

A Day in the Life of a Hospice Nurse



■ Lisa Mourie

A hospice nurse's day revolves around patients' needs and wants.

It's not dictated to by strict timetables or clinical procedures - the hospice environment is like a home, not a hospital.

Lisa Mourie has been a nurse at Hospice Taranaki's Inpatient Unit, Te Rangimarie, for seven years.

The six-bed inpatient facility has a chapel, lounges and garden area. The unit provides palliative care for people who are dying from illnesses such as cancer, HIV, renal failure, cardiac failure and motor neurone disease.

A typical day for Lisa starts with cooking patients a breakfast of their choice. She helps them get out of bed and shower - whenever suits them. "There's no rules, it's meant to be like a home for them," she says.

There are usually two or three nurses on duty during the day, whether the unit is full or not. This gives the nurses an opportunity to sit and talk with patients.

Lisa likes to pamper patients by painting their nails or giving them a hand massage. Aromatherapy and music are also offered, and

there's even a friendly hospice cat to cuddle.

The nurses are not solely task or clinically focused. Instead they take a holistic approach to care, which considers patients' spiritual, mental and physical needs.

There are some clinical procedures carried out at the unit including blood transfusions to control patients' symptoms. Lisa says there is good clinical support available to the nurses.

The atmosphere at Te Rangimarie is relaxed. "It's a great, supportive team and we have fun with our patients," Lisa says. There are rooms the patients' families can stay in too. "We encourage them to participate in the care."

Hospice staff members go to great lengths to ensure patients' stays are as pleasant and meaningful as possible. One patient wanted to go for one last swim, so it was arranged for her to visit Taranaki Base Hospital's pool. Another patient got married in the hospice chapel.

Lisa became interested in palliative care after working with the elderly - she worked in rest homes for five years. She has a Post Graduate Certificate in Palliative Care and

is working towards her Post Graduate Diploma. She says hospice management encourages and supports further education of staff.

Lisa liked the hospice philosophy and felt she could contribute to improving people's quality of life. She says there is a common misconception that the hospice is just where people come to die. The hospice has a day care programme and a community team that sees patients in their homes.

Part of Lisa's job is discharge planning and she works closely with the community team. She also visits patients at Base Hospital and liaises with staff there.

The hospice nurses are offered clinical supervision sessions and they support each other during difficult times.

Lisa says palliative care nurses should be friendly, approachable and nonjudgmental as relationships with patients and their families are established quickly and can be complex.

She says the patients have taught her to appreciate life and not to worry about trivial matters.