

AUTUMN 2024

How you're making a difference for New Zealanders facing cancer

Newscan



**Golfing for an
Incredible Cause!**

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World Leading Smokefree
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**Cancer
Society**

Te Kāhui Matepukupuku
o Aotearoa

Welcome to the Autumn edition of Newscan 2024!

The year is now well underway, and our teams are hard at work providing wrap-around support services to Kiwis facing cancer across the Waikato and Bay of Plenty region. In 2024, as the cost of living continues to rise, it presents an added burden for those facing cancer. The financial impact of a cancer diagnosis is something we don't often talk about, but it can be significant. Time off for appointments, hospital stays, and needing to take extended leave from work (for both patients and carers) can cause a significant financial strain on top of the existing stress of cancer.

On top of this, cancer rates are also continuing to rise, and in New Zealand, a devastating 74 Kiwis are now diagnosed with cancer each day. I want you to know that we so appreciate your ongoing care and financial support as we endeavour to help more Kiwis than ever through their cancer journeys. As you read the following pages, I hope it is clear just how much of a difference your support makes for New Zealanders facing cancer like Rob, Lucy and Huia. We truly couldn't help as many Kiwis without you. So, thank you.



Ngā Mihi,

Helen Carter
Chief Executive

World-leading Smokefree Legislation Repealed

We are extremely disappointed to hear the Government's plan to repeal Aotearoa's world-leading smokefree legislation has gone ahead. The Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products (Smoked Tobacco) Amendment Act (SERPA) was introduced in 2022 to combat smoking by decreasing the number of retailers able to sell smoked tobacco products, reducing the amount of nicotine that is allowed in smoked tobacco products, and prohibiting the sale of smoke tobacco products to anyone born on or after

1st January 2009. These steps would have accelerated New Zealand's progress towards a smokefree future, and were crafted on solid evidence from global research on how to decrease smoking rates and prevent addiction. *"The time for complacency is over; we need decisive action. The Government's decision to repeal existing legislation means that it now holds responsibility for finding a new way to ensure we reach our Smokefree goals."* – Rachael Hart, Chief Executive, Cancer Society New Zealand

There are 2,000 New Zealanders who die from smoking related cancers every year. As the Government deliberates on the next steps of our Smokefree journey, Cancer Society stands committed to our goal of a Smokefree Aotearoa, and will continue advocating for Kiwis in this crucial fight to save New Zealanders lives.



Nurse Support was a "Light in the Darkness" for Rob

From the moment you begin talking to Robert Edwards, his positivity is almost tangible. It's no surprise that Rob's day job involves providing entertainment to retirement villages and special needs facilities, a role he describes as 'incredibly rewarding'. But not every day is sunshine and rainbows. In fact, this past season has been more of an uphill climb. In 2021, Rob received the devastating diagnosis of stage 4 prostate cancer.

"They told me the cancer had moved from my prostate to the lymph node and my lower spine."

"My wife and daughter were with me and my daughter started crying... we'd never had cancer in our family before, it was such a shock."

As Rob and his family grappled with the cancer diagnosis they decided to share their cancer journey on Facebook.

"I chose to share because I wanted to help other people, but it also helped me... It provided a space to get rid of any negativity and allowed me to express my feelings."

To manage his cancer, Rob endured numerous rounds of chemotherapy and radiation, but it's the ongoing hormone therapy that is the most difficult to bear.

"The chemo was very hard - I was losing my hair and having a lot of trouble urinating. But nothing compared to hormone therapy..."



Rob and his support crew

"Hormone therapy makes you sweat - I go through about 100 hot flushes every day. It's uncomfortable and can be awkward. The [doctors] have said I have to be on hormone therapy for two years because it's stage 4, grade 5 cancer so it's very aggressive."

Throughout the ups and downs of his journey, Rob has relied on support from his family and from the wonderful team of nurses at the Cancer Society who have been there every step of the way.

"The support I've had from the Cancer Society has been absolutely amazing. Especially nurse Jane who has rung me frequently over the last year, and has even come to visit me at home... Any question that I've had has been answered."



Rob in his youth representing New Zealand in touch football

"I would encourage every person who has cancer to reach out to the Cancer Society for help. They are a wonderful, wonderful group. Especially having to do their own funding - it's unbelievable, so if you can help, do it."

