Southern Speech Language Therapists Making a Difference

It’s Speech Language Therapy Awareness Week this week.

At Southern DHB Speech Language Therapists (SLTs) work with many patients across a variety of departments and treat many different conditions. This may include adults and children with a wide range of communication difficulties resulting from different health conditions. It is less well known that SLTs also treat adults and children who have swallowing difficulties (dysphagia).

Speech language therapy provided by Southern DHB SLTs has been a lifeline for patient Greg (aged 42) who suffered a severe stroke in November 2012. As a result of the stroke Greg lost his ability not only to speak but also to read and write. Greg’s swallowing was also affected by the stroke.

After the stroke Greg spent three weeks in Dunedin Hospital, firstly in the Intensive Care Unit then the High Dependency Unit and on a ward before being transferred to ISSG Rehabilitation Unit at Wakari Hospital. Here he underwent intensive rehabilitation for five months with an interdisciplinary team including specialist physicians, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, social workers and speech therapists.

The stroke left Greg with a condition known as aphasia. This is the total or partial loss of the ability to articulate thoughts and ideas and comprehend spoken and written language, as a result of damage to the brain caused by stroke, head injury, tumours and infections.

Prior to suffering the stroke Greg worked in a high-powered job, was fit and healthy and was a great communicator. “Not being able to communicate with me and his family came as a big shock to us and was really upsetting, especially as he had been such a clever and articulate man before this happened,” said Mireka, Greg’s partner.

Speech Language Therapist Warren Cossou, one of the SLTs who has been treating Greg said that, “what people don’t realise is that aphasia sufferers often can understand what’s going on but can’t communicate, which is very frustrating for the patient and can often lead to social isolation and depression.”

Greg’s recovery has been slow and steady. The SLTs worked with Greg firstly on a one-to-one basis, then with other aphasic people in group sessions as an inpatient. Now, Greg attends group sessions as an outpatient. SLTs tried lots of different ways to help Greg communicate, including lo-tech communication aids such as communication books as well as high tech aids such as an iPad with specialist apps. He can now communicate most of his needs verbally.

Greg is now at home with his family and has come a long way from when he first suffered the stroke when he couldn’t communicate at all.

“The speech language therapy team at the DHB have been fantastic,” said Mireka. “I can’t thank them enough – they’ve been amazing, they’ve supported us, they’ve given Greg the tools to communicate again and they’ve enabled us to be together as a family again.”

Southern DHB welcomes Maori Health Manager

Southern DHB has welcomed Karen Goffe to the role of Maori Health Manager of the Maori Health Unit – Te Huinga Tahi and Te Korowai Hou Ora.

Karen, who is a descendant of Ngai Tahu, Te Ati Awa and Ngapuhi, has extensive experience of working in the areas of social services, health, justice, education and, more recently, employment.

She was a Southland District Health Board member for eight years and brings strong leadership qualities and has extensive local knowledge and established relationships that will support her in this role.

Karen promotes quality assurance and good practice in both primary and secondary care settings, and said “I’m excited about being a part of a district-wide approach to improving Maori health outcomes”.

Kawhakahaare Hauora Maori (Executive Director, Maori Health) Donovan Clarke said that he was, “delighted to have someone of Karen’s calibre join the Maori Health Directorate. She comes with good community connections and understanding of health inequalities. We wish Karen success, satisfaction and a rewarding career with Southern DHB.”

Mother’s Nest opens at Queen Mary Maternity Centre

“The Mother’s Nest” at Queen Mary Maternity Centre in Dunedin has been officially opened.

The Mother’s Nest is a room for new mums to socialise and develop support networks.

“The thought for having the room was that we hoped to increase socialization of the new mothers in order that they may make some lasting friendships and develop support networks,” commented Southern DHB Acting Charge Midwife Manager Lynne Steiner.

“We also hope that it will increase early mobilization and therefore reduce complications,” she said.

The room has been made possible by generous donations by The Warehouse which donated the leather couch, The Charitable Trust which gifted the money to buy the table and chairs and Farmers, which sold the tables and chairs at a reduced price.

The team at Queen Mary also plan to use the room for group education on subjects such as baby massage, breastfeeding and physio.

Seeking more Southland Hospital Volunteers

Southland Hospital volunteers run the gift shop, provide a mobile shop trolley service for patients and visitors in the wards, tend to patients’ flowers, and provide companionship.

The volunteers manage and co-ordinate their own charitable organisation, the Southland Hospital Volunteers. There are currently 25 volunteers who do a great job and between them have provided over 200 years of volunteer service. Each year the volunteers donate around $6000-$7000 to Southland Hospital from the proceeds of the shop, to go towards items and projects that would not otherwise be able to be funded, such as toys, portable DVD players, Makaton Sign Language Books, special chains, and yarn to make knitted baby clothes for those in need in maternity and neonatal ward.

We are looking for able-bodied people who would like to volunteer a few hours each week. We are seeking people who are honest and reliable, good communicators and are able to do one or more shifts per week (10am to 1pm or 1pm to 4pm). Retail and customer service skills are preferred but not essential as training is provided.

If you would like to find out more or would like some information or an application form to pass on to someone you know, please pick up an application form from the Hospital Gift Shop (Monday-Friday 10am-4pm).
It's Cervical Screening Awareness Month

Southern women are being asked to consider the impact their health has on family and friends this September, by ensuring that their smears are up to date as part of Cervical Screening Awareness Month.

