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Waitematā DHB Fracture Liaison Service joins elite international Gold Standard ranks

Waitematā DHB's efforts to curb one of the most damaging and costly causes of injury for older Kiwis have earned it top recognition with the International Osteoporosis Foundation.

The DHB's fracture liaison service (FLS) has received international Gold Standard recognition from the foundation for its work in preventing injuries from falls and accidents among people aged 65 and older.

Among patients to benefit from the service is Dale Ryburn.



Above: Fracture Liaison Service patient, Dale Ryburn.

Mrs Ryburn fractured her arm in late January. The team picked her case up via the North Shore Hospital Emergency Department trauma list and got in touch, asking if she would like to undergo a bone density scan. She had the scan in March, which showed that, at 58, she had developed osteoporosis.

"I was shocked when I got my diagnosis but the DHB team has been awesome, I can't complain or fault them on anything," she says.

Mrs Ryburn had her first bone protection infusion this month.

"It was very simple from when they called to getting my first treatment. I was fine about it because now I know I am getting it sorted."

Waitematā DHB was the first in the country to establish a FLS in 2012 and IOF Capture the Fracture® Steering Group Member Adjunct Associate Professor Paul Mitchell says it has been a guiding light ever since.

“Waitematā is a beacon of best-practice across the country. On a global level, they’ve been an innovator that’s ahead of the curve.”

Falls are the most common cause of injury for New Zealanders aged over-65. Up to 60 percent suffer falls each year and 10 to 20 percent of these people are injured, hospitalised or die as a result. ACC spends nearly \$200 million per annum helping over-65s recover from falls. Without effective fall and fracture prevention interventions, this cost is expected to increase to \$400m by 2035.

ACC Manager Targeted Investment Paul Kennedy is leading the organisation’s work to reduce the social, personal and economic impact of falls.

“Fracture liaison services play a critical role in identifying the underlying issues that could lead to a fracture and putting individualised plans in place to reduce that risk.

“DHBs like Waitematā recognise that a good fracture liaison service can systematically reduce serious fractures from falls by 30-50 percent. With the population of over-65s expected to double to 1.2 million by 2035, it’s a no-brainer for us to invest in a programme that can address the resulting increase in demand on NZ’s health system.

“Waitematā has done a lot to achieve this Gold Standard they’re at the front of the pack.”

Endocrinologist Dr David Kim has been involved with Waitematā DHB’s FLS since its inception and has been leading the service since 2014. His dedicated team of FLS clinical nurse specialists, Michelle Cowley and Julia Spinley, identify and intervene in around 1500 cases per year.



Above: from left, Waitematā DHB Fracture Liaison Service Clinical Nurse Specialist Julia Spinley, Dr David Kim and Clinical Nurse Specialist Michelle Cowley with the team’s Gold Standard recognition.

“It was huge when we learned we had achieved the Gold Standard, the whole team was absolutely exalted. It means that if people within our DHB suffer a fragility fracture, even if they don’t realise

they have a problem, they can be confident that our system will detect them and make sure they are appropriately evaluated and treated.”

“We’ve always been leaders in the New Zealand fracture liaison service scene but we will continue to strive to provide a better service to our population.”

Osteoporosis NZ Executive Director Dr Christine Gill says achieving the Gold Standard in the middle of a pandemic is “fantastic”.

“Dr Kim has been phenomenal in his drive, so it’s great for the public to know that Waitematā is providing the best system of care.”

Ends.

What is a fracture liaison service?

A FLS identifies patients who are at-risk of further serious fractures by analysing information including initial fracture presentations at hospitals and ACC alerts for fractures occurring in the community.

The service contacts patients who may be at-risk and conducts a bone evaluation - developing a personalised plan to improve and maintain bone health to prevent future fractures or harm.

Osteoporosis NZ (ONZ) has been working with the Ministry of Health, the Health Quality & Safety Commission and ACC to create a FLS at each DHB for close to a decade - ACC and ONZ are currently engaging with all DHBs to determine the status of each FLS.

What is the International Osteoporosis Foundation Capture the Fracture® Map of Best Practice Gold Standard?

The Gold Standard was developed by the IOF for secondary fracture prevention. A FLS is recognised as the most important step in improving patient care and reducing fracture-related costs worldwide. Gold, silver and bronze standards are awarded to services that pass a rigorous audit.

Just 78 fracture liaison services worldwide hold a coveted IOF CTF Map of Best Practice Gold Standard - the latest belongs to New Zealand’s own Waitematā DHB.

About Waitematā DHB

Waitematā is the largest and one of the most rapidly growing DHBs in the country, serving a population of around 650,000 across the North Shore, Waitakere and Rodney areas. We are the largest employer in the district, employing around 8,500 people across more than 80 locations.

In addition to providing services to our own population, we are also the metropolitan Auckland provider of child disability services, child community dental services and community alcohol and drug services, and the northern region provider of forensic psychiatry services.

For further information, high-res image access or to arrange an interview, contact:

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