"In a time when people with cancer are very lonely and afraid, the nurses of the Cancer Society and the organisation bring a beautiful light to their darkness."

When you donate to Cancer Society, you're ensuring that cancer patients like Rob have free access to vital support services like our invaluable nursing team - a priceless gift. Please consider making a donation to help us provide crucial support. Thank you.



Rob receives treatment

Huia's Breast Cancer Journey Inspired a Heart for Advocacy

The last few years have been challenging for mother of three, Huia Patena. From an ischaemic stroke in 2018 where Huia had to relearn how to walk, to moving home to New Zealand just before a global pandemic, it certainly has not been easy. And in 2022, just as Huia had begun to regain her independence, her health took another horrible turn.

"It felt really good to be back in New Zealand and back in the workforce. I could contribute to my family again.

But then in early 2022, I noticed two lumps in my breasts, and I thought where the heck did these come from? We were in the COVID red light setting so I couldn't get them checked out. I didn't think I had cancer... I just kept thinking that it was a cyst..."

After months of waiting, Huia was finally booked in for an important biopsy. But during the pre-examination, her specialist said it was extremely likely she had cancer.

"When the nurse and the doctor left the room, I just lost it. I cried and I could not stop. I was alone in this ugly cold room, it was horrible."

After three long weeks, Huia's biopsy came back positive for grade three breast cancer.

"The surgeon said, 'Without surgery, I'm telling you now, you won't make it until August.'"



The first day of chemotherapy with partner Joseph



Huia going through chemotherapy treatment

"My partner Joseph just stood up and said 'Look, we've got private insurance. Can we see if we can get it done now? Because I can't lose her.'"

Thankfully, surgery was booked for the next week, followed by a plan of radiation, chemotherapy, and hormone therapy. The many treatments would involve numerous trips to the hospital, but Huia's husband Joseph couldn't take any more time off to drive her. As they discussed what seemed to be an impossible situation, your support stepped in.

"My family were busy, and Joseph couldn't take any more time off work. I contacted the Cancer Society about rides to treatment and they were so good.

There is one particular driver I'll never forget. We'd talk on the way to chemo, and then after chemo I couldn't say anything because I was exhausted. I didn't know if I wanted to cry or scream, and he would put his hand on my shoulder. He'd say, 'You'll be alright girl, you've just done another session and you're one step closer.' It helped reframe it and chemo became my mate because each time I would think, I am one step closer. 11 more to go, 10 more to go, 9 more to go..."

Throughout her treatment, Huia also utilised the Cancer Society support groups and found access to counselling invaluable.

"The services Cancer Society provides aren't just for patients. They can explain your diagnosis to your whānau and help you to understand what your family member is going through."



Huia at her fundraising breakfast with partner Joseph, son Naysheh, and daughter Mysti

This journey inspired Huia to raise awareness of the importance of early detection. And in May, she held her first fundraising breakfast with over 50 attendees.

"After I'd gone through all my treatment I thought, I don't want this to happen to any of my loved ones. Early detection is key, and in 2023 alone, three wāhine in my family passed from cancer. So, I am doing everything in my power to raise awareness. My main goal is to get the people of my tribe, Ngāti Haua, to be 100% screened."

Huia's positive impact on the community has not only increased the number of women going for their mammograms in her marae, but she has joined our volunteer team at the Cancer Society Lodge.

"If you are going through cancer, tap into the [Cancer Society] services, because they have the tools, the knowledge, and the wisdom to help patients and their whānau. And just ask the questions, don't be shy."

"I am grateful beyond words to the people who support the Cancer Society and all of its services. Because they were there for me, so now I'm trying to give back to them as well."



Breast Cancer

Every year more than 3,000 women and a small number of men are diagnosed with breast cancer.

Breast cancer symptoms

Signs and symptoms of breast cancer may include:

- a lump in the breast
- the skin on the breast is thicker or dimpled (it can look like an orange peel)
- a lump or swelling in one or both armpits
- a change in the shape or size of the breast
- the nipple turning in, unless the nipple has always been turned in
- a rash on the nipple
- discharge or bleeding from the nipple
- pain or discomfort in the breast that does not go away

Breasts naturally change with age, and it is normal for some changes during your menstrual cycle.

