

Nau mai. Haere mai. Ki te pānui o RHĀNZ mō tēnei wiki (Te Reo for welcome to the RHĀNZ Newsletter for this week).

In this issue: Mental health for rural women, two new mental health services, video/photo selection from the Rural Connectivity Symposium and Fielddays, call for abstracts for the National Rural Health Conference and a selection of relevant media and research articles...

Who are RHĀNZ?

The Rural Health Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand represents a united voice from across multiple rural sector organisations. Our aim is to provide solutions and influence policy affecting the health and wellbeing of rural communities.

[Visit our website](#)



New mental health services will make it easier for people to get help.

We thank our partners.



LAUNCH OF TWO NEW MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES MAKE GETTING HELP EASIER

The Early Mental Health Response service has been set up to allow 111 operators to transfer calls to trained mental health nurses where appropriate while a new four-digit phone number has been set up to provide mental health support and advice.

People who are distressed and need someone to talk to can call or text 1737 to be put in touch with trained mental health professionals. It's a free service, available anytime of the day or night.

[Read more.](#)

NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE 2018



The National Rural Health Conference next year will be held at the Pullman Hotel in Auckland from Thursday, April 5 to Sunday, April 8, 2018, with the two main conference and exhibition days being **Friday, April 6 and Saturday, April 7.**

There will be four themes to the conference: Clinical; Nursing; Management and Community. If you would like to present either an oral or poster abstract at the conference please submit an abstract.

Key dates

Abstract submission open: Now.
Abstract submission closes: 31 August 2017
Author acceptance notification: 15 September 2017

Please [click here](#) for more information and to submit your abstract.

RURAL CONNECTIVITY SYMPOSIUM 2017 – Videos now available



Thanks to Mobile Health, we are able to provide video recordings of most of the presentations from the recent 2017 Rural Connectivity Symposium.

[Click here to view videos.](#)

HEALTH HUB FIELDDAYS 2017 – Photos now available

Thanks once again to the fab crew at Mobile Health we also have some great photos from the Health Hub at Fielddays. Please feel free to use and share amongst your networks.

[Read more.](#)

Media Watch

Challenges, rewards of rural practice hard to beat, say Aussie GPs

Exposing med students to the rewards of working in a community setting is crucial if New Zealand is to reverse its chronic shortage of rural GPs. Flinders University in Australia pioneered the idea of having students spend a year of study in a rural location. The proposed Waikato medical school seeks to follow a similar model, with students spending the third year of their four-year degree in a community setting. (Stuff)

[Read more](#)

Rural schools in need

Having to fetch balls off the school roof and sorting out a rogue bull is not usually the work of a primary school principal. But for Karen Goodall of Wainuioru School, nothing comes as a surprise during her work day. Yesterday, she and other school staff met with representatives from the New Zealand Educational Institute who are campaigning for better government funding in schools.

Though Miss Goodall is no bullfighter, she can tick off the job of calming a bull in the rural school paddock — working at a small rural school can be very different from a larger urban one, she said. "But your costs are spread out among fewer kids, so there are things that just cost more per student — it means the kids miss out," she said. (Wairarapa Times-Age)

[Read more](#)

Plans to trial drones for medical deliveries in remote North

Drones could be delivering medicine to remote, rural Northland communities by March next year.

Medical Drones Aotearoa plans to begin trialling the delivery of medical supplies to Mitimiti, near Hokianga, in November and aimed to start its first regular service by March, pending Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) approval.

Medical Drones Aotearoa founder Robyn Kamira said about 14 per cent of patients in low socio-economic and rural areas did not pick up their medicines and even more rationed their medicines to make them last longer. (NZ Herald)

[Read more](#)

Tiny towns a tough sell for grads despite years of pro-rural effort

Medical graduates' desire to work in small towns and provincial cities has eroded further, adding to rural health advocates' worries about threats to service sustainability.

Few people finishing their medical training want to live and work in towns with a population under 10,000, but these communities have increasing health needs as residents age, Rural Health Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand chief executive Michelle Thompson says. (NZ doctor – subscribers only)

[Read more](#)

Rural suicide documentary attracts strong audience

The recent launch of the NZ Young Farmers rural mental health documentary for rural youth has seen large numbers of young people view the programme that features stories of depression and suicide.

The 40-minute documentary also features the moving story of Canterbury member Sam Robinson, from Methven, who shared his story and has had interest from Australian health networks. (The Country)

[Read more](#)

Don't forget nurses in plans for new medical school

Waikato's proposal for a new kind of medical school should give rural nurses an opportunity to explore their training needs for delivering rural community services, writes Barbara Docherty. (NZ Doctor – subscriber only)

[Read more](#)

GPs and PHOs close door to future negotiations until funding reviewed

PHOs and GPs have dug in their heels about the need for funding reforms, telling the Ministry of Health and DHBs they will not negotiate any more contract changes this year without a review.

