

11 June 2012

Ministry of Health  
PO Box 5013  
Wellington

By email: [cancerteam@moh.govt.nz](mailto:cancerteam@moh.govt.nz)

**Resource and capability framework for integrated adult palliative care services in New Zealand**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on this matter. The New Zealand Medical Association (NZMA) advises that it would have liked to have been brought in at the initial consultation stage.

The NZMA fully supports the objective of developing a more structured approach to palliative care in New Zealand that endeavours to ensure accessible and equitable services and formalises linkages between all providers to facilitate integrated care that best meets patient care. We are however disappointed that the examination of “resource and capability” requirements has failed to fully consider workforce issues. While workforce is mentioned it focuses on advanced nursing skills. And though this naturally needs to be included it is important to remember that there is a team involved in palliative care, and that team includes the doctor.

Good palliative care is intensely people focused and the standard of the workforce delivering that care and supporting the patients and their families is paramount.

We note that there are fewer young doctors becoming palliative care specialists and as a result there has been an increasing reliance on International Medical Graduates (IMGs) in respect of this work. We need to ensure that we train more New Zealand doctors in this area so that we reduce our reliance on IMGs.

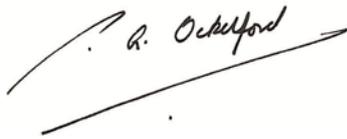
Similarly, palliative care is becoming increasingly community based and this trend is likely to continue. In our opinion New Zealand needs to focus on increasing and supporting the number of New Zealand trained palliative care specialists, but also ensuring that there is the necessary training and support available to general practitioners in palliative care. The latter

is particularly important given the aging population and limited pool of palliative care specialists. As the World Medical Association recently mentioned in its press release<sup>1</sup>:

The increasing number of people who require... palliative care and the increased availability of effective treatment options [means]... that end of life care issues should be an important part of undergraduate and postgraduate medical training. The duty of [doctors is]... to heal where possible, to relieve suffering and to protect the best interests of their patients.

The only other issue the NZMA wishes to raise is the recommendation in the report that DHBs implement clinical pathways. As written we think that this recommendation could be a little too prescriptive.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Ockelford", with a long horizontal line extending to the right below the name.

Dr Paul Ockelford  
NZMA Chair

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<sup>1</sup> WMA 25 May 2012 “Governments must do more to invest in End of Life Care”