

Media Release

From: Jill Stringer, Communications Advisor

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Subject: Wairarapa DHB health initiative wins major award

Dr Cath Becker, Janine Vollebregt, and Jill Perry were last night presented with the "People's Choice" award, at the New Zealand Health Innovations Awards dinner in Wellington. The Kura Whanau Clinic received the highest approval rating of the 25 finalists from around New Zealand, from people who learned about their work by visiting a display booth at Te Papa.

Dr Becker initiated the Kura Whanau GP clinic at Te Kura Kaupapa Maori O Wairarapa in June 2002. The clinic is funded by Wairarapa DHB, and clinic nurse Janine Vollebregt is funded through a Primary Nursing Innovations Grant. Jill Perry provides office management expertise, linking the clinic with Cath's medical practice.

The clinic offers free GP consultation to students and their whanau / whanui one a week. Services include cervical screening, ear checks, timely treatment of skin infections, minor surgery and management of chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and congestive heart failure. Before Kura Whanua, many families in the area did not have a regular GP, often because they were uncomfortable with or couldn't access mainstream health services due to cultural, financial or location barriers.

'Building trusting relationships and treating the whole family results in better outcomes for the children at the Kura,' says Cath. There have been more than 600 patient visits in the first year, often by people who previously had infrequent contact with a GP. The clinic is supported by other agencies such as Whaiora Whanui, Te Hauora Runanga O Wairarapa, Public Health Nurses, and Plunket Nurses. 'It's great to see the cohesiveness of everyone working together,' says Cath. 'People are now more confident and assertive about getting medical care, especially afterhours, which can avoid emergency department admissions.'

'This is an excellent example of how innovative health care can make a huge difference,' says David Meates, CEO of the Wairarapa DHB. 'The clinic works because it's 'owned' by the community it serves, which ensures that the services provided are appropriate to their needs.'

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