

BAU or is it?

2020 was a year the world will never forget, but NZ was fortunate to maintain a certain level of “freedom” unlike so many others.

Some may have thought that General Practice would return to Business as Usual (BAU) in 2021, but the reality is the “ultra-marathon” that we have all been participating in over the last 18 months is set to continue. Practice Managers and General Practice teams, through many aspects of their day to day work have shown that they are resilient and adaptable. Practice Managers ensure that a practice runs smoothly and have had added pressures to handle.

Staff resourcing became more challenging with the added aspect of staff needing to stay home if they are mildly unwell, where pre-covid this was not the case. Then there have been time delays in Flu vaccination this year, along with the need to plan for gaps required between vaccines which has meant staff planning has become a daily task and the uncertainty around whether all General Practices will be involved with covid vaccination has meant countless patient enquiries without having the answers.

Add to this, the increased demand, knowledge and cost of IT systems to ensure staff are able to work from home when required and patients have access to healthcare when they need it. Practices still opt to see patients virtually or via red or green streams when they have any “symptoms” to keep their communities safe and of course, their staff well so they can continue to service patients. For this reason, it has been crucial to have clear guidelines on what different lockdown levels means at a practice level and to communicate this clearly to patients via email, text, patient portals or websites.

Despite the above, Practice Managers and admin teams have taken this all in their stride, alongside their usual work, thank you, you are all amazing! It is, however, essential to ensure these staff have the opportunity for continued professional development to be equipped to deal with what the future holds. It seems more important than ever this skilled group have the opportunity to network, share ideas and upskill. The next PMAANZ (Practice Managers and Administrators of NZ) conference, which has a specialised Receptionist Day, will be held in Rotorua on the 9-11th September 2021. The programme has been confirmed with a fantastic diverse range of speakers across many areas including; Equity, LGBTQ, Rainbow Youth, Mental Health, Rural Health, Health Care Home, Burnout, ACC, IMAC, MOH. This years’ conference is a special one, as this will be the 25th Annual Conference. The theme is Celebrate – past, present and future and will certainly be educational, challenging and inspiring. As a first, attendees this year will receive a certificate of attendance that will be linked to Foundation indicators. Meaning, you can attend a session at conference and then go back to the practice and train other staff or implement a new idea with knowledge and / or resources gained. For more information or to register <https://www.pmaanz2021.org.nz/>

PMMANZ is a wonderful organisation that provides not only collegial support all around Aotearoa with several branches, but the branches offer regular meetings and training opportunities throughout the year. Most recently, due to ongoing member requests, mentoring has been offered for those who are looking for more one on one support. Also, there is now a CPD points system to keep track and promote continued Professional Development as the demands and breadth of the role grow. Alongside this, for those interested in a more formal qualification, PMAANZ has linked with UNE, the University of Newcastle which offer shorter courses as well as Degree programmes in Health Management, completely extramurally at a discounted price for our members <https://www.pmaanz.org.nz/education/une-partnership/>

The role of Practice Managers and administrators in Health has changed dramatically over the last 25 years and yet what the future holds, with the proposed Health Reform may completely change the landscape again. What is certain, is that Practice Management and all those that work in health administration have and will continue to be an integral part of the smooth running of general practice and the Health System as a whole.