

Diabetes Nurse Specialist prescribing demonstration project

By Helen Snell, Nurse Practitioner, on behalf of the New Zealand Society for the Study of Diabetes

The New Zealand Society for the Study of Diabetes (NZSSD) is working with Health Workforce New Zealand, the Nursing Council of New Zealand and the Ministry of Health to undertake a demonstration project of diabetes nurse specialist (DNS) prescribing. As well as lifestyle recommendations, ensuring that people with diabetes are on the right type of medication in the correct dose for their blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol is already a key focus of DNS practice. However prescribing medication, including changing doses, is outside the registered nurses' scope and they have to practise under standing orders written by diabetes specialist physicians. In many other countries, suitably qualified DNSs are able to prescribe diabetes-related medications independently but New Zealand lags behind in this regard. Expansion of the nurse's role to include prescribing in Britain has been widely successful, with no or minimal problems reported^{1,2,3}.

The number of people with diabetes in NZ has almost doubled to nearly 200,000 in the past 10 years and better management of diabetes is one of the Government's key priorities. Most general practice teams and specialist diabetes centres nationwide are struggling to cope with demand, so looking at innovative ways to alleviate the pressure on existing services and personnel is essential. Health Minister

Tony Ryall has prioritised efficiency and greater access to key services and is supportive of this project.

The project proposes to demonstrate safe and effective prescribing by suitably qualified DNSs in approved diabetes specialist services in NZ over a six-month period. The DNSs will be practising alongside a diabetes physician, who will have oversight of their prescribing practice for the duration of the project. It is anticipated the project will also demonstrate how making the most of the potential of DNSs improves outcomes for people with diabetes, through improved access to timely and appropriate care as well as reduced duplication of visits and cost. Allowing diabetes nurse specialists to initiate and continue a limited range of medicines to people with diabetes will also result in better use of skills and resources to provide diabetes services.

Following consultation with the health sector, the Health Workforce NZ DNS prescribing workforce innovation project has confirmed four demonstration sites. A number of high-quality proposals were received and the evaluation of those proposals has resulted in demonstration sites in Hawke's Bay, Mid Central Health, Auckland District Health Board and Hutt Valley. For the project to proceed, a regulation needs to be passed to make prescribing by the participating DNSs legal for the duration of the project and this is expected to happen shortly. After that, the nurses will need to be authorised by the Nursing Council of New Zealand to prescribe after providing evidence of meeting specified education, training and experience criteria.

The project will be externally evaluated throughout the demonstration project and at the end, with implications for further roll out identified. This is an important step forward in improving access to high-quality care for people with diabetes in NZ and NZSSD is very excited to be involved. ●

References

1. Hawke, N. (2010). Handing over the prescription pad. *British Medical Journal*, 340, 73-75.
2. Stenner, K., Carey, N., & Courtenay, M. ((2010) Implementing nurse prescribing: A case study in diabetes. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 66(3), 522-531. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2648.2009.05212.x
3. Courtenay, M., Stenner, K., & Carey, N. (2010). The views of patients with diabetes about nurse prescribing. *Diabetic Medicine*, 27, 1049-1054.

Photography
by Woolf

Weddings

Family Groups

Children

Special Occasions

Copy Restoration

Digital

PHOTOGRAPHY BY



Call us for all your
photographic needs

Ph: 04 385-773 | now!
www.photo.woolf.co.nz