

# Annual Activity Report

April 2024-  
March 2025



**Diabetes**  
Foundation Aotearoa

Te Tumu Matehuka o Aotearoa

# About The Foundation

Diabetes Foundation Aotearoa is an Otago based Charitable Trust and has been in operation since 1993.

The Foundation aims to prevent and reverse diabetes - its prevalence and its damage - for Aotearoa New Zealand's most high risk communities

## WHAKATAUKI

Ehara tāku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini.

“My success is not mine alone, it is the success of the collective”.

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# Who We Are

## OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

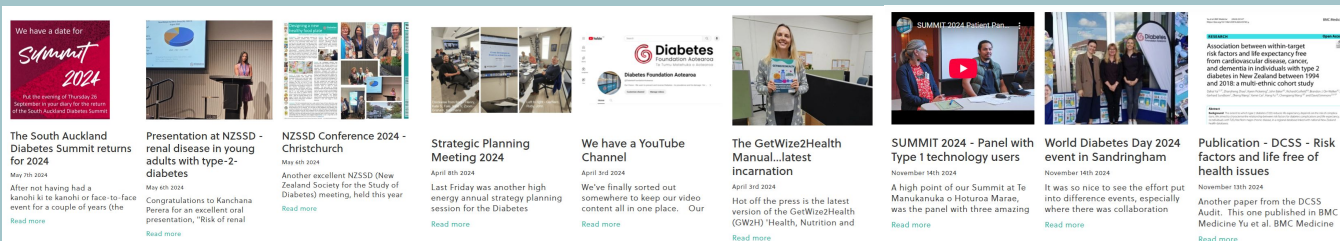
John Baker (Chairperson)  
Kate Vennell (Deputy Chair)  
Graham King  
Henry Kozak  
Fale Lesa  
Ruby McGill  
Gerhard Sundborn

## OUR PATRON

Distinguished Professor David Simmons

## OUR TEAM

Diana Anderson - Team Leader Lifestyle  
Tania Bromley - Facilitator Gardens4Health  
Marie Glapiak - Lifestyle Programme Facilitator  
Patricia Harry - Lifestyle Programme/Research support  
Jennifer Leatham - Administration Officer  
Hari Narayan - Facilitator Gardens4Health  
Ali Nicholls - Gardens4Health Leader  
Kanchana Perera - PhD Candidate  
Karen Pickering - General Manager  
Cassie Slade - Co-ordinator GetWize2Health Schools  
Kate Smallman - Clinical Director/Mātanga Tapuhi (Nurse Practitioner)



# From the Board Chair

**Finance** - Diabetes Foundation Aotearoa had another good year April 2024 to March 2025. Financial reserves are stable and the balance sheet is healthy. The main source of income for service delivery remains a long-term contract with the Ministry of Health supported by grant applications and fund-raising activities. Our core businesses Healthy Workplaces and Cook'n Kiwi, GetWize2Health Schools, and Gardens4Health projects continue to produce excellent results.

**Research** - The Adolescent Bariatric Surgery study administered under contract to Aotearoa Clinical Trials completed on time and within budget in May 2025. This is despite labouring through the COVID-19 pandemic with associated lockdowns and restriction of activities. This was a study of medical management of extreme obesity supplemented by a bariatric surgery procedure in 20 predominantly Māori and Pacific participants. Seven participants had a bariatric procedure and most had significant weight loss associated with reversal of diabetes and other obesity related stigmata. Our thanks go to Diana Anderson for nutrition advice, Kate Smallman for diabetes management support, and Trish Harry for cultural support and personal guidance of this high-risk group. We are grateful to the Freemason Foundation Potter Trust and Perpetual Guardian Trust who funded this valuable project. Professor David Simmons is currently completing a formal evaluation of the project.

**Advocacy** - Diabetes Foundation Aotearoa continues to support Patient Voice Aotearoa led by Malcolm Mulholland in their work to improve the health system in Aotearoa New Zealand by amplifying the voices of patients, whānau, and communities. Malcolm advocates for better availability of modern pharmaceuticals in Aotearoa New Zealand. Speaking in support of this, Diabetes Foundation Aotearoa presented at the Valuing Lives Summit in April 2024 at the NZ Parliament hosted by the Hon David Seymour, Associate Minister of Health.

