

## News

Regular news from the New Zealand Doctor newsroom

### Palmerston North hub project more social care than medicine

Virginia McMillan

[vmcmillan@clear.net.nz](mailto:vmcmillan@clear.net.nz)

Monday 31 October 2016, 10:05AM

Palmerston North GP David Hill and fellow Health Hub Project co-founders have begun creating a new medical centre, but say it will be less about medicine and more about the social determinants of health.

Their objective is a network of outreach centres, with a new facility – to be constructed in the shell of an old movie theatre in the Downtown mall – as the hub.

The founders' existing suburban medical centre will be one outreach centre, and it's hoped two other general practices will join in the near future.

While its clinicians are upskilling to top of scope, with the idea of helping to relieve some of the hospital's workload, Dr Hill says the hub project's services will increasingly be social care oriented.



GP and Health Hub Project owner-director David Hill in the shell of an old movie theatre in a Palmerston North shopping mall

#### Shamed by child poverty inaction



Health Hub Project, formerly Central City Medical, will become an outreach centre for the hub

This arises from recognising the drivers of ill health, mainly poverty. "It galls me, it is a shameful thing that in New Zealand we have [29 per cent] of children in poverty," Dr Hill says.

He says governments won't act, so communities must do so. "We know the solution is about improving access, living conditions and earnings of individuals.

"Instead, we throw little bits of money at the problem and not at the solution. We have to change that."

Hence the hub is taking a community development approach: "What we are looking at is services that are predominantly social welfare services.

#### Medicine as allied health

"The major focus in future will be psychosocial and educational, rather than medical provision, which becomes the allied health

service.”

It means GPs and practice nurses, alongside social workers and others, including community members, helping families become empowered to take responsibility for their health.

The hub project already employs a social worker, and has added three nurses to the team since taking over the former Central City Medical a year ago.

### **Belief in the team**

Dr Hill says the project promotes non-conformity and is about equity of esteem in a non-hierarchical structure. “This is based on the belief that the people doing the work know how to do it best and how to change it to make it better.”

Plans include a health education facility where research, professional training and community health education are carried out, with outreach health education provided for schools and other settings.

Dr Hill gained RNZCGP fellowship after working in general practice in Marton and Feilding in the late 2000s, after a career overseas in pharmaceutical company management.

The hub project’s other founders are former director of the Massey University Graduate School of Education Pat Nolan and researcher Andrew Nolan.

As shareholders, they have kick-started the cinema redevelopment, and are tying up more funding, which they hope to finalise soon. They intend to turn the company into a charitable trust.

Designs have been done and the theatre has been gutted. Space for acute procedures, basic pathology and radiology is included in the plans.

### **READ MORE FROM NEW ZEALAND DOCTOR**

[From 'Red Shed' to family health centre: Papakura clinic gets \\$3.6m makeover](#)

[Return to homepage](#)

[Print Email Share](#)

[Stay on top of the news and stay ahead of the game -](#)

[Sign up for Doctor@Large email newsletter](#)

Like 0 [Tweet](#)