite our best efforts to make contact you are still to respond to our communications.

Thanks to those of you who have responded and have either rectified the situation or are in the process of cancelling an entry on the Register.

I ask those of you who are still to attend to this to please contact me or Lizz with a quick email at the very least. And I remind you to be mindful of your colleagues who have made their Annual Declaration – if you have an entry on the Register and continue to work (in any capacity [within the Scope of Practice](#)) without an APC you are both, in breach of the HPCA Act and, being disrespectful to those who have obtained their APC or made a Non-Practising declaration.

6. Your Concerns

The Board is interested to hear your concerns and ask you to provide some feedback on the following:

- What difficulties are you having due to COVID-19?
- What risks are there for your practice?
- What risks are there for your patients and clients?
- What resources do you need? (Do you have some to share on our COVID-19 page?)
- What are the key issues for the dietetic workforce?

The Board meets on Tuesday afternoon and whilst it's not much time between reading this email and then, if you could come back to me **by noon Tuesday 21 April** with any comments or thoughts that would be great.

The Board acknowledges the mahi of Registered Dietitians; your commitment to providing dietetic services and care is very much appreciated.

Do please contact Lizz or me if you have any questions or concerns – we will endeavour to help you as best we can.

Take care in your bubbles.

Kia Haumaru te noho.

Sue

Sue Domanski

Registrar

Dietitians Board

Te Mana Mātanga Mātai Kai

Driving the creation of a workforce that is responsive to the health and wellbeing needs of New Zealanders

Our Values: Professional – Integrity – Fairness – Excellence - Kaitiaki