



Media Release

May 31^s 2018

Never Too Young campaign focus for Bowel Cancer Awareness Month

June is Bowel Cancer Awareness Month and this year Bowel Cancer New Zealand (BCNZ) has a new, nationwide campaign to raise awareness that bowel cancer can strike at any age.

The Never Too Young campaign has been organised by BCNZ community ambassador Chelsea Halliwell in collaboration with Bowel Cancer New Zealand. A young bowel cancer survivor herself, Chelsea came up with the idea after she noticed an increasing number of young people joining the online Bowel Cancer New Zealand patient support group.

BCNZ general manager Rebekah Heal says, "We hope the Never Too Young campaign will drive home to people just how vital it is for everyone, of any age to know the symptoms of bowel cancer. These include bleeding from the bottom; a change of bowel habit; any lumps in the stomach; fatigue or tiredness; anemia and unexplained weight loss."

"Bowel Cancer New Zealand has been encouraging people to not sit on their symptoms for years, but with the rising incidence of bowel cancer in young people, it's now more important than ever that people don't die of embarrassment, and go to their GPs immediately if they have concerns."

Every year, more than 300 people under 50 are diagnosed with bowel cancer. This isn't an insignificant number and the aim of the Never Too Young campaign is to reduce those dying needlessly, through awareness and education.

BCNZ community ambassador Chelsea Halliwell says, "If you have symptoms, taking action quickly is so important – it's because of this that I'm here today. I'm so fortunate I didn't delay in going to my GP - within a week, I had a stage three bowel cancer diagnosis, and my surgeon told me another six months would have made a real difference to my chances of survival."

"In creating this campaign, no one said 'no' to us. We've been given nationwide, free-of-charge advertising on billboards, bus backs, street posters, radio, online and in newspapers, which is enabling us to reach so many young New Zealanders so successfully. The level of support has been quite phenomenal, and we just hope that it translates into increased awareness and donations for the essential work BCNZ does to support patients," she says.

Bowel Cancer New Zealand is a national charity raising awareness of bowel cancer, supporting patients and education in the community. However, despite this cancer killing as many New Zealanders as both breast and prostate cancer combined, it is critically under-funded and under-resourced compared to other cancer charities.

June's Bowel Cancer Awareness month is an important time to highlight the impact of this disease on the community, and also to raise essential funds.

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 that can come and go;
- Persistent or periodic severe pain the abdomen;
- A lump or mass in the abdomen;
- Tiredness and loss of weight for no particular reason;
- Anaemia.

Anyone who has symptoms or a family history of bowel cancer should see their GP immediately. Those that don't live in current DHB screening areas and want to do regular checks can talk to their GP or buy a commercially available bowel screening kit at participating Life or Unichem pharmacies.

More information on bowel cancer and Bowel Cancer Awareness Month can be found at <http://www.beatbowelcancer.org.nz> or on the Never Too Young campaign at www.nevertooyoung.org.nz.

For further information:

Mary Bradley, Communications Manager

Bowel Cancer New Zealand (BCNZ)

021 027 51924 or mary.bradley@beatbowelcancer.org.nz

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.