



**Bowel Cancer**  
NEW ZEALAND

## **Media Release**

**March 4th 2016**

### **New Zealand lags behind Australia's improved bowel cancer survival rates**

Bowel Cancer New Zealand is concerned there is still no statistically significant improvements in bowel cancer survival rates for 2006-2010 in New Zealand compared to nearly 4% improvements in bowel cancer survival for Australian men and 5% for Australian women.

One of the reasons suggested for this lag are differences in diagnostic and primary care treatment pathways between the countries.

Bowel Cancer New Zealand (BCNZ) spokesperson Mary Bradley says, "Australia had a bowel cancer screening programme begin in 2006; meanwhile New Zealand still has no decision about a national bowel cancer screening programme!"

"We know that Kiwis are dying because of a lack of early diagnosis, which comes down to the lack of a national screening programme. BCNZ has been calling for a rollout of screening since 2010 and yet we are no closer to a firm commitment and timeline from the government," says Bradley.

New Zealand GPs experience difficulties obtaining timely referral to specialists when they have concerns about patients with bowel cancer symptoms. New Zealand also has marked delays in terms of access to colonoscopy compared to Australia.

Bradley says, "New Zealand has been delaying action on bowel cancer for far too long! We are losing as many to bowel cancer as both prostate and breast cancers combined, with more than 100 deaths a month. BCNZ have long been calling on our government to address this issue. And yet, still we wait while more than 1200 New Zealanders continue to die each year."

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>

**For further information:**

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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.