

MEDIA RELEASE

World Cancer Day 4th February 2017 - Lung Cancer Kills More Kiwis Than Any Other Cancer

Today, Saturday 4th February is World Cancer Day and people are being urged to get active to help combat the world's most deadly diseases, the cancers.

Under the banner 'We can. I can.' World Cancer Day encourages people to be more active - in every sense to combat the illnesses known as cancer that, in less than two decades, will directly affect up to 21.7 million¹ people per year.

Lung cancer is the most common cancer worldwide and in New Zealand, more people die of lung cancer, than of breast cancer, prostate cancer and melanoma combined.²

Philip Hope, Chief Executive of Lung Foundation New Zealand, says, "World Cancer Day is a chance to reflect and explore how everyone - as a collective or as individuals - can do their part to reduce the global burden of cancer.

"We need to take collective action as a country to reduce both our high rates of cancer and the inequalities that patients face. The Lung Foundation wants lung health to be a priority for all Kiwis and this includes making sure lung cancer patients receive the right treatment at the right time.

"Lung cancer impacts more people than any other cancer and people need to know how to keep their lungs healthy and recognise symptoms of lung disease; The symptoms of lung cancer include, but are not limited to, shortness of breath, chest pains, an unexplained cough (of more than four weeks) and noisy breathing."

Lung Foundation New Zealand Medical Director & Associate Professor of Oncology, Chris Atkinson, says, "We need people to recognise symptoms and visit their doctor if they notice any signs. This will lead to earlier diagnoses and ultimately reduce deaths.

"Lung cancer lacks the profile of many other cancers. It is also a major cause of disparity 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 than non-Maori.

"Thanks to advancements in lung cancer research, doctors have found that every lung cancer is different and biomarker testing can be used to uncover some of the characteristics of a patient's cancer and plan the best treatment.

"There are several different biomarkers in the most common group of lung cancers - non small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). These biomarkers include EGFR, ALK, ROS-1, and PD-L1.

"Recently we have seen new medicines being registered in New Zealand for lung cancer. These include anti-PD1 immunotherapies KEYTRUDA® (pembrolizumab) for patients who have previously been treated for advanced (NSCLC) and whose tumours express the PD-L1 biomarker and nivolumab (OPDIVO) for previously treated advanced NSCLC."

Philip Hope adds, "It is great that we are seeing better diagnostic tools and new treatments, but we recognise that there are significant unmet needs and lung cancers are some of the most challenging cancers to treat.

“To coincide with World Cancer Day, we have launched a number of lung cancer patient resources to help inspire people to be their own health care advocate and empower them to make informed treatment decisions.”

Together, the twelve individual lung cancer patient resources make up a toolkit that helps inform all aspects of the lung cancer patient journey and they are available on the Lung Foundations website;

<http://lungfoundation.org.nz/resources/>

Lung cancer patient, Kate Hodges says, “I only wished the materials had been available when I was first diagnosed. I found them clear, concise and easy to read. They gave me the information that I needed immediately, but not so much that would have overwhelmed.”

The Lung Foundation acknowledges its Special Advisory Committee for their work in preparing and delivering lung cancer patient resources which are user friendly, easy to read and very appropriate.”

The Foundations Special Advisory Committee, is headed by Medical Director & Associate Professor of Oncology, Chris Atkinson of Christchurch, and assisted by;

- Dr Greg Frazer, Respiratory Physician & Clinical Director, Respiratory Services, Christchurch Hospital
- Catherine Smith, Clinical Nurse Specialist - Lung Cancer, Cardio Respiratory Integrated Specialist Services (CRISS), Christchurch Hospital
- Anne Fraser, Oncology Nurse Practitioner, Cancer and Blood Services, Auckland City Hospital

The Lung Foundation also acknowledges the valuable input provided by lung cancer patients, Dr John Ashton, Lung Cancer Patient Ambassador and Kate Hodges, Lung Cancer Patient Advocate.

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For media enquiries to arrange an interview with Medical Director & Associate Professor of Oncology, Chris Atkinson, or for further information about the Lung Foundation, please contact;

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For media enquiries to interview Lung Cancer Patient, Kate Hodges, Please contact;

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References

¹ GLOBOCAN 2012 (IARC), Cancer Incidence, Mortality and Prevalence Worldwide, Lyon, France, International Agency for Research on Cancer, available at:http://globocan.iarc.fr/old/burden.asp?selection_pop=224900&Text-p=World&selection_cancer=290&Text-c=All+cancers+excl.+non-melanoma+skin+cancer&pYear=18&type=0&window=1&submit=%C2%A0Execute[Accessed 24/01/2017]

2. Cancer: New registrations and deaths 2012/ Ministry of Health NZ last accessed 25 August 2016