

Media release

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Wairarapa DHB happy with recruitment progress

In October of last year, Wairarapa District Health Board (DHB) highlighted issues with a gap in its clinical workforce that was challenging its ability to keep up with specialty areas, particularly general surgery and orthopaedics. Recruitment was underway at the time and the DHB is happy with the progress it is making, though the COVID-19 travel restrictions have caused some delays.

“We have been continuing to operate a full service by working with casual and long term locums to complement our permanent positions,” said Dale Oliff, Chief Executive. “But obviously, we would prefer to have a permanent team, and I am pleased to say we are getting closer now to filling all vacancies.”

At capacity the hospital has four orthopaedic surgeons, though at present just one surgeon is permanently employed. This gap will be soon rectified with two offers accepted and one more under negotiation. One of those that has accepted is based in New Zealand and the other is awaiting immigration and registration clearance. The DHB is looking forward to be fully staffed in orthopaedics in the near future.

Other Senior Medical Officer (SMO) vacancies are also showing promise of soon being filled. Three anaesthetists are being considered at present, with two looking to be permanently recruited. One general surgeon is currently undergoing immigration application with a view to working with Wairarapa DHB when travel allows, and further opportunities are being investigated. The DHB is meeting with applicants for a permanent General Physician position, and recruitment for a psychiatrist is ongoing.

The impact of COVID-19 travel restrictions is being felt, and Oliff says that the DHB is having to progress recruitment using the digital platforms available.

“We are getting very good at utilising Zoom at the DHB,” she said. “It is one of the silver linings of the COVID-19 response that we are taking advantage of the technology.”

“We are able to meet with applicants and progress recruitment online, but we might need to be more patient than we’d prefer while we wait for global travel to open up again.”

“Recruitment processes are often protracted, and I am extremely pleased with the hard work of our staff to achieve this success in a short time.”

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For more information:

Anna Cardno, Communications Manager
Wairarapa District Health Board
anna.cardno@wairarapa.dhb.org.nz
027 205 2422