

Te Aho o Te Kahu, Cancer Control Agency update from Chief Executive Prof. Diana Sarfati

Tēnā koutou katoa

E ngā mana, e ngā reo rangatira tēnei te mihi maioha ki a koutou ki tēnei wāhanga hirahira o te tau.

As Matariki celebrations draw to a close, and July becomes August, it is the perfect time to reflect and share some of the work we have been doing at Te Aho o Te Kahu, Cancer Control Agency.

I am looking forward to being able to share my updates on our new website when it goes live in late September. I am excited by what I have seen of the content and design, and am pleased to learn that changes have been made in response to feedback gathered during our user testing. It takes time to build a secure, accessible, future-proof and relevant website but it will be well worth the wait.

The work to set up the Agency continues, but there is also a busy substantive work programme which is well underway. A few of the highlights are listed below.

Southern DHB visit

It has been one month since the Regional Cancer Networks transitioned into Te Aho o Te Kahu Regional Hubs and I am already drawing on their local knowledge and expertise. Last week I visited Southern DHB, accompanied by Southern Hub Manager, Nicholas Glubb and our Chief Advisor, Dawn Wilson.

We met with Southern DHB CEO, Chris Fleming and clinical leaders over the course of a day. This was an opportunity to introduce the Agency, find out about Southern's cancer services and to discuss the barriers people in the region may experience in relation to cancer care. It was a very valuable visit and we will work together to improve outcomes for people living with cancer in that area. Further DHB visits in other regions are currently being planned.

COVID and cancer

In late May we released a report outlining the impact of COVID-19 and the lockdown on cancer services. This showed that, overall, cancer treatment services were largely maintained during the COVID-19 lockdown. I would like to acknowledge the large number of clinicians across many disciplines who worked closely with the Agency to provide timely advice to DHBs. We believe this was instrumental in ensuring ongoing care, and consistent services around the country. The report also identified there was a large disruption to diagnostic services during the lock-down period, contributing to

a significant reduction in new cancer diagnoses. We are working with the Ministry of Health and DHBs to rapidly address this backlog.

We have now produced a second report, which includes updated data through to the end of May 2020. Overall, the report shows a reassuring increase in new registrations and diagnostic procedures in May compared to April 2020; although, the overall number in 2020 remains lower than 2019.

We have shared the report with DHBs and will continue to monitor monthly. This will ensure diagnosing people with cancer remains front-of-mind for DHBs.

Update of colonoscopy guidelines

We are working in partnership with the National Screening Unit and the National Bowel Cancer Working Group on advice that will provide an update on the guidelines for surveillance after colonoscopy with polyp excision. The advice, providing recommendations on the frequency of colonoscopies required for surveillance (based on recent evidence from the US and the UK), is expected to be released to DHBs in the next four weeks.

Faecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) pilot

Building on our relationship with the National Screening Unit and the National Bowel Cancer Working Group we are working together to develop a pilot to assess the use of the FIT test in patients with bowel symptoms who have been referred for colonoscopy. We are hopeful FIT tests can help to identify and prioritise colonoscopy for those most at risk of bowel cancer.

The project team is currently developing the protocols and procedures for the pilot which will be shared with stakeholders when agreed. We are excited by the potential for this venture to diagnose people with bowel cancer more quickly.

Quality Performance Indicators (QPIs)

Quality Performance Indicators (QPIs) are a way to measure how DHBs are performing in the treatment of particular cancers. QPI development began in the Ministry of Health and is continuing under Te Aho o Te Kahu. Monitoring QPIs will assist DHBs to take actions which will lead to improved outcomes for people living with cancer. Recent QPI activity includes:

- Development of a national quality improvement plan for bowel cancer
- Identification of 11 quality performance indicators for lung cancer
- Lung cancer report to be published in September 2020

- Formation of a working group to develop the pancreatic cancer indicators - this group met for the first time on 29th June.

I would appreciate you sharing this update with your team, networks and any other interested parties. While we wait for our website to be completed we have limited communication options.

Nei rā āku mihi whakamutunga ki a koutou e ngā pukumahi o te motu, mā te mahi ngātahi tātou kia ora ai te katoa

Mauri ora

Diana