**Publications and presentations** - Our Patron, Distinguished Professor David Simmons of the University of West Sydney, continues to publish new manuscripts based on the 25-year DCSS audit of diabetes management in primary care in South and West Auckland. These publications contribute to the aim of Diabetes Foundation Aotearoa to support diabetes research in Aotearoa. David's PhD research student Kanchana Perera and other members of the team also presented posters and research papers at the NZSSD scientific meeting in Christchurch in May 2024. The Diabetes Foundation hosted a successful Diabetes Summit at the Te Manukanuka o Hoturoa marae, Auckland Airport in September 2024. The Summit was opened by Matua Robert Clark and focussed on health disparities, adolescent weight loss, FIZZ, and insulin pumps for type 1 diabetes.



**Staffing and succession** – The Board of Trustees would like to acknowledge Karen Pickering for the work she has done for the trust over many years. In recognition of this contribution, we have decided to promote Karen to the position of Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation.

**Governance** – Personally, I'd also like to acknowledge the continuing support of our Trustees to governance and strategic direction. This is all voluntary work and I am grateful for their commitment and contributions.

*John Baker - Board Chair*

# Main Activities 2024-2025

**Research** - We are currently concluding of the Adolescent Bariatric research project in conjunction with Counties Manukau Health, funded by Freemason Foundation Potter Trust and Perpetual Guardian Trust. Diabetes Foundation Aotearoa is also delighted to continue to work with Professor David Simmons and his team as they continue to analyse material gathered from the 20 years of carrying out the DCSS Quality Improvement audit in Primary care in South Auckland.

**Healthy Workplaces** – As part of the Lifestyle Programme led by Diana Anderson this Health NZ/Te Whatu Ora funded programme continues to deliver health promotion/education services into a range of workplaces. Face to face and online activity provides the workplace with practical guidance and support across Auckland. Workplaces continue to value the input, with recognition of the importance of promoting the health of their employees, understanding that healthy, well supported team members are more productive and lead to a better work environment.

**GetWize2Health Schools** – The Lifestyle team are active in training key staff in secondary schools in Tamaki Makaurau in the use of the GetWize2Health resource and providing additional support where needed. Resource re-development continues as aspects of advice, delivery, curriculum and the school environment continue to change.

**Cook'nKiwi** - Lifestyle Healthy Eating on a Budget. This Health NZ/Te Whatu Ora funded programme continues to offer flexible, tailored and hands on approaches and resources to meet the needs of the most at risk in our communities. Cook'nKiwi, and an associated 'Train the Trainer' continues to complement Diabetes Foundation Aotearoa's other programmes, including Gardens4Health.

**Gardens4Health** – Led by Ali Nicholls and with funding from a range of sources including Health NZ/Te Whatu Ora, Auckland Council, individual Local Boards, and other supporters with additional or in-kind support. The Gardens4Health team works alongside community gardens and other food related enterprises across Tamaki Makaurau, providing support to set up, maintain, fund and extend efforts to produce fresh and healthy food for community members. Other advantages include, beautification and protection of the environment, promotion of increased physical activity, improved mental health, and healthy social context. Additional advantages of having well planned and productive community gardens include alignment with waste reduction, carbon emission reduction, improved soil quality, and water/flood management which is even more important given experience from flooding in recent times.

**Resource & programme development** – In this year period the environment continues to change around what resources are relevant, useful, and remain accurate. A new interactive education tool for nutrition has been developed and is being tested for wider usability.

**Student support and capacity building** - Work experience and support has been provided to students from a range of disciplines. With the intention of increasing delivery capacity at community level, the Lifestyle team in particular continues to deliver Train The Trainer where possible, and Gardens4Health supports resilience and food security/sustainability by sharing their knowledge and skills.

PhD candidate Kanchana Perera is in her final year of work and has had successful presentations at a variety of conferences and making progress with her research and analysis work.

**Advocacy** - Diabetes Foundation Aotearoa takes opportunities to advance the interests of people with or at risk of diabetes, including advocating for changes in prevention and treatment, such as supporting the introduction of CGM to all people with Type 1 diabetes. A community based summit was held at Te Manukanuka o Hoturoa marae, Auckland Airport with a range of excellent speakers, and Board Chair Dr John Baker was an invited speaker at the 2024 Valuing Life Summit in Wellington in support of the important messages of medication access and equity.