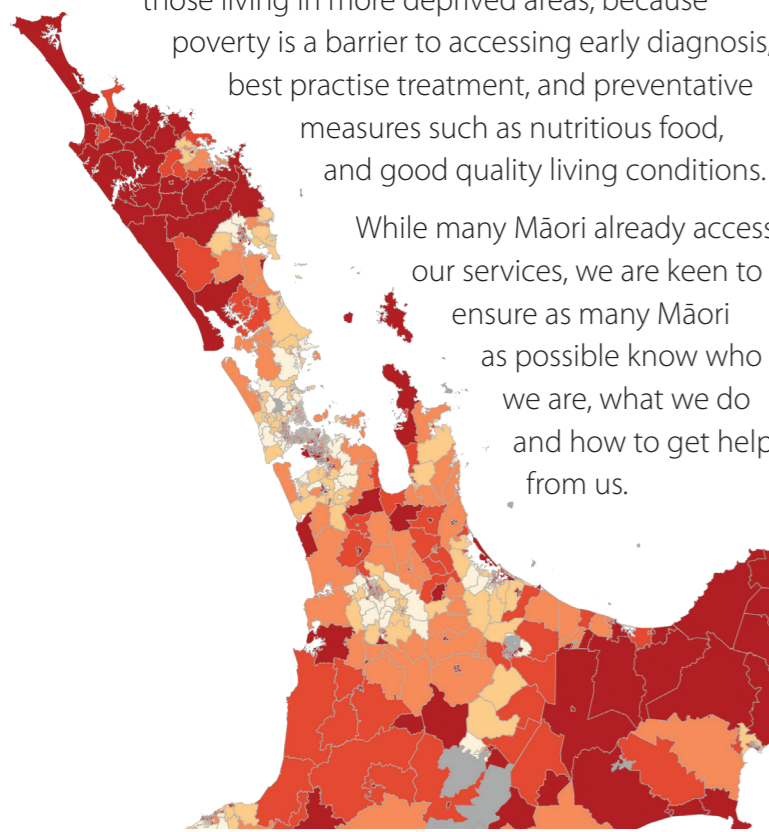
Having these symptoms does not mean you have breast cancer, but it is important to have any changes checked by your doctor.

Kia ora - E te iwi!

At the Cancer Society, we are committed to supporting all families to live life well after a cancer diagnosis. But in New Zealand, Māori are around 20% more likely to develop cancer compared to non-Māori, and are nearly twice as likely to die from cancer.

Overall cancer incidence is also higher among those living in more deprived areas, because poverty is a barrier to accessing early diagnosis, best practise treatment, and preventative measures such as nutritious food, and good quality living conditions.

While many Māori already access our services, we are keen to ensure as many Māori as possible know who we are, what we do and how to get help from us.



Map of the upper North Island showing areas of greater deprivation in dark red

To address disparities, we have been working to develop a kaupapa Māori programme called Kia ora - E te iwi. This programme comprises of six sessions over one day, covering whakawhanaungatanga, what cancer is, an opportunity to talk about personal experiences, what services are available within the Cancer Society and the community, and cancer prevention. It is an opportunity to provide support for whānau affected by cancer, and follow up is crafted in line with the needs of the community (for example a bowel screening service to visit the area). The programme is delivered with aroha, aligned with tikanga and led by kaimahi Māori.

Prior to the session one patient told us:

“Our whānau has had no support, we don’t even know who to turn to or where to ask for help. It’s just been us, my immediate whānau, I don’t want to burden anyone else.”

Although it is still early days for this programme, we have had great feedback from those involved including an increase in referrals coming through to Cancer Society services from Māori cancer patients.

It has also encouraged cancer prevention advocacy, with one grandmother sharing with us that she is now confident to have conversations with her granddaughters about the HPV vaccine to prevent cervical cancer.

“As a Māori person, being in a comfortable environment made it easy for me to listen, contribute and be engaged.”

If you would like to learn more about this exciting programme, contact programme lead Tipene at tipene.brundell@akcansoc.org.nz.

GLOSSARY:

- Aroha - Love, compassion, and empathy
- Kaimahi Māori - Māori staff
- Kaupapa Māori - a Māori approach, practice, principle or ideology
- Tikanga – Correct procedure, customs, and practices
- Whakawhanaungatanga – the process of establishing good relations
- Whānau - Family



Kia ora - E te iwi ki Domain Lodge. Whānau, Hauora providers and Programme Facilitators pictured.

