



## MEDIA RELEASE

### Lung Cancer Patient, John Ashton to complete a 10k run to raise awareness of lung cancer and highlight the need for more treatment options

#### Summary

Lung Cancer Patient Ambassador, John Ashton has set his sights on completing a 10k run to raise awareness of lung cancer and highlight not only the results of access to effective medicines, but also the benefits of exercise for people with lung disease. Whilst John has just  $\frac{3}{4}$  of his pre-cancer lungs left, he has been busy training with the goal of breaking 60 minutes in this 10k run.

*Said John -*

*“As a lung cancer patient I became aware of the low profile lung cancer has in New Zealand, despite it causing more deaths than any other type of cancer (5 Kiwis die every day from lung cancer).”*

*“As lung cancer patient ambassador for Lung Foundation New Zealand, I am dedicated to increasing the awareness and early detection of lung cancer and advocating for more funded treatment options for patients.”*

*“While I have just  $\frac{3}{4}$  of my pre-cancer lungs left, I have been busy training with the goal of breaking 60 minutes in this run challenge”*

*“By choosing this 10k fundraising run challenge to raise much needed funds for Lung Foundation New Zealand, I also want to highlight the benefits of exercise for people with lung disease”.*

*“Please join with me by making a gift to this great cause - visit my run challenge page below”*

<https://give.everydayhero.com/nz/lung-cancer-patient-10k-run-fundraising-challenge>

*“Your support really will help save lives by increasing the awareness and early detection of lung disease”.*

#### Programme:

The Honest 10, Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> Oct, Wind Needle, Corner Cobham Drive & Evans Bay Parade, Wellington

Registration: 8.15am

Start: 9.00am

Guests arrive: 9.45am

Finish: From 9.45am - 10.15am

Speeches & Prize-giving: 10.15am - 10.30am

#### Members of Parliament attending in support:

Hon Peter Dunne, Associate Minister of Health

Hon Annette King, MP for Rongotai, Labour Deputy Leader, Member of the Health Select Committee

**Video** - John was recently interviewed about his lung cancer diagnosis and his journey as a patient.

Click on the following link to view <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ec3fk4OCau4>

See also [www.lungfoundation.org.nz](http://www.lungfoundation.org.nz)



### **Background - John Ashtons journey from diagnosis into remission**

At the age of 47 John Ashton was diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer after a chronic cough did not respond to anti-asthma medication. He had never smoked.

The cancer could not be removed surgically because it had spread to his other lung. The median survival time for this type of cancer is 9-12 months. John underwent several rounds of two different types of chemotherapy, but his cancer did not respond and his symptoms remained unchanged.

In January 2014, John found he was a candidate for a very new type of drug, not yet registered in New Zealand, called ALK inhibitors. In February he started taking an ALK inhibitor. Several weeks later the cough had gone and a CT scan showed clear regression of the secondary tumours. John has continued taking an ALK inhibitor and the cancer remains under control. He recently ran 7.5km in 40 minutes.

Having worked initially as a research fellow, Prof. John Ashton works full time as a lecturer at the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology, University of Otago.

John lives on the Otago Peninsula with his wife and two sons. As lung cancer patient ambassador for Lung Foundation New Zealand, Dr John Ashton hasn't let lung cancer define him.

With the support of his family, Otago University and the Lung Foundation, John is dedicated to empowering others, by sharing his experience; highlighting the symptoms of lung cancer and emphasising the importance of early detection.

### **Background - Lung Foundation New Zealand**

Established in 2015, Lung Foundation New Zealand is an independent non-government organisation dedicated to promoting healthy lungs and early detection of lung disease (including lung cancer, NZ's biggest cancer killer).

The Foundation provides a voice for patients and advocates on a range of issues, including; access to more effective funded treatments, an increase in research funding and a commitment to making Aotearoa a Smokefree nation by 2025.

For more information and to get involved or make a donation, please visit

<http://lungfoundation.org.nz/support-us/>

### **New Zealand Lung cancer statistics:**

- Lung cancer is New Zealand's biggest cancer killer. More than 1600 kiwis die from lung cancer every year (5 Kiwis every day).
- Every year in New Zealand, more people die of lung cancer, than of breast cancer, prostate cancer and melanoma combined.
- Even healthy people can develop lung cancer - two of every ten people diagnosed with lung cancer have never smoked.
- Lung cancer is the most common cause of cancer death for males aged between 45-64 yrs
- Lung cancer is the most common cause of cancer death for men and women aged 65-74 yrs



- The annual mortality rate for lung cancer is 80% of the total number of lung cancer registrations per year. The same comparison for colorectal cancer is 42.5%; breast cancer is 20.2%; prostate cancer is 19.4%.
- New Zealand's 5 year survival rate is poor in comparison to Australia (12%) and USA (16%).
- Lung cancer is a major cause of disparity of health outcomes between Maori and non-Maori, as lung cancer rates are four times higher in Maori women and two and a half times higher in Maori men.

**For media enquiries to arrange an interview with John Ashton, Lung Cancer Patient Ambassador, please contact John directly;**

Email: [john.ashton@otago.ac.nz](mailto:john.ashton@otago.ac.nz)

**For further information about Lung Foundation New Zealand, please contact;**

Philip Hope, Chief Executive, Lung Foundation NZ

Phone: 021 959 450

[philip.hope@lungcancer.org.nz](mailto:philip.hope@lungcancer.org.nz)

**For event enquiries or to register in The Honest 10 run, Evans Bay, Wellington, please contact;**

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