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BUSINESS

Tūhoe expands health services with Kawerau Medical Centre purchase

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The Tūhoe iwi has bought the business of Kawerau Medical Centre

Five years after it opened, the Kawerau Medical Centre business has been sold to the Tūhoe tribal group.

The medical centre was launched in 2014 by businessman Lance McNicholas and his wife, GP Emily McNicholas.

Mr McNicholas confirmed the sale of the business had gone through on 1 July. The couple will retain ownership of the building and will run the practice for Tūhoe as contractors.

Tūhoe already has two medical centres. The first opened its doors in Tāneatua in August 2014, followed by a second centre in Waimana in 2016. There are now nearly 1700 Tūhoe whānau enrolled with the two centres.

Mr McNicholas says he believes Tūhoe are interested in increasing their capacity. Kawerau Medical Centre has about 4000 patients.

“It was a way for us to sell the business,” he says. “The opportunity came up.”

He doesn’t expect much to change with the day-to-day running of the centre.

Kawerau Medical Centre offers Very Low Cost Access general practice services, a specialist centre and a pharmacy located under one roof. Five GPs are based at the centre, and orthopaedic and gastrointestinal specialists make regular visits. Mr McNicholas says it is a busy practice; 91 per cent are high-needs patients and 76 per cent are Māori.

Tūhoe’s original plan was to operate independently of any PHO, but its Te Uru Taumatua Trust signed up to join Eastern Bay Primary Health Alliance in July 2016.

Earlier this year, Kawerau and Tāneatua medical centres considered switching to the larger Tauranga-based Western Bay of Plenty PHO but have decided to remain with the Whakatāne-based EBPHA.

Tūhoe communications team lead, Te Ori Paki, says they are not ready to make a comment about the Kawerau purchase.