

Media release

National Science Challenges boost health research funding, but still not enough

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Health research advocate, New Zealanders for Health Research (NZHR), welcomes the government's decision to continue funding the National Science Challenges but says that funding for health research still falls well short of what New Zealanders need and expect.

NZHR Chief Executive Chris Higgins said that the total ten year funding allocated to the four health related challenges stands at \$184.7m, or 27% of the total allocation. Of this amount \$94.3m had already been spent in previous years or allocated in the 2018/19 budget, with the remaining \$90.4m comprising new money to be spent over the next five to six years.

"We welcome and applaud the government's continuing investment in health research" said Mr Higgins, "but the government's overall funding of health research falls well short of what's required and what New Zealanders expect".

"NZHR maintains that government investment in health research should stand at 2.4% of health care costs, yet the 2018/19 budgeted amount, including investment in the health related National Science Challenges, comprised just 0.74% of health care costs."

"Furthermore, our May 2018 Roy Morgan Research public opinion poll found that three quarters of New Zealanders believe that the government should be investing more funding in health research" said Mr Higgins.

The four health related National Science Challenges are: "A Better Start" (to improve the potential of young New Zealanders to have a healthy and successful life: \$34.7m allocated over ten years); "Ageing Well" (to harness science to sustain health and wellbeing into the later years of life: \$34.9m); "Healthier Lives" (to reduce the burden of major New Zealand health problems: \$31.3m); and "High-Value Nutrition" (to develop high-value foods with validated health benefits to drive economic growth: \$83.8m).

NZHR is a member funded advocacy organisation pressing for increased investment in health research from government, industry and philanthropy, and is chaired by Graham Malaghan, of the Wellington-based Malaghan Institute of Medical Research.

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Further information about the National Science Challenges is available from MBIE [here](#)