

# Hospital food safety programme nabs listeria bug

WENDY Dodunski could be forgiven for giving herself a pat on the back after a laboratory test came back positive for listeria on a batch of cold sliced beef served at Waikato Hospital.

The Health Waikato food nutrition manager was deeply concerned at the discovery but relieved because it proved the tight monitoring systems she'd championed in the hospital kitchen had worked.

Routine monitoring by Waikato Hospital kitchen's food safety programme recently caught the presence of listeria on beef bought in from external supplier, Leonard's Smallgoods.

Although anyone can get sick from listeria, pregnant women, the very young, frail elderly, or anyone with a compromised immune system or long-term chronic illness are most at risk of severe effects.

These are exactly the people who receive food in hospital.

The confirmation of listeria by further testing led to the widely publicised withdrawal of the Leonard's packs of cold beef and later corned silverside from a range of outlets in the upper and middle North Island, including two hospitals.

"Following the incident, some people were concerned about eating hot cooked beef and corned silverside but any listeria present is killed when food is freshly and thoroughly cooked," said Ms Dodunski.

"The voluntary food safety programme at Waikato Hospital was developed because the people that meals are prepared for are among the most vulnerable and the hospital feels strongly about protecting them."

The food safety programme covers all



**QUALITY MANAGEMENT:** Aletta Scheffer testing food in the hospital kitchen.

steps from selecting suppliers through receiving, storage, preparation, serving, leftovers, control of contamination, cleaning, hygiene, monitoring, staff training and keeping accurate records.

"Cold meat and salad meals have been among the many foods sent for microbiological testing routinely every month for the past year with no bugs found until this

time.

"Water and ice are likely suspects so cold meats and salads are routinely sent for testing, as are samples from cleaned kitchen surfaces," she said.

Microbiological testing is just one tool that monitors the effectiveness of the programme. Internal audits take place each month and once per year, and an external

## SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

- As part of a routine sample of cold meat and salads on Friday, February 8, a suspected presence of listeria was notified and the batch of meat which the sample came from was immediately withdrawn as a precaution
- Presence of listeria was confirmed by the laboratory on Wednesday, February 13 and all cold meat from Leonard's was withdrawn immediately as a further precaution
- Further testing of separate components of the cold meat from the original batch were tested as was meat from other batches of meat in stock
- Confirmation on Friday, February 15 that meat was positive for listeria and on Monday, February 18 that it was Listeria Monocytogenes.

accredited agency also audits the service.

The Waikato Hospital Nutrition and Food Services team is proud of the development of its food safety programme which led to certification of the programme by the NZ Food Safety Authority in February 2007. Legislation changes in the near future will make food control plans mandatory for all district health board hospitals.



This aerial photo shows the new route through Gate 1 to enter and exit Waikato Hospital

## Easy access, more parking at Waikato Hospital

### Stage one complete Carpark building open

Enter and exit Waikato Hospital grounds through the new gate off Pembroke St and follow the signs to the new carpark building.

The 18-level building can hold more than 800 cars and provides direct lift access to the main hospital buildings.

If you need help, make sure you ask for assistance. Our hospital hosts and friendly staff are on-hand to help you find your way.



www.waikatodhb.govt.nz

## REGISTERED NURSES

### Want to return to the workforce?

#### Information Day

Waikato Hospital, Friday March 14  
9.30am – 11.30am and 1pm – 2.30pm

LEVEL L1, ENTRY LINK / CAR PARK BUILDING  
Park in the car park building  
Take the lift to level L1

Whether you are a returning, or prospective nurse  
This day is designed for you.



#### WHY HEALTH WAIKATO?

- Flexible working hours to suit you!
- Supportive orientation
- Ongoing education and learning opportunities
- Staff discounts at a number of retail outlets
- Squash/tennis courts available onsite

#### COME ALONG AND HAVE A CHAT WITH US

- Have fun practising with equipment
- Have a ward/hospital tour
- Refreshments provided
- Information packs/handouts available



We would love to see you!

## From volunteer to a nursing career

NURSING was the last occupation Hamilton woman Lisa Hall thought she would ever consider.

But, while flicking through a Waikato Times, she noticed an advertisement for St John Friends of the Emergency Department (Fed) volunteers at Waikato Hospital, and thought she would give it a go.

Three years later, she received her three-year service badge as a Fed.

In fact, the experience has been so rewarding she decided to study nursing at Wintec.

Lisa, 22, passed her final exam in November, and has started at Auckland's Starship Hospital in the surgical ward.

"I had never tried volunteer work before, and the Feds sounded really interesting so I thought why not?" she said.

A Fed supports patients and their families whilst in the emergency department (ED).

This support can be in the form of keeping someone company, making a cup of tea, looking after children, making beds or allaying fears – anything to help make a person's experience of ED a better one.

"Feds give their time and care so people in distress can receive comfort, while



LISA HALL

medical staff focus on treatment and clinical care," said St John communications officer Warren Rosser.

Prior to becoming a Fed, Lisa says she imagined herself in a 'glamorous' job.

"And glamorous nursing is not, but there is a lot of variety, it's challenging and I love it," she says.

"Seeing behind the scenes of a nurse's role, and realising it is so different to what is portrayed on television, really made me want to study the occupation."

Lisa joined the Feds in it's infancy in May 2004, while she was working as an assistant retail manager.

"I really enjoy the work," says Lisa.

"Every time you go into ED, you see something different and it just feels good to help people.

"I've found it so immensely rewarding. It has taught me empathy, compassion and given me much confidence when working with other people.

