

## **RCPA EXPRESSES CONCERN AT GOVERNMENT'S NEW CANCER ACTION PLAN**

[The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia](#) (RCPA) has expressed concern that a new cancer initiative announced by the New Zealand government fails to encompass pathology/laboratory testing services which are essential for the diagnosis of all cancers. The College strongly recommends that the Government address the funding and workforce requirements for these services as part of the New Zealand Cancer Action Plan.

The comprehensive plan, announced yesterday by New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Health Minister David Clark, includes the creation of a national cancer control agency, led directly by clinical experts, plus an extra \$60 million in funding for PHARMAC for new medicines, including several cancer treatments. There is no indication, however, that funding for the additional pathology testing that will be required to implement components of the Cancer Action Plan will be provided.

Associate Professor Bruce Latham, President of the RCPA, said,

“Whilst we welcome plans to establish a Cancer Control Agency and also an extra \$60 million in funding for PHARMAC, it is a concern to see that there are no plans to provide funding for pathology testing as part of this Cancer Action Plan. It is surprising that the government has outlined plans to improve detection, diagnosis, treatment and care after treatment, yet it has failed to recognise the crucial role that pathology plays in the diagnosis of all cancers, and also the need for complex genetic testing of tumours to guide targeted treatment using these new medicines.

“It is absolutely essential that additional funding is provided for pathology and companion testing if the government is to reach its goal of providing better cancer prevention, treatment and care in New Zealand over the next 10 years. It is also important to note that funding for pathology needs to increase in order to cover the increased complexity of testing, including genetic testing, needed to deliver ‘consistent and modern cancer care.’ Pathology services will be the sources of the data required for ‘cancer investment decisions’ and are involved daily in research and innovation that drives evidence-based practice.”

Doctor Nicole Kramer, New Zealand Vice President of the RCPA, and Vice President of the New Zealand Society of Pathologists, said,

“Almost all cancer diagnoses are made by medical specialist pathologists, yet despite the dramatically increasing complexity and the expense involved in cancer diagnosis and treatment targeting, there has been no indication of increased funding for pathology services. A key component of any attempt to reduce inequity in cancer care needs to include improved access to a timely and accurate diagnosis. Laboratories throughout New Zealand have large workloads and struggle with recruitment and retention of staff, particularly in histology where many cancers are diagnosed.

“In addition, genetic and genomic testing is becoming increasingly integrated into healthcare. While it’s great that patients will have access to some of the newer therapies available, it is critical that we appropriately fund the companion molecular tests that may be required for eligibility for these therapies. We welcome a co-ordinated approach to the availability and funding of these tests for all New Zealanders and call on the Government to provide additional funding for the pathology services that are a key component of cancer care.”

The RCPA is the leading organisation representing pathologists in Australasia and will continue to support pathologists and improve the use of pathology testing to achieve better healthcare in the community. The RCPA continues to work with the Government to ensure that pathology services are accessible and affordable for all New Zealanders.

For more information on the RCPA, visit [www.rcpa.edu.au](http://www.rcpa.edu.au) or see our updates on [Facebook](#) or Twitter - [@PathologyRCPA](#) [#RCPA](#) [#pathology](#) [#MedicineIsPathology](#).

## **ENDS**

### **About the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia:**

The RCPA is the leading professional organisation representing pathologists, medical specialists and scientists who provide pathology testing in Australasia. Its mission is to train and support pathologists and to improve the use of pathology testing to achieve better healthcare.

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