



Media Release

August 8th 2018

Positive step forward for bowel cancer screening

Bowel Cancer New Zealand is pleased the Ministry of Health has accepted the series of recommendations from the bowel screening review, and looks forward to working with the Ministry going forward.

Bowel Cancer New Zealand (BCNZ) spokesperson Professor Sarah Derrett says, "There is no doubt the review was needed after the issues that came to light during the early phases of the screening programme rollout. This review, called for by the Minister of Health the Hon Dr David Clark, is a positive first step in identifying what needs to be done to improve the programme."

BCNZ General Manager Rebekah Heal says, "There was never any doubt about the value of the screening programme which has saved hundreds of lives already. We now need to see these review recommendations being actioned and look forward to building a stronger relationship with the Ministry in the future."

BCNZ would like to see more emphasis by the Ministry on increasing engagement for Māori and Pacific people, and on the workforce development plan.

Derrett says, "As a charity we see, and experience, the challenges people face in getting access to diagnostic services for bowel cancer – both within the screening programme and for people aged under 60 years who are outside the screening programme. It is essential that the workforce capacity issue is addressed urgently. Workforce capacity is a key factor in delaying the rollout to all DHBs (screening is currently available in 5 of 20 DHBs), which means we will be waiting until 2021 for the last DHBs to offer screening."

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.

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 national screening program rollout in New Zealand.