

New laboratory service for lower North Island

The lower North Island will have a new integrated hospital and community laboratory service from 1 November. The new service will see laboratory equipment upgraded in the region which will improve patient experiences, turnaround times, and access to test results.

Wellington SCL was selected as the provider of the new service. It was selected because of its experience providing quality laboratory services in New Zealand and Australia, the significant investment they will make in new laboratory facilities and equipment in the region, and their commitment to offering jobs to all current DHB laboratory staff.

A fully integrated hospital and community laboratory service will mean there will be one seamless process across the region. Patients and health professionals will continue to receive high quality and timely laboratory services.

Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT CHANGES WILL THERE BE FOR PATIENTS?

Changes to patients will be minimal, and many will come as a result of improvements to services. This may include improved access to community collection services and faster turnaround times for some test results.

WILL PATIENTS DROP THEIR SAMPLES OFF TO THE SAME PLACE?

Some community collection centres may change buildings, but they will remain in the same area.

There will continue to be a mobile collection service for patients at aged care facilities and for people living at home with complex conditions that means they can't attend a collection centre.

WILL PATIENTS HAVE TO START PAYING TO HAVE LABORATORY TESTS DONE?

If patients currently have laboratory tests funded by the DHB, this will continue.

Some people are charged for private laboratory testing for insurance and travel purposes and these charges will continue as normal.

HAVE HEALTH PROFESSIONALS BEEN INVOLVED IN PLANNING THIS NEW SERVICE?

Yes. Health professionals, including laboratory experts, GPs and senior doctors, have been involved in planning, evaluating the proposals, and specifying the requirements for an integrated laboratory service. They are also represented on groups to guide and oversee the transition to the new service.

From 1 November, a group of GPs and senior medical staff will have clinical oversight of the new laboratory service and make recommendations on new tests.

WHAT WILL AN INTEGRATED LABORATORY SERVICE MEAN FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS?

GPs, hospital doctors and other health professionals who order tests for patients will experience the same or better services than they currently receive. Turnaround times for some tests are expected to improve with the expansion of electronic ordering, and more efficient processes. Health professionals will also have easy access to all tests results and laboratory specialists for advice.





WHAT CHANGES WILL THERE BE AT THE HOSPITALS?

Staff currently working in the hospital laboratories will continue to work there and many of the other day to day activities will remain the same.

One of the biggest changes will be infrastructure. A new multi-million dollar laboratory for the three DHBs will be set up at Wellington Regional Hospital and laboratory equipment will be upgraded at Wairarapa, Hutt and Kenepuru Hospitals. State-of-the-art equipment will make it faster to get test results back and improve the work environment for staff.

There will also be new IT systems to enable health professionals to access both the community and hospital laboratory results for their patients. This will prevent unnecessary duplication of tests where patients sometimes have tests done at their GP clinic and then again at hospital.

WHAT OTHER BENEFITS WILL THERE BE?

By substantially increasing our economies of scale and being more efficient the three DHBs will jointly save an average of \$10 million a year, for the next ten years, when compared with the expected cost of delivering services under the current arrangement. These savings will be reinvested into services to improve the health of our communities.

WILL THE NEW LABORATORY HAVE THE SAME QUALITY STANDARDS?

Yes. All laboratories have to meet International Accreditation New Zealand (IANZ) standards. IANZ is an external body who monitors laboratories against national standards.

HOW WILL WE KNOW IF A NEW SERVICE IS WORKING WELL?

There will be regular satisfaction surveys for patients and health professionals. The contract also has specific requirements which will be monitored closely.

DO OTHER HOSPITALS HAVE INTEGRATED LABORATORIES?

Yes. Nearly half the district health boards in New Zealand have integrated laboratories. Two of these district health boards also provide tertiary level health services.

