

Digital dental for Thames

A new machine on board the local mobile dental unit has put a smile on the dental therapists' faces.

The ScanX processor machine is moving dental x-rays into the digital world for viewing on a laptop in the unit.

Previously dental therapists would send x-ray film to Thames or Morrinsville to be developed, a process that could take up to a week.

Dental therapist Meirene Royal said the machine allows them to see results immediately after they x-ray students' teeth.

"It will save us a lot of time, and means we don't need to schedule a second appointment with children because we have all of the information available in the one appointment," she said.

Parents often attend their child's appointment too so the machine will save them time, and allow them to see the x-ray images of their children's teeth.

The Thames-Coromandel mobile dental van visits more than 19 schools each year and treats more than 1847 students in the region. School dental service manager Diane Pevreal said the scanning machine is an outstanding addition to the mobile that will improve the oral health of children and make life easier for staff.

"The earlier decay is diagnosed, the more successful preventative regimes are, so it is a really great piece of equipment for making a difference in what we do and how we do it," she said.

Waikato District Health Board purchased the machine with funds from the 2008 Fresh Future appeal, an annual campaign organised by Progressive Enterprises that raises money for 10 New Zealand hospitals.

Since starting in 2007, the appeal has raised more than \$2 million, with \$335,000 going to Waikato Hospital's children wards and into the community.



GONE DIGITAL: Dental therapists Meirene Royal (left) and Jan Vilicich are both pleased with the new machine that allows them to view x-rays on a laptop.



MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE: Jokers Café owner, Siengansar Vong (right), serves up a healthy choice to Leeane Young, Hauraki Healthy Kai project coordinator.

Healthy Kai a simple choice in Paeroa

Making healthier food choices in Paeroa is easy thanks to Hauraki Healthy Kai.

The Te Korowai Hauora O Hauraki project has made healthy food easy to find with three "Healthy Kai" menu items on display at participating food outlets in the town.

Project workers visited 11 local cafes, takeaway bars and convenience stores to identify healthier options with less than 10 per cent fat.

Project coordinator Leanne Young said the type of food we eat has a major influence on our health so it is important that where possible, we choose the healthier options.

"These choices can be hard though, so we're making it easier for everyone."

"We're not encouraging people to eat out and it's ultimately up to them to decide what choices they make but Hauraki Healthy Kai will show them that when they are buying food, there are healthier options available, and exactly what they are," Ms Young said.

Eleven Paeroa retailers are now displaying posters in-store to show

customers their three healthy choices. Ms Young said retailers were supportive of the projects and wanted to thank them for their involvement.

She said the project is now moving into a second phase with more promotion to retailers and shop owners about best practice for frying chips.

Retailers complete a free online training course that will teach them how to deep-fry chips correctly so they not only taste good but are healthier.

"Soggy chips are fatty chips," said Ms Young.

"But if you get the fat up to the right temperature then you can prevent fat entering the chips, making them healthier and taste better."

That is one of many tips that retailers will learn from the course.

Courses start next month and those that do not have internet access can use the local Paeroa Community Net centre.

Hauraki Healthy Kai is funded by Waikato DHB's Maori Community Action Obesity Projects fund, part of the Healthy Eating Healthy Action (HEHA) strategy.

Travel to health care on the agenda

A large transport project has been at the centre of Waikato District Health Board's presentations to various community health forums this year.

A team within Waikato DHB's Planning and Funding Unit led the presentations, and say the ultimate goal is improved access to hospital care for Waikato residents.

Latest developments in the project include the creation of a needs matrix, which looks at distance and travel time required to get to the nearest hospital clinic and Waikato Hospital.

"The needs matrix is weighted to recognise groups that generally have the most trouble getting to hospital; such as Maori, Pacific people, older people, those living in low socio-economic areas and under

18-year-olds who are reliant on others for travel," said Planning and Funding general manager Brett Paradine.

"The matrix has allowed us to identify which communities need our help."

Transport project staff visited community health forums throughout the region earlier this year to present the matrix findings and seek feedback on the approach.

"The project is two-pronged. It looks at overall gaps in transport services throughout the Waikato DHB region, as well as ways to improve awareness of the National Transport Assistance (NTA) Scheme."

The NTA Scheme is a ministry-governed fund which can be accessed by people who either travel a long way to get to hospital appointments, or have to travel to hospital clinics very frequently.

"There are a lot less people accessing this fund than we think are eligible. One reason for this may be because the scheme is not well publicised locally so we are working on that."

Areas such as Whitianga, Waihi,

Coromandel, Te Rerenga, Whangamata, Tairua, Paeroa and Moanataiari require greater access to information on whether they are eligible to have their travel costs to hospital clinics re-funded.

"We found the information about how to access the NTA Scheme funding is confusing and people often would not bother to go any further with the application due to this," said Mr Paradine.

"We took a step back and reworded all our promotional material such as the brochures, posters, and website to make them easier to understand and more relevant."

Mr Paradine said samples of the newly designed brochures went to the community health forum members for their feedback.

"There is no point in us doing all this work and telling people how they will best understand the information; we need the public – the users of the scheme – to tell us whether or not we are on the right track."

Mr Paradine said he would now encourage people who have to travel a long way, or frequently to hospital clinics, to ask clinic staff about the NTA Scheme.

"We are holding training sessions for staff, because in some instances, they aren't sure of how it works either. Increasingly that will not be the case and if people want help, they should ask because it is there."

To view the revised eligibility criteria for the fund, visit the patients and visitors section of Waikato DHB's website www.waikatodhb.govt.nz



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Your district health board and the national health system will focus on The Six Health Targets for the next few years.

1. **Shorter stays in emergency departments:** The aim is that within six hours, 95 per cent of patients who go to hospital emergency departments receive treatment and are admitted into a ward or are sent home. The length of time people spend in ED is an important measure of the quality of care in our hospitals because EDs should provide urgent healthcare; timeliness of treatment delivery (and any time spent waiting) is important for patients.
2. **Improved access to elective surgery:** The aim is for New Zealand hospitals to do an average of 4000 more elective (not urgent) surgeries every year than they already are. The Government wants the public health system to deliver better, sooner, more convenient healthcare to all New Zealanders. This will mean more people can get their surgery when they want it and should achieve a decrease in surgery waiting times.
3. **Shorter waits for cancer treatment:** The aim is that everyone needing radiation treatment will have this within six weeks (by the end of July 2010) and within four weeks by December 2010. Radiotherapy reduces the impact of different cancers and waiting for treatment is likely to lead to worse results for patients.
4. **Increased immunisation:** The aim is that 85 per cent of two-year-olds are fully immunised by July 2010; 90 per cent by July 2011; and 95 per cent by July 2012. Immunisation can prevent many diseases and is a cost-effective way of preventing health problems. Immunisation gives protection not just for one person, but also for whole populations by reducing disease circulating in communities.
5. **Better help for smokers to quit:** The aim is that 80 per cent of hospitalised smokers get advice and help to quit by July 2010; 90 per cent by July 2011; and 95 per cent by July 2012. Smoking kills about 5000 people in New Zealand every year. Most smokers want to quit, and there are simple methods to help them that can be provided in hospitals.
6. **Better diabetes and cardiovascular services:** The aim is that more of the adult population who should be checked for cardiovascular disease (heart disease such as heart attacks or strokes) will be; more people with diabetes will get free checks every year and have better diabetes management. These sorts of health problems are the leading cause of death in New Zealand, and affect more Maori and Pacific Island people than any other ethnic group.

Waikato District Health Board
www.waikatodhb.govt.nz