PHOs and other primary care providers took the stand at the latest meeting of the main primary care contract negotiation group on 20 June. (NZ Doctor - subscriber only)

[Read more](#)

Mental health for rural women



This week Waikato woman, Mary Anne Murphy, made a plea for more mental health support and funding specifically for rural women.

Mary's request was in response to the Government's recent announcement that the Ministries of Health and Primary Industries have committed a further \$500,000 for rural mental health initiatives, particularly initiatives supporting farmers. Her concern is that while most of the focus has been on farming men, too many rural women are suffering in silence.

We have not yet seen a copy of Mary's letter although it is apparently on its way to us via Rural Women New Zealand. From the media article, we certainly agree with much of what Mary is saying.

While hard data is scant, we know that women in general have more mental health problems than men, particularly in regard to depression and anxiety. We know that women are more often responsible for the care of their children, and are the carers of family members who have mental illnesses. We know that women are often the "glue" which holds families together through tough economic times, natural disasters and illnesses, and if they are unable to do so because of mental illness then they may be doubly stigmatised.

Shockingly, there is no data on the extent of mental ill-health in women – or men or children – in rural NZ. RHĀNZ is working hard to address this by pushing for a new fit-for-purpose definition of rurality as it pertains to health. We then want to see the Ministry of Health, and other Government departments, routinely reporting their statistics/outcomes with an urban/rural comparison.

It is true that women in New Zealand are less likely to die by suicide than men. Of the 185 farm-related suicides examined in our research paper last year, led by Dr Annette Beautrais, more than 91% were male. This helps explain the focus on males in rural suicide prevention currently. However, RHĀNZ certainly acknowledges the enormous role rural women play in keeping their families together and the toll this can sometimes take. We are also committed to ensuring that our rural mental health initiatives contract with Government works to support all rural people, especially the women, children and men involved with the business of farming.

In speaking with Dr Beautrais today she reminded me now that the dairy crisis is in abeyance, "we need to use it to leverage a wider focus on rural mental health. We need to conduct research including assessing the extent of illness in rural men, women and children, the types of stresses they face, the types of support that women want, and then set about seeing how we can best use rural community resources and innovative telehealth services to support our rural women."

Much of this activity is reflected in our *Framework to Improve Mental Health and Addiction Outcomes for rural New Zealanders*. We eagerly await Government's response to the recommendations and priority actions we identified in our Framework. We also continue to push for equitable - and affordable - access to broadband and cell phone coverage across rural New Zealand. A critical factor for improving access to health and education services and minimising the sense of isolation for our rural families.

This week The Country's Jamie Mackay spoke with Chanelle O'Sullivan from Farming Mums and Lindy Nelson, from the Agri-Women's Development Trust, about mental health for rural women. You can listen to the full interview [here](#)

Opposite my column, you can read about two new mental health services launched last week aimed at making it easier for people to get help when they need it. Click on the video link at the top of this ezine for more information. Of particular note to rural people is the ability to call or text "1737" to be put in touch with trained mental health professionals. The service is free and available any time of the day or night. Remember the 4 digits "1737".

Best wishes always,
Michelle

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Anyone interested in rural health is welcome to subscribe to this newsletter. Keep up to date with us by [subscribing now](#).

Member Column

Would you like to contribute an article for our newsletter? Tell a story about yourself or one of your members or something you're passionate about. Email your item to Michelle ce@rhaanz.org.nz

LOCAL INITIATIVES

Rural folk with MS sought for study in Southland

Medical researchers are turning their attention to the rural sector to benefit people who have multiple sclerosis.

People living in rural South Canterbury, Otago and Southland who have the auto-immune condition multiple sclerosis (MS) are needed for the University of Otago School of Physiotherapy study. (NZ Herald)

[Read more](#)

Women organise fortnightly walks and runs in an effort to reduce suicides

Losing two family members to suicide within a month was too much for Katie Morresy-Tahere. So she decided to take action and has organised fortnightly walks around New Plymouth, to encourage people to open up and talk about their problems. (Taranaki Daily News)

[Read more](#)

RESEARCH & RESOURCES WATCH

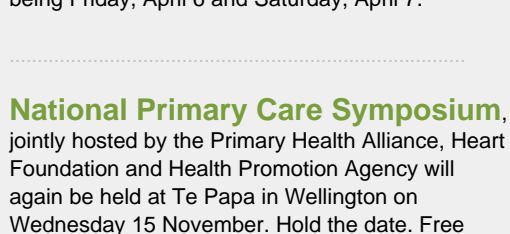
Partyline

The online magazine of the National Rural Health Alliance Australia.

[Read more](#)

EVENTS WATCH

Hold the date – National Rural Health Conference, Pullman Hotel, Auckland, 5-8 April 2018.



The dates are Thursday, April 5 to Sunday, April 8, with the two main conference and exhibition days being Friday, April 6 and Saturday, April 7.

National Primary Care Symposium, jointly hosted by the Primary Health Alliance, Heart Foundation and Health Promotion Agency will again be held at Te Papa in Wellington on Wednesday 15 November. Hold the date. Free entry.

