

International Nurses Day: Meet five Waiheke wonder women

The Covid-19 pandemic gave International Nurses Day added meaning last week, as people around the world expressed their heartfelt thanks to nurses on the frontline. At each of Waiheke's three health clinics, nurses have been working long hours assessing and testing hundreds of people for Covid-19. Sophie Boladeras meets five Waiheke nurses to find out about their experience nursing before and during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Claire Roose-Butcher

Claire began her position as district nurse with the Waiheke Health Trust just two weeks before level-four lockdown saw the country shut its doors. The 27-year-old nurse says that, despite the big move to Waiheke at such a surreal time in history, she was supported by a welcoming and talented pool of island nurses.

"Initially, as we shifted from level three to four rapidly it was a hard time for myself and the team here," says Claire.

"We had floods of phone calls and had to keep up with guidelines that were constantly changing, but everyone was amazing and held it together well. I was certainly anxious watching what was happening overseas, hoping nurses here would not be faced with those war-like scenes."

Do you remember the moment you



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Claire Roose-Butcher.
Photo Sophie Boladeras

decided to train to become a nurse?

Yes, my grandfather went into anaphylaxis, and I watched a team of nurses and doctors resuscitate him.

What inspired you to get into nursing?

I wanted to do something meaningful, and I've always found medicine fascinating.

Has this been a stressful time for health clinics and staff on Waiheke?

I think so, I'm still new, but I've been assured everyone is usually very relaxed! I think they've all been wonderful, welcoming, and really worked as a team.

Jayne Kitona

During the Covid-19 pandemic, nurse, practice manager and clinical lead Jayme has been a source of reassurance and up-to-date information for the community at large. She's expended energy and time setting up the drive-through testing station at Oneroa Medical Centre, and has been working tirelessly to feel-out the new norm when it comes to primary healthcare delivery.

"I've likened it a little bit to the airlines," she says.

"When the twin towers event occurred, it changed forever how we travelled. Primary healthcare will still be here and lots will be the same, we will just be doing it a little differently."

What do you love

Jayne Kitona.
Photo Sophie Boladeras



about your career as a nurse?

To me, nursing is a sisterhood for which I have profound respect. There is a huge sense of duty once you are a nurse. You are a nurse, period. There are some seriously amazing nurses out there who are so good at what they do. Having the opportunity to listen and learn from a nurse that is 100 percent skilled, passionate and crazy about what they do is so inspiring.

Did you celebrate International Nurses Day?

Yes, I was in a yellow gown, a face mask, gloves, a hairnet, my uniform and working in the Waiheke Covid-19 Centre alongside our fantastic team. For me, it would not feel right doing anything else during this current time. Maybe next year I'll track down a cocktail on this day.

Do you think the government needs to take further measures to support nurses?

Yes, nurses are a fundamental part of society. Where would NZ have been in the Covid-19 pandemic without nurses? Nurses are overworked and underpaid. However, that is not a new notion. Primary healthcare nurses are paid even less than nurses in other roles and specialties. Fair and equal funding in primary healthcare for nurses is long overdue. There is funding in primary healthcare, but it is not directed at nurses. Nurses have made, and are making, some serious sacrifices to be on the front line of the Covid-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, I am proud of the way our government has responded to the situation.

What inspired you to become a nurse?

Initially, my sister. She was in nursing school at the time and she is now an intensive care nurse at Auckland City Hospital. We went through nursing school together at AUT on the North Shore and ended up graduating and becoming registered nurses together in 2011. Our mum has been our rock and inspiration

along the way, she is also a nurse. It makes for really interesting dinner conversation when we get together, much to the displeasure of the rest of the whānau.

Jessica Mead

Jessica, who grew up on Aotea Great Barrier Island, knew she wanted to become a nurse as a child. The two nurses who worked at Port Fitzroy were the only healthcare practitioners on the island at the time, and Jessica says they had to assess, diagnose and treat patients, usually on their own and with limited resources. A young Jessica found their knowledge and ability inspiring, but despite her childhood dream, it wasn't until much later that she embarked on her career as a nurse.

Do you remember the moment you decided to train to become a nurse?

I was always going to be a nurse, even as a child. However, I wasn't into studying, so I went on a different path after high school. I joined the army as a medic, then I became a health, safety and environmental advisor in the oil and gas industry in Taranaki. It was ridiculously well-paid and I loved it at first, but the further I advanced in my career, the more I felt unsatisfied and frustrated with the culture within that environment. I was between construction projects when I thought about my desire to be a nurse. Going back to study as an adult was fantastic - I loved my three years as a

Jessica Mead. Photo Sophie Boladeras



student nurse, it turned out I was good at studying, and I never knew that.

How has your workday changed since the advent of Covid-19?

At the start it was incredibly busy, every morning and every night I had to read and educate myself on this new virus. Almost every day there was a new "case definition" of Covid-19 from the Ministry of Health, and a new management algorithm to learn. Every single patient who called in with a snuffle, cough or cold had to be triaged.

One of my roles at Ostend Medical Centre is the infection control coordinator, so I had to follow all the up-to-date information, which changed almost daily, on what cleaning, isolation and protective measures we needed to protect ourselves and our patients. It is a new concept for patient consults to be done virtually. For many of us, it goes against our instinct to not physically assess a patient. However, we had to change fast and, as it turns out, it does work fine in many situations. The benefit for Waihekians is the possibility of virtual consults with specialists in the city for

those who struggle to commute - suddenly, we can do it. This is a game-changer.

Catriona Foster

As a little girl, Catriona knew she wanted to be a nurse like both her mother and aunt before her. She devoured novels about nurses who worked in the community, and started as a district nurse on Waiheke in 1979. At that time she says the team was mainly responsible for taking care of people's personal needs, including bathing, showering and wound care.

"Over the years this has changed, we now have home support services set up to perform non-complex personal care and household management."

Catriona says that in the 1980s there were very few services to care for highly dependent people within their own homes, and so many people had to leave Waiheke to be cared for on the mainland.

"There are no residential hospice beds available on Waiheke, therefore

people, where at all possible, are cared for in their own homes, supported by ourselves and many of our other health and community colleagues," says Catriona.

"The national percentage of palliative patients dying in their own home is below 10 percent, here on Waiheke it is around 60 percent. There is no better place to live and die."

Catriona Foster. Photo Sophie Boladeras





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