



Photo: Clinical nurse manager of paediatrics Mark Liddy says making a difference to children's lives is a great privilege.

Nursing has become more complex in ways that couldn't be imagined a generation ago.

Now there's an imperative to be not just a great caregiver, but a great innovator too.

As Clinical Nurse Manager at Timaru Hospital's children's ward, Mark Liddy has been at the forefront of change during his career, which has spanned three decades.

He says the rate of change in healthcare and nursing has been huge.

"We now do things I never dreamed of when I started nursing," the 54-year-old says.

Nursing has become very holistic, and working in paediatrics means working with the whole family, not just the child. Time is spent educating families so they can make the best choices for their children.

And the nurses themselves work as part of a multidisciplinary team of health professionals. Depending on the case, Mark can be consulting with colleagues in other cities to find the best solution.

Among the many technological advances has been the arrival of a SATs machine – which is a clip that fits on a finger to measure oxygen in the blood. This is painless and quick so especially good when working with children.

This continual evolution of nursing and technology has kept Mark interested.

“Among the highlights in nursing is the continuing growth and learning of new skills and knowledge.”

Working in a smaller hospital like Timaru he has seen a huge variety of cases.

“Through the years I have gathered knowledge over a whole field. There have been several occasions when I have been able to draw on experience gained over the years and applied to it a new situation. There is no learning that isn’t valuable.”

Mark did his nursing training in Timaru, and worked in every ward before settling in paediatrics 20 years ago. He has since completed post-graduate diploma in nursing, which is half-way towards completing a Master’s Degree.

As head of the team at the children’s ward, Mark encourages his colleagues to continually develop new skills.

“As nurses we can’t afford to stay still.”

However, as nursing continues to evolve with new hospital structures, fancier gadgets, and political challenges, the heart of the profession has stayed the same.

“Nursing is an art and a science. The core values of nursing – caring, supporting, and educating – they have to be the key. A nurse is not just a good technician,” Mark says.

“I would encourage anyone to go into nursing. There are such a wide variety of challenges and opportunities. And making a difference to someone’s health and happiness is a great thing to be able to do.”

An aging workforce is one of the issues facing the nursing sector, Mark says.

“Where are the next generation?”

Outside of work Mark enjoys rugby referring and sport. He has a wife, three grown children, and one grandchild, which he says is “a great new adventure.”