

On the FRONTLINE

Taranaki pharmacist **Anne Graham** has had a lengthy career in pharmacy and now works in palliative care at Hospice Taranaki Te Kahu Pairuri ki Taranaki. She speaks to **Jody Hopkinson**

How did you become a pharmacist?

I was raised in rural King Country. I was once asked what I wanted to do when I grew up, and confidently, I said that I wanted to be a pharmacist. The reply was, "How lovely...all that makeup, wouldn't that be fun?" To that, I have been told that I replied, "No, I want to own the pharmacy and help people." While I have never owned a pharmacy, I did become a pharmacist and appreciate the privilege it is to help people daily.

I worked at Clayton & Hayes Pharmacy in Taumarunui during my final years of high school and every holiday while studying. When I applied to pharmacy school and attended the Central Institute of Technology in Heretaunga, I was told that pharmacy was a man's job and women were not pharmacists. How times have changed.

After CIT, I moved to New Plymouth and have been here ever since. After an internship with Phil Mawson at Pharmacy 97 and working at the urgent pharmacy in the evenings, I moved to Vivian Pharmacy with Catherine Keenan in 1996 and remained there for 25-plus years. During this time, I had a close relationship with Te Kahu Pairuri Hospice Taranaki, manufacturing subcutaneous syringes for hospice patients in the community. I enjoyed the variety of work a community pharmacy brings. In 2021, I was offered the opportunity to work as a pharmacist at Te Kahu Pairuri Hospice Taranaki, where I work four days a week, Monday to Thursday. (I thoroughly endorse three-day weekends.) While it was a tough decision to leave community pharmacy, I have been able to create a pharmacist role at Te Kahu Pairuri Hospice Taranaki to help palliative patients around our maunga, Taranaki. Working for a partially government-funded, charitable organisation helping people is a privilege and honour.

It is a place where we really do aim to treat others as you would want to be treated yourself.

Small things can often help a patient immensely in a palliative setting – kindness, compassion, listening and empathy. When I am not working, I enjoy family, travel and spending time with my husband, Michael, planting native trees, about 3500 to date, on a small bush block we have that borders the national park. We love that our work on it now will benefit future generations, and it is so good for the soul.

How do you start the day?

I start each working day at 7am so I can field any queries from the previous evening or night shift for the inpatient unit. I grab a coffee, check emails and plan for the day. I head to the gym, walk, or do Pilates to clear my head before I go home.

What are you most proud of professionally?

My job isn't about me. It's about the people you work with in an organisation, the patients and their families/whānau. I love the true multidisciplinary team I work with. We have the most collaborative discussions and planning about our patients with all opinions and ideas welcomed.

Professionally, I am unapologetically pedantic.

My role is varied and involves education for nursing competencies, including calculations, syringe manufacture, and medication competencies. When I started, my early plan was to introduce Medi-Map. It has been a good step, not without issues, but it is now entrenched in our practice.

What's the one thing the pharmacy sector could do better?

I would love to see funding for pharmacists to do home visits, but this is very dependent on increasing the pharmacist workforce to address the shortages and stress we currently have. It is such an honour to be in someone's home, in their comfortable space, helping sort out, remove and educate about medications.

In your opinion, what's the next big thing in pharmacy?

A fair playing field. I am a huge advocate for a local community pharmacy, where you get to know a team of professionals who know you and help to do the best for you. This is how relationships are built with patients, family, whānau.

What's the thing you like most about your workplace?

He aha te mea nui o te ao?

He tangata, he tangata, he tangata!

I work with some incredible people who advocate and support palliative patients and their families/whānau in trying circumstances.

What takes up too much of your time?

Internal audits...tedious but necessary for auditors. I hate telling people if the results are not great, and it also means repeating them.



Palliative care pharmacist Anne Graham

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What are the three things you couldn't live without?

My husband and my children. I am a very proud wife and mum. A sense of humour and the ability to have a good laugh. A place where you want to go to work. A remarkably close fourth is a chilled glass of white wine.

Who do you admire?

I admire my dad and late mum's contribution to the person I am today and the sacrifices they made so I could go to pharmacy school.

I also admire all those people who volunteer for organisations, who give their time willingly and are community minded. We have many people covering different positions at Te Kahu Pairuri Hospice Taranaki who make such a huge contribution.

What's your favourite 3pm snack?

My 3pm snack is more a 4-4:30pm snack – crunchy peanut butter on one slice of bread if I am hangry when I get home after work and the gym.

A close second is the Nothing Naughty protein bars. I love the mixed box.

What would you do if you weren't a pharmacist?

Travel, explore and learn about others in our world. I would love to live six months in New Zealand and six months in another country every year. That would be the dream. **PT**

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