

Media Release
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Local Podiatrist Wins Top Innovation Health Award

The top award at the Bay of Plenty District Health Board's 'Innovation and Research Awards 2008' was recently won by Tauranga podiatrist John Miller of Foot Mechanics.

One of six finalists for the prestigious award and \$4000 prize, Miller was recognised for his innovative High Risk Foot Programme – a pilot community podiatry programme designed to reduce the impact and incidence of foot complications in people with high risk feet, especially those with diabetes.

“The success of this programme shows a practical example of how specialised health service providers like Foot Mechanics can work with Primary Health Organisations and District Health Boards,” said Mr Miller.

The pilot programme was implemented in Whakatane through Eastern BOP Primary Health Organisation. The overall aim was to reduce the impact and incidence of lower limb complications in people with high risk feet, especially those with diabetes. The programme has reached the high needs population providing value to general practice, patients and significant health dollar savings.

According to Miller evidence suggests they are preventing 66 foot ulcers a year. He says this is significant because 85 percent of amputations begin with an ulcer.

“The negative social and psychological impact on a person losing a limb can be devastating so the less people experiencing that the better. This programme also adds value to general practice teams in supporting their Diabetes Annual Review.

“The average hospital admission for a person with diabetes costs over \$11,000 according to a Ministry of Health Study from 2004. Preventing these admissions saves a lot of money, and more importantly the impact these complications have on the person and their family,” said Miller.

Bay of Plenty DHB Chief Executive Phil Cammish said through his programme, Mr Miller has been able to provide greater access to those with chronic podiatry problems to enable earlier assessment and treatment.

“This programme is particularly targeted at diabetes patients, who make up around half of those requiring lower limb amputations each year. Providing early podiatry

treatments can reduce the likelihood of amputation. In the past, access was only by referral to a secondary provider – or hospital – unless patients opted for a private referral. Now, free access for all Bay of Plenty people is available through this initiative,” said Mr Cammish.

Numbers of entries for the awards doubled this year with 20 applicants. Each finalist provided a 10 minute presentation with judging taking place on the night. Judges were from a range of portfolios from within the DHB as well as the wider health sector.

Mr Cammish and Board representative Mark Arundel welcomed participants and guests and presented the awards.

“I am extremely supportive of these awards and am amazed by the high standard and uniqueness of the innovations and research projects submitted each year. This year the winner was from one of our PHO-aligned organisations, which is indicative of the partnership the BOPDHB has with its primary health organisations and community providers,” said Mr Cammish.

Mr Miller said on the face of it he appeared to be the only winner of the award but he did not achieve this on his own.

“I am very pleased to have won the award – it is recognition of success. But, really success itself came much earlier in the support needed from a wide range of people that helped to drive this innovation from an idea to reality in the community,” said Mille.

Other places awarded were:

Second place: Anne Hishon and Tony Lawson, clinical nurse specialists from Tauranga Hospital, for their nurse-led service for the older person, discharging from the emergency department.

Third place: Minnie McGibbon, oral health manager/dental therapist, for her mobile dental service for predominantly Maori children.

The People’s Choice Award went to Dr Thomas Fenandez and nurse specialist Scott Jones for an audit of fentanyl patches in the post-operative setting.

Two other finalists were the Kawerau Home Safety for Preschoolers pilot project (a joint project between Safekids Kawerau, Toi Te Ora Public Health and Plunket), and community psychiatrist Dr Michael Ratna’s lithium monitoring audit.

Last year’s winner Terri Webby spoke on her trip to Cairns where she was invited to share the details of her healthy eating in Kohanga Reo programme, which took first place last year.

The annual dinner event was held at Mills Reef, Tauranga on Thursday 16 October.

OPTIONAL CAPTION FOR IMAGE

File: *Innovation and research award winner John Miller.jpg*

Caption: *“Award winner John Miller of Foot Mechanics.”*

About Foot Mechanics

Foot Mechanics has clinics in Greenlane, Botany, Manukau, Papakura, Tauranga, Mt Maunganui, Whakatane, Rotorua, Hamilton, Taupo, Palmerston North, and Masterton. They are experienced providers for some of New Zealand’s top sport teams including the All Blacks, Black Sticks, Silver Ferns, Black Caps, NZ Rugby Seven’s Team, NZ Rugby super 14 Teams, Rugby NPC Teams, Netball NPC Teams, and NZ Academy of Sports. Please visit www.footmechanics.com for further information.

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