



## MEDIA RELEASE

### World Lung Cancer Day 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017

#### *Lung Cancer Kills More Kiwis Than Any Other Cancer (5 People Every Day)*

Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> August is World Lung Cancer Day - the purpose being to raise awareness about lung cancer and its global impact, to inform and educate an understanding of lung cancer risks and the importance of early treatment.

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

Today, Lung Foundation New Zealand observes World Lung Cancer Day to honour and unite all kiwis that have been affected by lung cancer.

Philip Hope, Chief Executive of Lung Foundation New Zealand, says, "Sadly, more than 1600 kiwis die from lung cancer every year. For too long, lung cancer has been the silent and hidden disease - underfunded, undetected and unspoken".

"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".

"The symptoms of lung cancer include, but are not limited to, shortness of breath, chest pains, an unexplained/persistent cough and noisy breathing."

"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".

"To learn more about lung cancer, view our range of lung cancer resources."

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

*Lung cancer is the most common cause of cancer death for men aged between 45-74 years and women 65-74 years. A fact not known by many is one out of every five people diagnosed with lung cancer have never smoked.*

Lung Foundation Medical Director & Associate Professor of Oncology, Chris Atkinson, says, "We still have some way to go to address the stigma that has long been associated with lung cancer. If you know someone that has been diagnosed with lung cancer, don't ask them if they have ever smoked, ask them how they are".

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) which are around 80% to 85% of all lung cancers. These biomarkers include EGFR, ALK, ROS-1, and PD-L1.

Says, Medical Director & Associate Professor of Oncology, Chris Atkinson, “Many lung cancers are now treatable with targeted therapies and immunotherapies, such as KEYTRUDA (pembrolizumab) which is a significant breakthrough compared to the current standards of care.”

These treatments have considerably less toxicity than standard chemotherapy and significantly improve survival rates, giving patients more time with their families.

“Unfortunately, New Zealand lags behind many other OECD countries with its funding of targeted therapies and immunotherapies in the public health system”.

“Such is the inequity, many lung cancer patients and their families are forced to either self-fund their treatment/s, raise funds, or accept the consequences”.

“We are aware that more than 4,500 people have donated around half a million dollars via the Givealittle platform in support of a friend or loved one fundraising for lung cancer treatment. This suggests New Zealand is simply not keeping pace with what is a rapidly changing environment”.

“We are calling on Pharmac to help address this inequity by funding these new lung cancer treatments which have been registered in New Zealand”.

-ENDS-

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

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**Lung Cancer Patients available to media for an interview**

To arrange an interview with Kate Hodges, mother of two, lung cancer patient advocate, contact;

Kate Hodges, phone 027 458 6559

[nzhodges@gmail.com](mailto:nzhodges@gmail.com)

To arrange an interview with John Ashton, father of two, lung cancer patient ambassador, contact;

John Ashton, phone 021 111 5352

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



### **About Lung Foundation New Zealand**

Lung Foundation New Zealand was established in 2015 and it is a non-government organisation dedicated to promoting healthy lungs and early detection of lung disease (including lung cancer, NZ's biggest cancer killer. Five kiwis every day die of lung cancer).

The Lung Foundation is devoted to supporting people affected by lung disease and provides a voice for patients and their families.

Lung Foundation NZ 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.

### **Our Vision**

That New Zealanders will know how to keep their lungs healthy and they investigate symptoms of lung disease earlier in response to our advocacy.

### **Our Mission**

To ensure lung health is a priority for all New Zealanders.

### **Make a gift - Help us save lives**

<https://givealittle.co.nz/donate/org/lungfoundationnz>

### **Plan an event - Help us raise awareness and funds**

<https://nfp.everydayhero.com/nz/lung-foundation-new-zealand#>

### **Lung Health Promotion - Our Key Messages**

1. Lung disease can affect anyone.
2. See a doctor if you have a persistent cough, shortness of breath, chest pains or noisy breathing.
3. Lung disease can be treated. The earlier you start treatment the better.
4. Look after your lungs. Be active and don't smoke

### **Help us promote early detection by sharing our poster**

<http://lungfoundation.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/C004193-LFNZ-A4-Poster-v52034.pdf>

Lung cancer patient survivor and father of two, John Ashton talks about lung cancer. Help us improve early detection by sharing this video;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ec3fk4OCau4>