The focus of September's Cervical Screening Awareness Month is to inspire women to think about the wider effect their health has on those they love, and how it is worth putting their health first for the ones they love.

“A cervical smear test usually takes less than fifteen minutes and should be done every three years. It is a simple procedure that has the proven ability to save lives,” commented Southern DHB Population Health Service Manager Sharyn Robson.

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable forms of cancers and results show that screening every three years can reduce the risk of developing it by up to 90 per cent.

The cervical smear test is a screening test to find abnormal changes in the cells of the cervix. These cell changes are caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV infection is very common, and most people come into contact with it at some stage of their life.

To support Cervical Screening Awareness Month in the Southern DHB area every woman who has a smear during the month of September will have the opportunity to enter a draw to win one of several gift baskets, and the DHB will also have notice boards up in their hospitals with information about cervical screening.

“With cervical screening rates for Maori, Pacific and Asian women around 10 to 20 per cent lower than other groups these women are a particular priority. The changes in the cervix from HPV infection happen very slowly. By having regular smears there is an excellent chance that the abnormal cells will be found and treated long before they ever become cancer,” commented Ms Robson.

“A cervical smear test saves lives because it’s all about finding changes early. The sooner we can pick up any abnormal cells, the sooner a woman can be treated.”

The goal of the National Cervical Screening Programme is to reduce the number of women in New Zealand who develop cervical cancer.

Regular cervical smear tests are the best prevention, and screening every three years is recommended for women aged 20 to 70 years who have ever been sexually active.

“It’s easy to find out when your next smear is due. Call your GP, Family Planning or free-phone 0800 729 729,” said Ms Robson.

For more information visit www.cervicalscreening.govt.nz

Want to Stop Smoking?
Sign up for Stoptober

Southern DHB is urging people who smoke to stub out for good this October in New Zealand’s first national stop-smoking month – STOPTOBER.

The campaign’s call to action is to sign up to its website www.stoptobernz.co.nz which is live now! The goal is to get the 463,000 people who currently smoke to stop smoking together on 1st October, to stay smokefree throughout October and then, hopefully, beyond.

The website will provide free daily text and email support and a free Stoptober App, downloadable from the website, which has stress-related support in ‘Te Reo Maori and English. The website will also direct people to face to face, online or phone support, depending on their needs, as well as stop-smoking medicines.

“The latest census showed that 15% of New Zealanders still smoke and Stoptober is an excellent opportunity to stop for good with the increased support and knowing that you’re not on your own,” said Southern DHB Smokefree Coordinator Debby Newton.

There is no finger-wagging in this campaign – it is a motivational, inclusive approach using these messages:

- Go to www.stoptobernz.co.nz now as you have much more chance of succeeding with our free support.
- Stop smoking for a month and you are five times more likely to stay Smokefree for life.
- Use our free support because you are much more likely to succeed if you do.
- Stop now, and stop together for your health, loved ones and income.

Stoptober is being funded under the Ministry of Health’s Pathway to Smokefree 2025 Innovation Fund and run by Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) and Inspiring Limited, a provider of smoking cessation support.

Twenty-six pharmacies across Otago and Southland are actively promoting Stoptober and encouraging their customers to sign up to the campaign. The Giant Red Stop Ball is rolling down the country and stopping at the following pharmacies from around 10.00am on the dates below.

19 September Elwyn Bates Pharmacy, Balclutha
22 September Mornington Pharmacy and Mornington Health Centre, Dunedin
23 September Milton Pharmacy
24 September North End Pharmacy, Oamaru
25 September Brockville Pharmacy, Dunedin (from around 3pm)
26 September Unichem South City Pharmacy, Dunedin

If you want to stop smoking come along and meet the pharmacy staff and the Smokefree team from the Southern District Health Board. They’ll be there to provide advice and there’ll be stop smoking giveaways available too.

Weekday District Nursing Clinic at Wakari Hospital a win-win for patients and staff

A weekday district nursing clinic based at SIS, Wakari Hospital has been a great success.

In March the Dunedin District Nursing Service started a six-month pilot enabling patients to come in before work on a first come, first served basis or make an appointment during the day.

District Nurse Anna Kelly along with her District Nursing colleagues, set up the clinic. “From day one the clinic proved extremely popular with patients who, while still requiring expert nursing care wish to get on with the business of living,” she said.

Care activities may include complex wound care, negative pressure wound therapy, catheter care, long-term venous access and intravenous antibiotics. Patient Andrea who comes to the clinic before work said, “I am very grateful for the clinic, but more importantly the nurses that are there! They have been very helpful and supportive during my recovery.”

The overwhelming verdict of the new clinic at Wakari is a big thumbs up from both staff and patients.

The early-bird clinic runs from 7.30am to 8.00am and caters for patients with work or study commitments. This is on a “first come, first served” basis. The weekday clinics run from 8.15am to 4.00pm and this is by appointment with the clinic nurse.

Above from left to right: Cervical Screening Administration Assistant Lois Pilkington, Population Health Service Manager Sharyn Robson, Cervical Screening Advisor Livinia Hardy, Cervical Screening Administration Assistant Jan Patterson and Cervical Screening Administration Assistant Juliet Mendoza.

Above left to right: Joanne Lee Health Promotion Advisor, Debby Newton Smokefree Co-ordinator and Brock Dale Pharmacy Student outside Unichem South City Pharmacy.