

MEDIA RELEASE

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Important intake of internationally qualified nurses arrives at NMIT

It's been a long journey for a group of internationally qualified nurses who have arrived in the country and are now working towards their nursing registration in New Zealand.

Nine nurses from India, the Philippines and South Africa, and one domestic student are enrolled in the Certificate in Nursing (CAP) training scheme, a competence assessment programme at Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology's (NMIT) School of Nursing. Another five nurses are currently in MIQ facilities awaiting to join the programme.

NMIT moved swiftly to enable those in quarantine to be able to do some of their learning online but they will also attend the practical learning sessions in Nelson on completion of MIQ.

The nurses are only able to come in to the country as they enter under New Zealand's critical health workers border exemption.

Dr Mary-Ann Hardcastle, Registered Nurse and CAP coordinator at NMIT, says it's a challenging time for the students as they have often had to jump through hoops to get here. "They have had to leave their families, and they've been dealing with COVID-19 restrictions, immigration requirements, accommodation difficulties, the cost of living and adapting to the New Zealand environment," says Mary-Ann.

The programme runs over a maximum of twelve weeks and combines classroom theory and a clinical placement.

Mary-Ann says many of the CAP candidates will go on to work in aged residential care facilities, which for most is a novel experience.

"Nursing in an aged care facility is not that common in some countries so we have to make sure the nurses are prepared for the expectations on them in this country. For instance, to be the only RN on duty looking after 20 to 30 residents, and several Health Care Assistants (HCA) on a shift, they need to not only have comprehensive skills but also be good at

communicating—with the residents and with their families, and directing the HCAs.”

Mary-Ann says the students need to have good assessment skills as they are the frontline healthcare provider. Much of the programme is about encouraging the nurses to be critical thinkers, to be assertive, to be a client advocate and to accept that everyone has the right to offer their opinion.

“They will be working collaboratively in multi-disciplinary teams, in partnership with medical and allied health staff, which is not always something they have experienced in their home countries. It’s a big cultural shift for them, but they are very motivated to learn and achieve,” she says.

There are many benefits to New Zealand from having the experienced, qualified nurses who are, compassionate and competent in clinical settings.

"They are valued team players, both in the aged residential care sector and the hospitals."

One of the biggest cultural differences the students have noticed is the expectations New Zealand patients have around the level of communication they receive from nurses.

The nurses who have been working in middle eastern countries say in their experience patients there just ‘want to be fixed’ and they don’t want to have a big conversation about what medications they are getting or their options for treatment. Whereas in New Zealand the relationship between the nurse and patient is different—with an emphasis on informed consent.

In addition to the internationally qualified nurses, the CAP group also includes a New Zealand-registered nurse who is returning to practice after an extended time away from nursing.

Candidates from the programme demonstrate their ability to meet the Nursing Council of New Zealand’s competencies to obtain a practising certificate to continue their career in nursing.

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