# Manager Conclusion

The end of our business/financial year is a good time to reflect, and the first question is one we used to be asked by our strongest supporter and past Kaumatua, the late and much missed Bill Wiki. “What is the most important thing” he’d say, and he’d wait for the answer “He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata”, or “It is people, it is people, it is people.”

When I think about people over the last year, it is the sheer busyness that comes to mind. Lives have more going on in them than ever before and our team has been extra hard at work. They’ve been consulting and working on the various programmes, coming up with new ideas and ways to do things, navigating challenges and barriers, and of course, keeping up to date with the latest and best information in a world where the sheer amount of material out there, right, wrong and indifferent, is incomprehensibly huge. If our team is busy, those they are working with in the community are too, it speaks volumes to their commitment that community members are making time to gain knowledge and skills around making healthier choices for themselves and their whanau.

It was unfortunate that I was out of action for part of the year, so challenging loads became more challenging while our amazing team members took on my work. I can only say thank you... to Kate and Diana and Ali for their leadership, Jennie for keeping the business wheels turning and everyone sane, and the rest of the team, Trish, Cassie, Marie, Hari, and Tania for stepping up. I can’t leave out our Board members, their ongoing support of our small but productive organisation is legendary.

A lot has been achieved in the 2024-2025 year, but for me, high points include the 4th Summit held at Te Manukanuka o Hoturoa marae at Auckland Airport, the ongoing research being produced by Professor Simmons and his team using DCSS Audit data, the extraordinary stories from the youth who participated in the nearly finished Adolescent Bariatric project, our presentations at various conferences, some excellent students, and the privilege of capturing stories in a new podcast series.

I’ve now been in this role for over 25 years and looking back the most recent year gone by is one thing, but staying relevant and effective means regularly going back further sometimes. Plenty has changed in quarter of a century, technology is top of the list. Change has also occurred in how we do business, how we treat people, our understanding of better balancing work and life, and changed expectations of technical knowledge and skills. So again we review what and how we do things, and as Jennie refers to in her comments on page 8, there has been effort put into “tidying up, sorting out, and reorganising”. Definitely challenging times when you’re faced with decades of history and have to decide, how and whether to retire systems or ‘things’ or bring them into now. And of course, digging around in the archives has definitely provided plenty of “oh I remember...” moments to talk about, laughs (or wistful sighs) to be had about past times, older haircuts and what we considered important in earlier days before some of our team members were even born.

So while there is looking back, there is also looking forward. A lot of this focus is reflected in on our online world which continues to evolve. Day to day activities are being captured more in our social media or blog, building a new type of ‘history’ to look back on that doesn’t involve piles of paper.

The next question is what will the next year bring? Who can predict? None of us could have imagined the last few years, and certainly 25 years ago...no-one would have envisaged what life and business looks like now. Whatever comes, the mahi we are doing is important, and we can expect new challenges, achievements and most importantly of all, enjoyment, while we make a difference in health in our community.

*Karen Pickering - General Manager*



# Clinical Director

The timeframe for this report covers a major change in our diabetes environment, with the amazing results that were achieved by the efforts of many to gain access to Continuous Glucose Monitors (CGM) and insulin pumps, now accessible for all people with type 1 diabetes in Aotearoa New Zealand.

CGM devices and Pumps, became fully funded by Pharmac from October 1 2024 for all eligible people with type 1 and other specific forms of diabetes. This funding decision was a result of a long and hard advocacy effort by the diabetes community. The development provides access to life-changing technology regardless of the person's age or socioeconomic status. The Diabetes Foundation Aotearoa worked hard alongside other organisations and advocacy groups to help achieve this.

In the September of 2024 we held a diabetes Summit at Te Manukanuka o Hoturoa marae, Auckland Airport. Our main speaker was our Patron, Professor David Simmons, who talked about "Disparities in Diabetes Management and outcomes". Part of this covered analysis of information that had been collected over the years re diabetes care in Primary Care. This was followed by a presentation from a past research fellow of ours, Dr Shekhar Sehgal, on an introduction to CGM and pumps. This was very timely as Pharmac was just about to fund the access to CGM and pumps. We had 3 other speakers who presented on their knowledge and experiences in the area of disparity, and finally, a panel was then formed where 4 presenters who had diabetes discussed how they managed their own diabetes. This was very well done as it came from personal experience.

