



Hon. Jonathan Coleman
Office of Minister of Health
Parliament buildings
Private Bag
Wellington

March 10, 2015

Dear Mr Coleman

Thank you for informing us that you will be unable to attend the OTNZ council meeting on 27 March.

One of our objectives for this meeting was to discuss your vision for the New Zealand health system and the role you saw for occupational therapy within this. We were pleased to note that you see an important role for allied health professionals in the future of New Zealand's health system (noted in your address to the Association of Salaried Medical Specialists Annual Conference on 27 November).

As allied health professionals, occupational therapists are also concerned at the increasing demand on our health system, particularly with our ageing population living with more long-term conditions, increasing incidence of obesity, the challenge of technological advancement and rising public expectations. All of which are combining to place unsustainable pressures on hospitals, general practices and aged care providers. These are issues that have also been experienced in the United Kingdom.

Occupational therapists in the UK have been at the forefront in the changes of their health system to meet these increasing demands. We would like to alert you to some excellent research showing the role occupational therapists have had on alleviating pressure on the NHS. Please take the time to read the attached article by David Brindle from the Guardian.

One piece of research highlighted in this article shows that employing occupational therapists in the A&E departments of the Royal Gwent and Nevill Hall hospitals, respectively in Newport and Abergavenny, South Wales, **is preventing the admission of 50% – 60% of referred patients**. Another shows that NHS Lothian's similar use of occupational therapists in A&E departments in the Edinburgh area is preventing 100 admissions a month, saving at least £864,000 a year.

There are no similar studies here in New Zealand. However, a number of DHB's, such as Hawkes Bay, are operating multi-disciplinary teams consisting of occupational therapists, physiotherapists and social workers, in their emergency departments.

Please contact me if you would like further information on the research mentioned here, as we can provide links to these, or if you would like to follow up this matter further.

Yours sincerely

Peter Anderson

Executive Director

Occupational Therapy New Zealand | Whakaora Ngangahau Aotearoa

Main 04 473 6510, Cell 021 2229 448 | PO Box 10 493, Wellington

www.otnz.com