

Media Release

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DHB discussing Whakatane Hospital lab services with Pathlab

The Bay of Plenty District Health Board is entering discussions with long term laboratory provider Pathlab for them to assume full accountability for laboratory testing at Whakatane Hospital from early next year.

Pathlab is already contracted by the DHB to run community-based laboratory testing in the Eastern Bay of Plenty, Western Bay of Plenty and hospital-based testing in Tauranga. Expanding the contract at Whakatane from clinical oversight to full management is expected to be achieved with minimal change. An existing clinical advisory group already provides advice on amendments to the range of tests available to referrers.

The decision to explore the possibility of Pathlab expanding current services in the region comes after extensive discussion and consultation with laboratory and hospital staff. It reflects the board's commitment to maintaining ongoing access to high quality laboratory services in Whakatane.

"Pathlab is a trusted provider and we are confident that they can ensure a high quality service continues at Whakatane Hospital. For hospital clinicians and GPs we believe the change would be minimal, as they will still be obtaining advice on result interpretation from either experienced technologists or pathologists they know and trust," says chief operating officer Philip Balmer. "The laboratory at Whakatane Hospital has been overseen by Pathlab pathologists for many years.

Pathlab has the capability to deliver a high quality service, with the efficient systems and support of a large specialty laboratory testing provider.”

A heads of agreement has been signed by the BOPDHB and Pathlab and negotiations will begin next week. Staff have been advised of timing and the likely process. “If negotiations are successful then we will all go through a period of change and adjustment in the short term,” says Phillip. “For the board the focus remains on ensuring ongoing access to a safe, quality laboratory service for Whakatane Hospital clinicians, patients and GPs into the future.”

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