While she is adamant about keeping up her affiliation with St John in Auckland, she would like to change roles into events work.

"Now I'm nursing full-time I would like to do something a bit different, but definitely want to keep up my skills and relationship with St John," she said.

"They're a really supportive organisation to work with, and do well at acknowledging volunteers give up their time."

She said ED staff are also very receptive to the help of Feds.

"When appropriate, we can be of a lot of help to the staff."

The Feds system has grown rapidly since 2004. It is now an integral part of 14 hospital EDs throughout the country and reached a milestone 6000 volunteers in November 2007.

EDs that have employed the system have reported a significant decrease in patient complaints due to the presence of St John Feds.

"I'd encourage people to give volunteer work a go. It's as simple as making a phone call, and in my case, it has lead me to my chosen career – whether I knew it or not," Lisa said.

# Nurse returns to the bedside

LORRAINE Stringer is one of those old-school nurses you'd want caring for you if you ever ended up in Waikato Hospital.

Thankfully, the 62-year-old grandmother is among a new breed of older nurses rapidly becoming important as Health Waikato grapples with nursing shortages.

The country is full of nurses no longer registered or practising who are itching to get back into the workforce but fearful of doing so.

"I've got life skills – I was trained in an era where that's what mattered," said Mrs Stringer, who has been back working at Waikato Hospital as a casual nurse for seven months.

Health Waikato is running an open day at Waikato Hospital on Friday, March 14 in an attempt to attract registered nurses out in the community back into the workforce with hours that suit their family commitments.

It will also target those considering nursing as a career.

Mrs Stringer said when she was farewelled from Waikato Hospital in March 2004; she never expected to come back.

However, the money – nurses have had significant wage increases in the four years since – and the opportunity to work flexible hours made it worth her while.

Mrs Stringer is a surgical nurse and prefers to stick to the surgical wards where her skills are recognised and she



BEDSIDE: Registered nurse Lorraine Stringer brings her life skills back to work at Waikato Hospital.

can get the mental stimulation she needs.

"I still learn something every day though."

She works anything up to three days per week.

Most of the class she trained with at Waikato Hospital from 1962-1965 are still working but there were others who had left

nursing.

Now's the opportunity to come back and make a contribution to nursing and (finally) make a dollar.

"Nowadays we are being paid better and recognised for what we do."

Nurses' wages start from \$41,000 per year.

There is a nationwide shortage of nurses. Last year Waikato DHB and Wintec joined forces to promote nursing as a career. Nurses, midwives and occupational therapists are in demand throughout the country.

Waikato DHB hires at least 45 Wintec nursing graduates every year.

## Mums enjoys Mothercraft support

NICOLE Richardson was in despair, she describes it as rock bottom, when her plunket nurse told her she should go to Waikato Hospitals Mothercraft Unit.

"I just really wasn't able to care for my two children," the 37-year-old Tauranga mum said last week as she read a book in the sprawling Mothercraft Unit lounge while waiting for three-month-old Holly to wake.

"Now I feel like I've got some tools to cope."

It took less than a day for Nicole and Holly to turn their lives around in the Hamilton unit that has helped thousands of mothers and children since it opened in 1972.

"I think every mother should come here whether they think they need to or not," said Nicole.

Mothercraft is a department of the Child Health Unit at Waikato Hospital. The unit is in the hospital grounds but separate from the main hospital environment and serves the Midland region. Community service groups built it after a massive fund-raising effort in the early 1970s.

It provides live-in residential help in a homelike, supportive environment for parents experiencing problems. The unit operates as a communal living situation with assistance from experienced nursing staff. It caters for mothers with breastfeeding problems, parenting

skills for young mothers and those adopting new infants, exhausted and/or overloaded mothers and those with postnatal depression. Babies with feeding problems are cared for as are wakeful crying babies, infant colic, poor weight gains, halfway between newborn intensive care unit and home.

The unit only caters for infants up to one year with only one parent/caregiver. Male primary caregivers can be cared for. The unit has helped fathers too.

Attached to the unit is paediatrician Eleanor Carmichael while there is also support from social workers and mental health services.

Nicole had postnatal depression and then got sick and ended up in hospital. Her doctor recommended Mothercraft but Nicole felt guilty and wondered how she could get someone to care for her two-year-old son for a week.

However, she tucked the information away in her head. Holly was suffering from reflux so when the plunket nurse also mentioned Mothercraft, Nicole was convinced.

"It's such a controlled environment here. It's all about routines. They showed me ways to encourage Holly to have more at feeding time so that she slept for longer. I've learned that just because she's crying doesn't always mean she's hungry. Where else do you



SUPPORTIVE BACK-UP: Nurse Sally Coventry (left) with Nicole Richardson and her baby Holly.

learn this stuff today?"

Clinical nurse leader Alison Williams said the unit gets referrals from midwives, Plunket, GPs, paediatricians and other social agencies.

Most babies admitted have feeding and sleeping issues.

"Some people think it's Draconian what we do here. It's not rocket science. Some of the kids that come here are over tired, over handled and over stimulated. We're not here to give women a break. We ask them to set goals and to learn to read their baby."

Collectively the staff of the unit has more than 100 years of nursing experience working with infants and their families.

"These are well children we see, it's the mothers who need support," said Alison.

The unit houses eight mothers and their babies with two nurses on each shift and one on at night.

Alison says Mondays are always the worst days.

"They can be diabolical, the noise can be deafening. Some kids have a more urgent cry than others do too."

"The reality is a newborn baby needs to be fed well and given the right encouragement to sleep. Mothers need support to become confident with mothering; this is much of what we do. That's what routines are all about," she said.