


14 February 2023

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Official Information Request HNZ00009646 Bowel Screening

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 19 January 2023 for information relating bowel screening, specifically:

- 1. How many bowel cancer screening kits have been sent out to eligible residents in Te Whatu Ora Hauora a Toi Bay of Plenty since the National Bowel Screening Programme rolled out in the region in May 2022?**

17,576 kits sent between 2/5/22 and 6/1/23.

- 2. How many of these screening kits have been returned?**

8848 kits have been returned to Lab.

- 3. How many of these tests were positive and therefore meant the patient was referred for a colonoscopy?**

425 kits were positive.

- 4. How many colonoscopies confirmed the patient had cancer?**

22 cancers detected.

- 5. How many surgeries have been undertaken to remove bowel cancer following a positive colonoscopy?**

17 surgeries have been completed.

The National Bowel Screening programme was introduced across Te Whatu Ora Hauora a Toi Bay of Plenty in May 2022. Bowel cancer is the leading cause of cancer related deaths in NZ and this screening programme is designed to identify early signs of changes to the bowel – detection of which allows for earlier treatment which will reduce the number of people who present with advanced or non-curable cancer. The symptoms of bowel cancer can be subtle (changes in bowel habit and bleeding in the stool) therefore this programme is aimed at early detection for people who may not have symptoms that concern them.

This programme offers people over the age of 60 years screening for signs of blood in their stool which may indicate the early changes associated with bowel cancer. Invitations to participate in the programme are sent out to people who are enrolled with a General Practice in the Bay of Plenty. Once a person accepts the invitation, they receive a sampling kit from the national laboratory service which once completed can be returned via NZ Post for testing. The kit has a limited time to be returned to laboratory and a team of staff both nationally and locally follow up with all kits that are sent out to support participants to complete screening. All people who receive a kit which is not returned in time are contacted first by the national centre and then by the local team. Participation in the programme is currently at 58% nationally – indicating that there is still work to be undertaken to ensure that as many people as possible take advantage of the screening programme. In comparison, participation in a similar programme in Australia (2019) was 43.5% so the programme in NZ is off to a good start with a strong commitment to growing participation rates even higher.

The NZ programme has a strong commitment to equity with a focus on ensuring that Māori, Pacific people and people who may have challenges in accessing screening programmes receive additional support to participate in the programme. The local NBSP team who are based in the Bay of Plenty have established an outreach network with community-based providers and provide follow up and individual support to people to complete screening and access any ongoing care. This mahi is also supported by primary care colleagues (GP and Practice nurses) who *are informed and able to provide support for people with questions or concerns around screening.*

If you have any questions, you can contact us at h.nzOIA@health.govt.nz.

If you are not happy with this response, you have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman. Information about how to do this is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by phoning 0800 802 602.

As this information may be of interest to other members of the public, Te Whatu Ora may proactively release a copy of this response on our website. All requester data, including your name and contact details, will be removed prior to release. The released response will be made available on our website.

Nāku iti noa, nā



Debbie Brown
Senior Advisor Governance and Quality