



Lung Cancer Awareness Month a reminder of the work that needs to be done

Improvements must be made to decrease the high number New Zealanders dying of lung cancer, Te Aho o Te Kahu Chief Executive Professor Diana Sarfati says.

Lung cancer is one of the most common cancers in Aotearoa, and accounts for the most cancer-related deaths.

"The rate of Kiwis dying from lung cancer is unacceptable and avoidable," Professor Sarfati says.

"November is Lung Cancer Awareness Month and serves as a reminder of the improvements needed for lung cancer patients."

Since its establishment in December 2019, Te Aho o Te Kahu has made bettering outcomes and addressing inequities in lung cancer a priority.

Next month, the Agency will release the Lung Cancer Quality Improvement Report, which will assess the performance of District Health Boards against quality performance indicators for people diagnosed with lung cancer.

The report will help inform what can be done to prevent and improve diagnostics and treatment of lung cancer in Aotearoa.

Lung cancer mortality rates in New Zealand are high compared to other countries with similar healthcare systems.

For Māori and Pasifika, the incidence and mortality rates are two to three times higher than their European counterparts.

The Lung Cancer Quality Improvement Report will examine how more equitable outcomes can be achieved.

"Examining the quality of services available to Māori and the variation in outcomes will allow for better advice on what changes should be made."

Late diagnosis of lung cancer was one factor contributing to New Zealand's high mortality rate, according to Professor Sarfati.

"Nearly half of all lung cancer diagnosis happen after an ED presentation, which is often, sadly, too late in a patient's journey."

"People who notice difficulty in their breathing, pain in their chest or a cough that doesn't go away should consider seeing their GP."

Factors that increase the risk of lung cancer include smoking, asbestos exposure, and pre-existing lung disease.

"We have known for a long time the strong link between smoking and lung cancer," Professor Sarfati says.

"One of the most important things we can do to improve our rates of lung cancer survival is support our smoking friends and whānau to find help and quit."

More information about lung cancer symptoms and treatment advice can be found [here](#).