

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY OR RESIDENTIAL CARE PATIENTS

When Hospice Waikato is involved with a patient's care, who is the lead/main health provider?

The General Practitioner (GP) or Nurse Practitioner (NP)* remains the patient's lead health provider. If the patient is not enrolled with a GP/NP all attempts are made to support the patient to acquire a GP/NP as this is important for ongoing patient care.

**Note: ARRC facilities and primary health care practices may have GPs, NPs or a mix of both.*

If a patient is moved to a residential care facility and is known to the Hospice Waikato service, who is the lead health provider/carer?

The patient's GP (or NP) remains the primary clinician for patient care. Some residential facilities use a GP service instead of individual GPs (such as Residential Eldercare Services Ltd, or Third Age) who take the lead. If there is an issue with a patient's care, if they are in distress, or if medications need to be reviewed the facility staff will call the GP/NP.

So, what happens if the GP is unavailable or uncontactable?

If GPs are on holiday, they will have a backup plan of who to call that is shared with the facility. Some facilities have other processes they use such as Anglesea Clinic or virtual nursing and medical services.

Will the Hospice Waikato Palliative Care Specialists take over for the GP if the GP is absent?

No. The Hospice Waikato Palliative Care Specialists are similar to a specialist cardiologist or gastroenterologist. They have a different scope of practice and skill set so will not take over for a GP who isn't able to be contacted. Hospice Waikato Palliative Care Specialists work with GPs/NPs to guide and advise them in palliative care medical practice, as required.

Who can contact Hospice Waikato Palliative Care Specialists for advice?

Hospice Waikato Palliative Care Specialists are available 24/7 to provide advice and support to GPs/NPs, other medical staff, Hospice Waikato staff and health professionals, such as District Nurses. If a Registered Nurse from the community or a residential care facility calls, they are usually directed back to the patient's GP.

Do Hospice Waikato Palliative Care Specialists give verbal medication orders over the phone for non-Hospice community or residential care registered nurses to follow?

No. Legally a doctor should not prescribe medication to a patient who they do not know. Hospice Waikato Palliative Care Specialists may change medications for patients who are admitted to the Hospice Waikato Inpatient unit. If the patient is in the community, medication changes are done by the primary health care practice GP or NP.

What services does Hospice Waikato provide for community organisations or aged care facilities?

Hospice Waikato has experienced Clinical Nurse Specialists who work with staff in residential care facilities and community organisations to provide care coordination, education, and support to enhance care for patients. They also visit patients known to Hospice who are living in residential facilities (aged care and disability), and complete specialist assessments so that the patient receives appropriate care and treatment. Clinical Nurse Specialists often liaise between Hospice Waikato Palliative Care Specialists and General Practitioners/Nurse Practitioners to ensure actions result in the best responsive patient care.

Can Clinical Nurse Specialists be contacted after hours?

Hospice Waikato Clinical Nurse Specialists make planned visits to over 100 health facilities around the Waikato, and sometimes home visit. They do not provide urgent care or an after-hours service (the hours of work are Monday to Friday daytime). The Clinical Nurse Specialists continually reprioritise their workloads to accommodate needs wherever possible. Clinical Nurse Specialists have advanced knowledge and skills in Palliative Care and work with other health professionals to support best practice and achieve best patient outcomes, including coordinating comprehensive care plans alongside facility colleagues. After hours, the main Hospice number (07 8591260) is transferred to the In-Patient Unit and Hospice Registered Nurses will help you with questions. On-call nurses may visit patients in their homes after hours if urgent and a palliative care medical specialist is available 27/4 for urgent calls from health professionals.

If I ring Hospice after business hours, who will I speak to?

Phone calls (07 8591260) go directly through to the In-Patient Unit where knowledgeable and experienced nursing staff are able to help patients with reassurance, give advice about medications, support problem solving about issues with pumps and equipment, make a phone assessment, and provide advice about care. This advice may involve contacting the rostered on-call nurse, contacting the on-call Specialist Palliative Care doctor, or in urgent cases suggesting an ambulance is called to take the patient to hospital. In-Patient nurses are not able to home visit, prescribe, admit patients to the In-Patient unit, or provide emergency care.

Please note: On Public Holidays it is the same process as the weekends with reduced staff at work. Please call the main Hospice Waikato number (07 8591260) to talk with a Hospice nurse or if the matter is urgent, call 111 for an ambulance.

Can ARRC residents be admitted to the In-Patient Unit at Hospice Waikato?

It is not usual for aged-care residents to be transferred from an aged care facility (their home) to the In-Patient Unit as they already have 24/7 nursing support, GP/Nurse Practitioner support and after-hours support. In very rare circumstances where the GP/NP is unable to manage a resident's complex symptoms, and the GP/NP have negotiated with the Hospital Specialist Medical Consultants, an admission from ARRC to the In-Patient Unit may be considered. Most of the time plans of care can be adjusted and managed in the facility with support from the Hospice Specialist Medical Team, the GP/NP and CNS oversight.