

MEDIA RELEASE

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“Counties Manukau goes to war against diabetes”

The people of Counties Manukau District are staring down the barrel of what is potentially the most crucial health issue they will ever face - diabetes.

12,000 people in the area are diagnosed with diabetes, and as many again have the disease but remain undiagnosed. With numbers expected to more than double over the next 20 years, if action isn't taken now, a new satellite dialysis clinic will have to be built every year, just to cope with demand.

To combat these harrowing statistics, the Counties Manukau District Health Board has commissioned a strategic five year plan in conjunction with Manukau City Council and other key stakeholders. The 'Lets Beat Diabetes' campaign will be launched tonight, with the hope of turning around the statistics that make the district one of the worst hit by the disease.

10 million dollars has been allocated over the next 5 years to the campaign to target three key goals; to reduce the incidence of diabetes, slow the progression of the disease in those who already have it, and to reduce harm from complications. This funding is in addition to the many millions of dollars already invested in the treatment and prevention of diabetes.

Dr Brandon Orr-Walker, Clinical Director of Let's Beat Diabetes, says "Type 2 diabetes has its roots in prenatal life". The campaign will focus on young people who are at risk of developing the disease in the future, and changing the habits of these young people so they can lead healthy and fulfilled lives. The campaign will also focus on helping to ensure people with diabetes enjoy better life outcomes.

Let's Beat Diabetes will be reflected in Counties Manukau in areas as diverse as school lunches and exercise programmes to suburban design collaboration with City Councils.

Particular attention will also be paid to our Maori and Pacific communities who are the most at risk of this disease.

"The rapid rise in the epidemic (within a single generation) and current medical understanding of the causes of Type 2 diabetes, is that while it is a medical condition, its beginnings are in the social and environmental arena" says Dr Orr - Walker.

The Lets Beat Diabetes strategy reflects this, by tackling the underlying issues behind diabetes- poor nutrition, lack of exercise, and especially obesity. The fact is, 50% of New Zealanders are overweight and 20% are obese. 30% of our children are overweight and these figures are on the rise. Carrying too much weight makes diabetes more likely.

The social cost to communities and the health system will be enormous if the root of the problem is not addressed. Dr Orr-Walker says "if preventative and lifestyle treatments are difficult to comply with, the complexities of medical treatment are even greater". It's estimated that hospital costs for people with diabetes are at least 2.5 times that of non-diabetes patients, with renal dialysis costing up to \$45,000 per year, per patient.

The Lets Beat Diabetes Campaign recognises that we need to stop this disease of inequalities in its tracks - to protect our community, our families and our children from this serious disease which is slowly robbing us of our future.

For further information, please contact Paul Stephenson on 021 486 084 or Lauren Young, 09 3788 433 or 027 243 9900.