

Media statement

Two year anniversary for Wairarapa's bowel screening programme

2 August 2019

Wairarapa DHB is celebrating its first two-year cycle of bowel screening and the programme managers are pleased with the community participation.

It takes two years to invite all eligible people (60 to 74 years) in a health board region to screening, so the two-year anniversary is a significant milestone for Wairarapa one of the first DHBs in the country to roll out the programme.

Bowel cancer is New Zealand's second most common cause of cancer death, with around 100 people dying every month. The screening programme provides the opportunity to detect issues that otherwise may not have been found, providing early treatment and monitoring where required, and two-yearly checking for people without symptoms or identified issues.

"It is really exciting to be a part of this programme," said Janeen Cross, one of the Wairarapa DHB team that are leading the bowel screening locally.

"Our Wairarapa whānau have been actively engaging and we have had really good participation results. Where people have put the kits aside and perhaps forgotten them we have given them a nudge, just a gentle reminder and some reassurance."

"The test is easy to do and, once people know that, they are happy to take up the screening opportunity," Janeen says. "Really, our Wairarapa whānau want to be around to enjoy their lives and watch their mokopuna grow up. The bowel screening programme helps that happen, and we feel privileged to have been the first DHB to provide that for our community."

Wairarapa's bowel screening team want everyone to encourage the older people in their lives to do the simple test when it comes in the mail, and to continue with two-yearly screening for as long as they are eligible.

Since the National Bowel Screening Programme began two years ago, 325 cancers have been found and hundreds of potentially cancerous polyps removed. In Wairarapa alone, 6,456 people have been screened and 27 cancers detected.

Bowel screening saves lives by helping to find bowel cancer at an early stage, when it can often be successfully treated. People who are diagnosed with early stage bowel cancer, and who receive treatment early, have a 90% chance of long term survival.

The programme targets 60 to 74 year olds because, during the pilot undertaken in Waitematā, 80 percent of cancers were found in this age group.

Additional information:

More about the National Bowel Screening Programme can be found [here](#) or on the [Ministry of Health website](#).

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