Plenty. Urology Bay of Plenty, in essence, is composed over 65 and the Bay of Plenty region has an estimated urban population of 122,000 encompassing 168 the sunniest climates and many beautiful beaches. A forward-looking urology practice

A forward-looking urology practice

Report from Tauranga, New Zealand

The concept is based on outcome rather than output and all appropriate referrals were seen and treated within a fixed timeframe and with very few exceptions. Some of the factors that set Venturo apart from other hospital-managed services are the categories of roles they have created and treated within a fixed timeframe of two months for a First Specialist Assessment (FSA) and six months for elective surgery. To demonstrate the efficiency, in 2012 there were 871 surgical urology procedures performed at the public hospital whereas the urology team has three full time equivalent (FTE) nurse practitioners. A neighbouring region, Waikato, adopted this model soon after its development. The founding urologists of Venturo, Peter Gillling and Mark Friedlander, are internationally renowned for their innovation, use of technology and clinical research. This culture has been maintained with the recruitment of urologists such as Andre Westenberg and Liam Wilson.

Pioneering strategy

The pioneering nature of their business strategy is also evident in their medical accomplishments and opportunities. Tauranga has been the birth place of numerous surgical procedures including the invention of Holmium Laser Enucleation of the Prostate (HOLEP) for BPH. Tauranga was the first in the world to use Holmium for surgery, modifying and developing techniques and equipment to suit the HOLEP procedure. The first ever laparoscopic pubo-vaginal sling was also performed here. Other NZ first's include laparoscopic prostatectomy, transurethral resection of prostate, transurethral resection of bladder, robotic prostatectomy and prostate aquablation. The idea of using ultrasound for performing TURP biopsy came from Tauranga. Prior to ultrasound the needle guide was manually employed by the doctor, meaning it was finger rather than ultrasound guided.

Tauranga Urology Research Limited (TURL) was established in 1999 by Gillling and Friedlander and has experience in Phase I (first time ever in humans) to Phase IV (variation to the license of an approved drug etc) trials. The trials are single or multi-centre, pilot and / or multisite and include pharmaceutical and device studies. TURL employs a manager and three-part time research nurses. Current studies include metastatic prostate cancer, overactive bladder, robotic prostatectomy, BPH, bladder cancer and urodynamic stress incontinence. A current project is a Phase I study for BPH.

...The first ever laparoscopic pubo-vaginal sling...

There are two hospitals in Tauranga, one public and the other privately owned. The private hospital (Grazie) is owned and managed by Norfolk Southern Cross Ltd, a partnership between two private hospitals, Grace Hospital, Tauranga which opened in 2003 has six major operating theatres, 50 inpatient beds and a separate day-stay facility performing around 6,500 procedures per year. 39% of the Da Vinci robotic prostatectomies that are performed at Grazie are for patients living out of the region. 10% of all Brachytherapy implants are also for out-of-region patients. The publicly owned Tauranga Hospital has 349 beds including 234 beds which are available for medical and surgical patients (including critical care and coronary care). Tauranga Hospital has eight operating theatres.

A committed partnership

There is a strong and committed relationship between the urologists and nurses as we work together to develop and advance these important areas. The teamwork also involves frequent development of care plans, pathways, procedural setups and patient information booklets for procedures that have never been performed. The urology nurses are appointed and encouraged to establish in-service and study groups; funding is available for study and conference leave and common research interests. Urology nurses are informal and friendly. Generally, ‘Team Tauranga’ has a strong representation at NZ Urology Nurse Conferences.

Tauranga has hosted the annual National Urology Nurses Conference several times in the past decade with the most recent in 2009 when 120 delegates attended. These conferences are always a great opportunity to showcase a region, network with colleagues, establish friendships and be updated of developments in other centres. Currently three of the Eight New Zealand Urology Nurses Society (NZUNS) committee members are from this region, and I serve as secretary and have been in the committee for five years.

For me and many of my colleagues, urology work in Tauranga is exciting, interesting, rewarding and challenging. Come and visit us...