The research that we were managing on youth and bariatric surgery is coming to an end during this year. We are working on the evaluation and will be reporting back on the results. A big thank you to the participants and staff that worked hard on this research.

*Kate Smallman - Clinical Director, Nurse Practitioner.*



# From the team

**Diana Anderson - Lifestyle Team Leader** - The team have had some wonderful opportunities to collaborate with other organisations and enjoyed doing the mahi to provide improved services for our whanau. Patient voice is imperative in the prevention, early detection and better outcomes for people with Diabetes.

Collaboration with other organisations such as Health Coaches and PHO's is critical to underpin this. We have also continued our collaboration with Auckland Council, through this we can deliver our Plant based Train the Trainer programme to these community activators, health coaches and others so that they can better support change in their own communities.



**Marie Glapiak - Lifestyle Facilitator** - Over the past year I've continued to grow my role within the Lifestyle Team, with a strong focus on diabetes prevention through nutrition and education. The Cook'nKiwi programme remains a highlight, giving me the chance to connect with communities across Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland and explore the many cultures and food traditions that shape eating habits in our country. Since I didn't grow up here, it's been a wonderful opportunity for me to learn directly from the community as much as I share with them. Every session is not only an opportunity to provide knowledge but also to deepen my understanding of local culture and lived experiences.

I've also dedicated time to developing engaging visual resources that make health information clear and practical. A key project this year has been updating the manual we use for our GetWize2Health programme, ensuring it reflects current best practice and is accessible for both educators and young people. Looking ahead, I'm excited to keep creating resources that inspire healthier choices and strengthen the impact of our community programmes.



**Patricia Harry - Research Assistant/Lifestyle** - Fakaalofa lahi atu, This year has been exceptionally busy and rewarding. Our Adolescent Study successfully concluding, with 20 young participants completing the programme and continuing on their individual health journeys. It was a valuable and meaningful experience, and while I felt a sense of sadness as the study comes to an end, I'm also filled with pride and joy seeing the young people take positive steps forward in their lives.

Our Cook'n Kiwi workshops continue to run successfully, keeping us engaged and active within the community. Also working on our Get Wize 2 Health kits for schools and attending the workshops. New resources are also in development to support our ongoing programs.

Being out in the community and meeting new people always gives me great satisfaction and passion to promote health and wellbeing. My photo is me at a cook'n program in Mangere East. We just made coleslaw alongside tuna veggie patties. (me in action) :) I am thankful working with awesome Tima, community and other awesome organisations.

**Jennifer Leatham - Administration** - It's been another busy and rewarding year of administrative work here in Ōtara – a good year.

Over the past months, I have spent quite some time managing the digitisation of our physical records, scanning paper files and organising them into secure online storage systems. Much of our historical documentation – including VHS videos – has also been stored online. This transition supports better accessibility, reduces physical clutter, and enhances data preservation.

Last year we began implementing the new Tier 3 (NFP) Standards issued by the External Reporting Board (XRB) for the reporting of our Annual Financial Statements. It is now mandatory and all of our Financial Statements from 31 March 2025 will be prepared using the new reporting requirements. The finished, audited report presents a good clear overview of our financial and non-financial performance and position.

Overall, it's been a year of tidying up, sorting out, and reorganising. It has been rewarding to organise our past and prepare for future endeavours

**Hari Narayan - Gardens4Health Facilitator South** - Try growing microgreens in milk bottles. This is an example of the important message to:

## *Recycle And Upcycle*



**Ali Nicholls - Gardens4Health Team Leader** - It's been a busy year for the G4H team working alongside our communities to improve access to healthy food and healthy environments across the city. Hari Narayan continues his mahi in South Auckland, however we have just farewelled Tania Bromley who has moved on to new things.

We are grateful to have welcomed a host of new kai gardens to our network, our numbers are up to 136. With many changes and challenges facing Aucklanders, we are really proud to see a growing interest in gardening both from our communities on the ground and from our friends in Auckland Council.

As always our priority is to work alongside gardeners, share our skills, and learn from them what they hope for their communities and for their mokopuna. We are hearing from people that they want to protect green spaces from development, and turn more of our parks into edible gardens and landscapes. Food forests and orchards are becoming popular, and we are working alongside many groups and gardens to share our knowledge and figure out which strategies work best for the many soils and environments that the isthmus offers.

