

From: Health NZ Communications <communications@mailout.tewhatauora.govt.nz>
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Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora

15 October

Kia ora koutou,

A memo was sent last week in Waikato asking for consistent use of one language in clinical settings as a patient safety measure. I have also been made aware of a similar directive made in Christchurch earlier this year.

Firstly, I want to be clear that all Health NZ staff should absolutely feel supported and free to be themselves, to use their language, and celebrate their culture in our workplaces.

I can see how the memo has caused some concern, and I would like to clarify our position on the use of other languages in a clinical setting.

Clear communication is a critical part of quality and safety of care. Patient safety is the absolute priority in our hospitals or any clinical setting. It is important that everyone involved in a patient's care, including the patient and their whānau, can clearly understand what is being discussed and be able to



Margie Apa, Chief Executive

participate in assessment, diagnosis, and treatment planning. This communication could be in English, or another language. The key point is patient safety.

It is a requirement that all nurses registered in New Zealand can speak and understand English. The current Nursing Council regulations sets a standard for competencies to practice including language. While we accept staff may wish to speak in their preferred language as part of everyday informal conversations – we expect health professionals to use their judgement for when this is clinically safe and appropriate in relation to patient care. You are professionals and we trust your judgement.

We also celebrate the diverse cultural backgrounds that our staff have and acknowledge the value that diversity can bring to ensuring we are responsive to the care that patients need whom also come from diverse community and cultural backgrounds.

Health New Zealand's Chief Clinical Officer, and Chief Nurse will look at our policies on this issue and make any changes necessary to ensure all staff across the motu have clear guidance in clinical settings.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to speak with your manager or send me a message.

Nga mihi,

Margie Apa
Chief Executive

Missed the last all-staff hui? Watch the recording here.



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