



**Bowel Cancer**  
NEW ZEALAND

## **Media Release**

**February 20th 2016**

### **Sigmoidoscopy is nothing but a distraction**

Bowel Cancer New Zealand believes screening using sigmoidoscopy is a distraction from the pressing need for a national screening program.

Bowel Cancer New Zealand (BCNZ) spokesperson Mary Bradley says “New Zealand is far behind other OECD countries in implementing a bowel screening programme, the last thing we need to do is further delay things by changing direction now”.

The Ministry of Health has taken extensive advice on this issue and the balance of evidence, international opinion, and cost-effectiveness favour faecal immunochemical test (FIT) screening. Sigmoidoscopy misses a third of cancers unable to be viewed by the sigmoidoscope.

Bowel Cancer New Zealand’s concern now is that the demonstrable success of the Waitemata DHB pilot of FIT is made available to all New Zealanders by rolling out that programme nationally.

“We see no reason to back up the bus and start from scratch. The government needs to get on with implementing a national screening programme now; 1200 New Zealander's continue to die of bowel cancer every year they delay,” says Bradley.

BCNZ encourages open discussion about bowel cancer with medical professionals and avoiding ‘sitting on your symptoms’. Symptoms include:

- Bleeding from the bottom or seeing blood in the toilet after a bowel motion;
- Change of bowel motions over several weeks without returning to normal;
- Persistent or periodic severe pain the abdomen;
- A lump or mass in the abdomen;
- Tiredness and loss of weight for no particular reason;
- Anaemia.

Those who don't live in the Waitemata DHB area or have symptoms or a family history of bowel cancer and want to do regular checks can talk to their GP or buy a commercially available bowel screening kit, which involves the family doctor, at Life or Unichem pharmacies.

More information on bowel cancer and BCNZ can be found at

<http://www.beatbowelcancer.org.nz>

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**About Bowel Cancer New Zealand**

- Bowel Cancer New Zealand (BCNZ) is a patient and family-led charity organisation.
- The registered charity was founded in 2010 by a group of people affected by bowel cancer, committed to improving bowel cancer awareness and outcomes for people with the disease.
- BCNZ aims to provide clear and up-to-date information about the disease, symptoms, what to do if diagnosed and to support patients and families affected by bowel cancer.
- The ultimate aim of BCNZ is to prevent lives being lost to this disease and to promote the introduction of a national screening program in New Zealand.