It hasn't all been hard graft though! In April 2025 we hosted our first Harvest Festival at Communities Feeding Communities in Puketāpapa Mount Roskill. It was a huge success with lots of visitors, workshops, prizes, and celebrations.

As well as getting our hands in the soil, we have been advocating for community food growing opportunities at local and national government levels as part of the Healthy Auckland Together group. This has been an exciting opportunity to engage politicians on how their policies can strengthen the health and wellbeing of our people. We are already excited for another year of fulfilling our vision of:

*Growing Healthy Communities Together.*



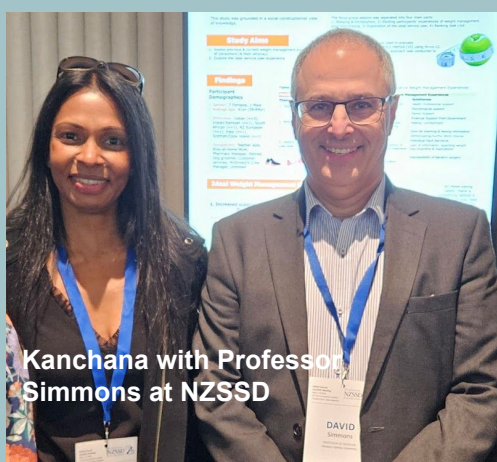


**Kanchana Perera - PhD Candidate** - My PhD examines ethnic disparities in diabetic kidney disease (DKD) among young adults with type 2 diabetes in New Zealand. The research uses large clinical cohorts to assess differences in incidence, progression, and renal outcomes across Māori, Pacific, and NZ European populations. DKD is one of the leading complications from type 2 diabetes and disproportionately affects Māori, and Pacific people.

I have completed major analyses for two of four thesis projects, including one manuscript currently under review. In 2024 I presented the findings of my research at the New Zealand Society for the Study of Diabetes (NZSSD), American Diabetes Association (ADA), and International Diabetes Epidemiology Group (IDEG) meetings and received useful feedback.

I am currently leading a systematic review and meta-analysis on ethnicity-specific DKD and ESRD risks globally, to further understand the different patterns that exist across populations. The final paper involves serum samples collected in South Auckland, these have now been analysed to explore possible new biological markers for renal disease.

The next milestone includes writing up findings and preparing for the end of my candidature by March 2026, with a view to translating results into action to address the current disparities in DKD outcomes.



Kanchana with Professor Simmons at NZSSD



**Cassie Slade - Lifestyle/Schools** - The year has been busy but very enjoyable for me in the Lifestyle Team. Like last year, I have been juggling work commitments with completing my Masters in Dietetics, as always I could not have done it without the unwavering support of my brilliant work colleagues.

In my time at work between programme placements we have packed in three successful GetWise2Health workshops, numerous Cook'nKiwi workshops and lots of ad hoc education and advice for students, teachers, nurses, communities and workplaces. Highlights include: a 'pop-up' lunchtime session on 'Gut Health and Nutrition' at a local College; several school holiday healthy lifestyle education events in collaboration with Health Active Families; a number of education sessions with Year 13s at another high School to equip them with healthy eating and lifestyle knowledge as they venture out into the world as adults; collaborating with EATucation to provide professional development for teachers on incorporating motivational interviewing into their teaching practice; workshops with public health students and food policy seminars at The University of Auckland; a workshop with school nurses from several Auckland schools regarding the latest research on obesity in young people; and 'Plant-based Eating' workshops with Auckland Council/Youth Climate Collective

I feel as a team we have achieved a lot this year and completed some very rewarding and purposeful work. We have received positive feedback wherever we have been and importantly been able to take away insights and knowledge from those we have interacted with, which is always a privilege. I am looking forward to the new year, completing my Masters and being able to concentrate solely on work.



# Acknowledgements

**Sincere thanks to the following for your support:**

Ministry of Health/Health New Zealand/Te Whatu Ora  
Auckland Council  
Local Boards  
Lion Foundation  
Four Winds Foundation  
The Trusts Community Foundation  
Boehringer Ingelheim NZ Ltd  
Novo Nordisk

In-Kind supporters of Gardens4Health (see FB page)  
Rocketspark (website/hosting)  
Elaine Johnson (Landlady - building renovation)

## Our Details

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YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@DiabetesFoundationAotearoa>

Link to Fundraising page:

<https://www.gofundraise.co.nz/beneficiary/diabetesfoundationaotearoa>

