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BAY OF PLENTY
DISTRICT HEALTH BOARD
HAUORA A TOI

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Win is spoonful of sugar for pharmacists

An innovative pharmacy service working to improve the way medicines are used has won the top prize at this year's Bay of Plenty District Health Board innovation and research awards.

Medwise pharmacists Pauline McQuoid and Carolyn Woolerton say up to 50 per cent of patients don't take their medicines as directed, or encounter issues with their medicines.

"Medicines are the most common therapeutic intervention, yet medicine-related problems are experienced by around 3000 patients discharged from hospitals in the Bay of Plenty each year," says Carolyn. "We proposed a pharmacy service which would improve the way medicines are used for positive health outcomes." The service focuses on helping people take their medicines correctly, reduce the medication error rates and work with other clinicians who may not recognise where problems are medicine-related.

The pharmacists visit patients in hospital and then follow up when they are at home to ensure they are taking medication as directed, and not experiencing any problems with it. They also review medicine use for rehome patients and Hauora providers' patients, by referral from GPs, nurses and other pharmacists. "Education is an important part of the service," says Pauline. "People are better at taking their medicine correctly if they understand how it works."

Eight finalists presented at the awards night, selected from a group of more than 20.

“The calibre of the finalists showed that health professionals are working smarter to achieve better outcomes for patients and this community,” says chief executive Phil Cammish.

Board chair Mary Hackett told the finalists “you are making us the best,” at the awards dinner at Mills Reef Winery last Thursday.

Other winners were:

Second Prize: Tauranga Hospital cardiologists Graeme Porter, Chi Wong, Calum Young and Jonathan Tisch for a study of outcomes and prognostic factors of 57 cases of infective endocarditis in Tauranga;

Third Prize: Tauranga Hospital orthopaedic nurse specialist Lesley Warner for a scheme to bridge the gap between acute hospital care and rehabilitation for older fracture patients. The Transitional Active Care Scheme was established in 2007 and sees patients moved from Tauranga Hospital to Althorpe (private hospital) for the period where they do not require acute nursing care but cannot put weight on their repaired limb and attend rehabilitation. All patients evaluated in 2009 maintained or improved their functional mobility.

People’s Choice Award: Paul Mason and Marty Bubb of the Mental Health and Addiction Services, for their activity programme for high and complex needs patients, which has drastically reduced readmissions to the inpatient unit, for those on the programme.

FACT SHEET

- In Australia a recent study showed up to 400,000 GP visits per year were for medication-related problems.
- Up to 50 per cent of people do not take their medications as prescribed.
- It is estimated that medicines to the value of \$250K are unused and wasted in the Bay of Plenty each year.
- In a recent survey of 452 individuals across New Zealand, 56 per cent reported that they collected all of their prescribed medications from a pharmacy, even if they did not intend to take them.
- An Otago study of returned unwanted medications to community pharmacies highlighted medication wastage. One individual returned more than 70 different medications valued at more than \$14,500.

- There is currently no mechanism for re-using returned medication that is unexpired and in its original packaging, as it cannot be guaranteed that it has been stored correctly to ensure its effectiveness.



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