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Knowledge Translation Session:

"Mind The Gap" - Allied Health Provision of Therapy in the Neonatal Units in New Zealand

Presented by:

Danielle Atkins, Occupational Therapist

➔ **12pm - 12.30pm | Tuesday 15 September, 2026 | [Hosted on Teams](#)**

In this session, Danielle Atkins, Occupational Therapist, returns to build on her recent presentation of findings from [Allied Health Provision of Therapy in the Neonatal Units in New Zealand: A Cross-Sectional Survey](#), shifting our focus toward knowledge translation and what these findings mean in practice.

Infants admitted to neonatal units in Aotearoa New Zealand often require specialised neurodevelopmental therapy from birth to optimise development and support their transition home. Danielle's research explored the equity and reach of neonatal therapy services across the country, drawing on perspectives from clinical directors and the neonatal therapy workforce, including Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, and Speech Language Therapists.

The [benchmarking study](#) examined the content and amount of neonatal neurodevelopmental therapy being provided, alongside workforce perspectives on current challenges and future priorities.

This session will provide an opportunity to reflect together on how we can translate these findings into practice within our own services and communities.

To guide our discussion, we will explore three key questions:

- What do these findings mean for the infants and whānau we care for?

- How could we make the best use of the neonatal therapy workforce skills we already have to support each other?
- How can we generate some "small wins" and advocate for the changes we want to see in the future?

About the Speaker:

Danielle Atkins is an Occupational Therapist with the Child Development Service at Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora, working alongside infants and their whānau in the Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU) and supporting high-risk infants following discharge. In addition to her clinical work, she leads regional workforce development initiatives across the Central Region, providing coaching and mentoring to support the wider network of Visiting Neurodevelopmental Therapists.

Her work is grounded in infant mental health and evidence-based neurodevelopmental care delivered in a relational way. Danielle is a certified trainer in the Newborn Behavioral Observation (NBO) system and the Neonatal Behavioral Assessment Scale (NBAS), and is co-developer of the Newborn Traffic Light Tool, which aims to support clinicians and parents to notice, interpret, verbalise and respond to infants' behavioural cues particularly during painful or stressful interactions or procedures. She is deeply passionate about working alongside infants and their whānau to achieve good relational health, and is a strong advocate for the vital role of Allied Health in securing equitable developmental outcomes for all families. She is currently collaborating on several international projects and research.

Access the session here



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If you would like to join our mailing list, have a suggestion for a topic or are interested in presenting at one of our workshops, **please get in touch**.

For any technical issues or queries please reach out to the Neurodevelopment Network Project Coordinator, Kati Wilson, by email to neurodevelopment@paediatrics.org.nz or phone: 021 237 9903.