

Adventist Health Ministries as disciples and servants of Christ

Adventist Health Ministries (AHM) has a powerful role in enabling active servants of Christ to come to know, live, commit and share the love of Jesus. By emphasising the whole-person wellness concept, “we” —as children of God— can meet people where they are and through our understanding of the multi-dimensional aspects of health, we seek to enhance their quality of life (wellness).

Adventist Health Ministries in New Zealand focuses on seven key aspects of wellness. We aim to see congregations and communities which are:

- emotionally thriving
- physically energised
- socially connected
- vocationally enriched
- intellectually energised
- environmentally attuned
- spiritually empowered

Because these dimensions are diverse, we have extensive and varied opportunities to connect with our communities.

Any one of the seven dimensions of wellness may become a launching point for the second phase of our task which is to inform and upskill our communities. By enlisting the multiple talents and spiritual gifts in our congregations and institutions, we can effectively inform and upskill the other members of our congregations and the communities those congregations and schools serve.

Adventist Health Ministries is rich in resources for health leaders and professionals to utilise in this outreach, some of the more well-known are:

- **Adventist Health Week (resources for adults and children)**
- **CREATION Health (Now CREATION Life)**
- **Complete Health Improvement Programme (CHIP)**
- **Depression and Anxiety Recovery (DARP)**
- **Forgive to Live**
- **Mental Health First Aid**
- **An introduction to massage therapy**
- **The Live More Project**
- **Community Champions Network (collaborating with ADRA and Discipleship Ministries)**

We have supported health professionals and leaders to attend the **ELIA Wellness Lifestyle Medicine Summit** in Australia – this has helped align these key individuals with the church’s direction and strategic plan in order that they might share this with their congregations, communities or workplaces.

Our **New Zealand Adventist Health Ministries Board** continues to meet, at least twice yearly and then on an ad hoc basis. The board has been particularly helpful in providing

guidance and direction during the recent COVID 19 lockdowns and I would like to thank them sincerely for their support over this past year.

AHM advocates doing all within our abilities to help our communities, using “Christ’s method” to reach those in need, so that they may see Him, through us.

Adventist Health Ministries is working for the hurting

The wonderful thing about this Ministry is that we can help the hurting within our communities in a very literal sense. From the feedback we have received, many hundreds have benefitted from the many programmes our churches and health leaders have run.

How amazing it has been to help someone who has been struggling to forgive, find the freedom that comes with learning how to forgive, or how transformative it is to see someone who is living with depression or anxiety learn the tools that help them cope and lift them up. Those whose lifestyle might have had declining health, may find a new way of living through **CHIP** or **The Live More Project**. By revealing the love of Jesus, our churches and schools have blessed others and have been blessed in return.

Key growth areas:

Because Adventist Health Ministries share many of its values and priorities with **ADRA New Zealand**, our involvement with their **Community Transforming Partnership** programme has helped us strengthen and grow our involvement in the interface between our churches and schools, and the wider community. The partnership between ADRA and Adventist Health Ministries has been particularly important in running the **DARP** and **CHIP** programmes. In addition, we have joint initiatives that help community using a health platform, by focussing either on physical activity, or community support of the elderly as examples.

We have created an extensive database, which is enabling us to connect with those who have registered as facilitators for our various programmes, as well as maintain contact with Health Leaders and health professionals around the country. As we continue to develop and refine this database, we will provide more immediate communication from our office to those in liaison and key positions in our congregations and schools. This database has also proved to be the link to enable us to establish Zoom connectivity and a resultant two-way communication between the office and our congregations and schools.

We are also excited to be working with **ELIA Wellness** and **Adventist Health SPD**. We have seen the development of a research-based e-learning space, including a lifestyle health platform, where health professionals or community members can access up-to-date health resources. Moving forward, we will be working on how best to serve our communities using this digital multimedia initiative.

Challenges:

Communication with our churches remains a major challenge for our department. In order to promote the sharing of programme information between local churches, we have created a number of regional newsletters, to promote inter-congregational sharing of information. It is increasingly important that those individuals who are appointed to key liaison roles in

their congregations are active, energetic and able to access electronic communications. There is now a need for two-way communication – simultaneous conversations over zoom provide that flexibility and immediacy and we can no longer rely on New Zealand Mail as our primary communication medium.

In this respect, the Pastors of churches are urged to become directly involved in the health work within their church, and to view it and its liaison persons as key to the mission of the church. Each congregation has groups of individuals who, for one reason or another, are more vulnerable and whose health puts them at risk. It remains a challenge to reach and assist these individuals or groups to make the necessary life-style changes.

Opportunities:

Adventist Health Ministries has been privileged to be assisted in ministry by Bible Health Workers (a collaborative approach between the Conference, AHM, and the New Zealand Christian Foundation). Kerry Gosset continues in this role. (renamed Health Worker). She has assisted AHM greatly through her dedication to the health ministry, by helping to train churches to run DARP and CHIP, as well as running programmes herself. Having more churches trained is a wonderful outcome. It has also inspired others throughout NZ to employ Health Bible workers, this is a very successful model for our churches to successfully connect with the community.

Moving forward our goals for Adventist Health Ministries in South New Zealand will be to support the growth of the **Community Champions Network** – seeing more churches and schools doing more in the community. Our collaboration with **ADRA** and other colleague ministries and the promotion of health (especially for our Maori and Pasifika) through **HOPE NZ**, will see a greater increase in churches and schools being involved in outreach.

Our focus will continue to be on the mental and emotional Health of our congregants, schools, and the communities we serve, as well as advocating for Lifestyle Medicine health.

As we examine the future, we will be searching for ways to have a more formalised, structure in place, where two-way communication with our congregations and churches is streamlined, and support for active health leadership is encouraged.

As always, we will leave this in God's hands, praying for His leading and our listening to His will.

Note: Our latest experience with COVID-19 has reinforced the importance of having a clear channel of communication between AHM and our church liaison or Pastor.