

Howard Wright cares about medical beds



The M8 intensive care bed (above) and examination couch are just two of the products from Howard Wright Ltd

A New Plymouth-based company is gaining a reputation in Australasia for its state-of-the-art medical beds and stretchers.

Nearly all the beds found in New Zealand hospitals have been produced by designer and manufacturer, Howard Wright Ltd. But, increasingly, the company is earning a reputation in Australia, with hundreds of medical beds now being flown across the Tasman.

Howard Wright is privately-owned by chief executive Bruce Moller and a small group of outside shareholders. Founded by motor mechanic Howard Wright in the 1950s, the company has been quietly working away for years manufacturing a range of products including beds, stretchers, shower and concealment trolleys and pressure reducing mattresses.

It also makes examination couches for medical centres, complete with electrics to adjust for height, head and feet tilts.

Since undertaking a “Better by Design” audit as part of a New Zealand Trade and Enterprise initiative to improve export competitiveness among Kiwi companies, Mr Moller says Howard Wright has experienced “steady growth”.

The need for a strong brand identity and research were highlighted in the programme. “Our research and development team has been spending a lot of time researching in the environments and working with clinicians and out of that you get some fantastic input into what the products need to do. You can convert that into a really good product,” he says.

Coupled with a new brand emphasising its underlying desire to look after people: a tagline – “Howard Wright cares”, the company has gone from strength to strength.

Mr Wright led the way in medical bed design from the 1970s when he invented the M4 bed with a remote hydraulic pump at the foot of the bed to raise the bed surface. Today, the company boasts a M7 model as well as the M8 intensive care bed.

The M7 has a range of electric functions enabling patients to lie flat, and has raised back and knee support. It’s been designed to minimise patient stress through unnecessary handling. An example is its “radiolucent” deck so that x-rays can be taken without the need to transfer patients.

The M8 intensive care bed also has full electric function and x-ray imaging capabilities and last month was the reason behind the company picking up silver at the national BeST Design awards.

Organised by the Designers Institute of New Zealand, Howard Wright was awarded silver in the non-consumer product design category at the awards.

tophamkindley@xtra.co.nz

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