

MEDIA RELEASE

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Oticon Foundation of New Zealand

BEDSIDE HEARING SIGNS BREAK DOWN BARRIERS FOR HEARING IMPAIRED

Communication problems frequently faced by people in hospitals or rest-homes who have a hearing impairment are being addressed with a simple but effective new nationwide initiative.

Funding from the Oticon Foundation has given the Nelson Hearing Association the green light to produce and distribute bedside signs for people in hospital or in rest homes, alerting visitors, nurses, doctors and staff to the fact the person has a hearing impairment.

"Fifteen hundred signs have been produced and distributed to Hearing Associations around the country to provide their local hospitals and rest homes," says Karen Pullar, Secretary to the Oticon Foundation Trustees.

"The signs make it clear a person has a hearing impairment, and break down barriers to communication and understanding," she says.

"We had a lot of personal feedback from people with hearing loss about the difficulties they had in hospital, because staff in particular didn't know they were hearing impaired," says Nelson Hearing Association's Past President John Ward.

"People weren't hearing crucial information about their health status or what was happening next. Being in hospital is intimidating enough without being unable to hear properly what is going on," says Mr Ward.

The bedside signs have been provided to hospitals and rest homes stating that the patient/resident is hearing impaired. They set out three basic communication rules:

1. Face me when speaking
2. Speak clearly and slowly
3. Don't shout

The yellow and black signs are designed to hang on bedheads or door handles where they can be easily noticed in the patient or rest home resident's room.

The Oticon Foundation is supporting National Deaf Awareness Week this week.

The Oticon Foundation in New Zealand was established in October 1976. It is a charitable trust of Oticon New Zealand Limited and aims to improve the lives of the hearing impaired in New Zealand through communication and knowledge.

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For more information please contact: Karen Pullar, Secretary to the Oticon Foundation in New Zealand. Phone 04 473 3330 or 021 647 330.

the oticon foundation