



Alliance pushes for increase in health research funding

Ahead of October election, New Zealand advocacy group calls for tripling of government investment

New Zealanders for Health Research, an advocacy alliance that is aiming to make health research an election issue, will issue a “report card” on all the main parties’ policies this week.

NZHR has written to all parties who hold seats in parliament, asking them to commit to more spending and better integration of research within the health system. It is using a survey that shows a high level of concern about health issues among New Zealanders to push the issue.

After the May budget, NZHR chief executive Chris Higgins slammed the level of spending on health research in New Zealand. He told Research Professional News that the association now wanted parties to make “a commitment to increase government investment in health research from the current 0.8 per cent of healthcare costs to 2.4 per cent, and embedding health research as an essential component of the health system”. The aim is “better health outcomes and elimination of unnecessary premature mortality,” he said.

On 14 September, the Health Research Council of New Zealand announced a NZ\$14.4 million round of healthcare research funding, drawn from existing budget allocations. The projects funded are the first under the Health Delivery Research investment category.

They include a study of the use of CT scans in acute coronary syndrome at the University of Otago, the Tihei Rangatahi programme on Māori youth health at Massey University, and a study of cervical cancer testing conducted by the Research Trust of Victoria University of Wellington.

Health Research Council chief executive Sunny Collings said the funds would support research that informed “policy, practice or systems in New Zealand’s health and disability sector”.

An NZHR poll in May showed that 79 per cent of New Zealanders thought health research investment should be a government priority, with “improving hospitals and the healthcare system” top of the list at 89 per cent. A response from the Labour Party said the government was “ensuring that groups who have not been as well served by our health system in the past are prioritised in health research”, and pointed to the NZ\$25m

Covid-19 Innovation Acceleration Fund and the NZ\$10m earmarked for New Zealand in the NZ\$37m Covid-19 vaccine response.

Julie Anne Genter, Green Party MP and associate minister for health, told NZHR that the Green Party supported higher investment in health research. “In particular, we’d like to see research investment directed toward Māori and Pasifika health issues to address the continuing disparities in the standards of health between different ethnic groups,” she said.

The Green Party also supported NZHR’s push for more inclusion of research within the health system.

A National Party spokesperson responded that the party would “not reduce government funding in health research if we form the next government, and we will consider increased funding in the future if the economy begins to stabilise”.

Several other parties are yet to respond to NZHR’s call; NZHR said it expected to put out its “report card” on the policies this week.

Members of NZHR include the Malaghan Institute of Medical Research, Cure Kids, the New Zealand Association of Clinical Research, pharmaceutical company Roche and several universities.

See more at: <https://www.researchprofessional.com/0/rr/news/new-zealand/2020/9/alliance-pushes-for-increase-in-health-research-funding.html#sthash.KhLRJz4O.dpuf>



New Zealanders for
HEALTH RESEARCH
*Ngā Tāngata o Aotearoa mō
te Rangahau Hauora*