Another Incredible Year for Longest Day Golf Challenge!

This year, the Longest Day Golf Challenge (LDGC) raised more than \$645,000 to support cancer patients and their families throughout New Zealand, one of the most successful challenges we’ve ever had!

To put it into perspective, the money raised equates to over 4,300 nights’ accommodation at Waikato’s Cancer Society Lion’s Lodge for a patient to stay free of charge whilst receiving treatment!

Longest Day participants were invited to test their skills and endurance on the golf course by completing four rounds of golf – a whopping 72 holes – in just one day.



Team Sultans of Swing completed their longest day in Omaha. Aaron, Cam, Jesse, and Simon walked 38 kilometres and played 363 golf shots over the course of the 72 holes! Collectively they raised almost \$6,000.



Team Choppa's managed to complete 100 holes in one day!



Viggo, Eirenei, Riki and Loren were the first team to complete their Longest Day Challenge!

We’d like to say a huge thank you to all who took part, donated to the cause, or spread the word to family and friends. If you’d like to join us for Longest Day 2025, head to www.longestday.org.nz.

One Patient’s Random Act of Kindness Brings Smiles to Cancer Society Lodge

After being diagnosed with stage four cancer last year, Lucy* decided to transform her miniature dollhouse hobby into a beautiful way to give back.

“I just wanted to show some gratitude for people who are supporting cancer and that’s both through the Cancer Society and at the hospitals.”

The people who aren’t front line often don’t get recognised for the things that they do. So, I make these little boxes with handmade flowers and different sayings in them, and I just leave them in different places for people to find. Hopefully, it brings a smile to them for the work that they do.”



Lucy leaves these special boxes on desks, cleaning trolleys and more which have ignited excitement from members of staff at Cancer Society Lodge where Lucy is currently receiving Cancer Society accommodation and support.

“I’ve recently discovered Cancer Society Lodge and the services there to help with the week-long chemotherapy treatment that I do. It’s been fantastic to experience that support!”

We hope you are inspired by Lucy’s creative generosity. Thank you, Lucy, for bringing a little brightness into our day!

*Lucy’s name has been changed to keep her random acts of kindness anonymous.

Cancer Society provides support for Gordon

After many years overseas, in 2021 Gordon decided it was time to come home and be closer to family. But, less than 18 months later, he was diagnosed with stage 4 prostate cancer.

"I didn't know what to think. Why me? Why now? I was overwhelmed by it all. I didn't know what to do."

Gordon had piles of photocopied printouts about the treatment he needed, and piles more for the medicines to control the side effects. Despite many years of experience working as an aged-care nurse in Australia, he felt unprepared for the road ahead.

"The first cycle of chemotherapy was absolutely abhorrent. By cycle four, I was psychologically and physically down, and in a really bad way. I thought, 'what am I going to do?' I thought I could deal with it, but I couldn't."

At first, Gordon found it hard to seek help. But he's glad he did.



Gordon puts the finishing touches on his glass artwork made during a workshop at Rotorua Cancer Society.



Gordon Reihana

"I pushed myself to reach out. That's when I got in touch with Andrea, a nurse at Cancer Society. It was Andrea who suggested I see a psychologist."

"The cancer psychologist opened up a whole new world... It made me a better communicator, especially with my sister."

"I [also] didn't want to burden people with my illness, and some people just don't want to know. It's good to have support outside the family unit."

A keen musician for most of his life, the side effects of treatment have meant Gordon has had to put his guitar down for now. He's picked up the pen instead and started writing as a way of processing his experience. He's also found social activities like the monthly Cancer Society support group have been invaluable.

"Now you can't shut me up. Everyone has their own story. You can give as much or as little as you want and not be judged because you're around people who 'get it'."

"If it wasn't for [nurse] Andrea, I don't know what I would have done. She turned up at my place, how cool is that? She said, 'you're not alone with this'. I clung on to that."

"I think Cancer Society is so important. If you live alone, you can feel isolated. You need good outlets to socialise."

Thank you so much for your incredible support! We couldn't do it without you.

Waikato/Bay of Plenty Cancer Society

For any queries regarding fundraising or donations please contact our friendly team.

☎ 0800 123 230 ✉ donations@cancer.org.nz

www.cancer.org.nz

