

# Ka Whakarauoratia te Hunga e te Rangahau Hauora

## Health Research Saves Lives!

Newsletter of New Zealanders for Health Research (NZHR)  
September 2022; No. 53

*“New Zealand’s peak body representing the entire health and medical research pipeline”*



### Greetings and tēnā koutou from Chief Executive Chris Higgins

Welcome to the September issue of NZHR’s newsletter. It’s been sometime since the last issue - partly due to an unpleasant dose of Covid and ongoing fatigue for a couple of weeks after. Even though catching it coincided with the expiry of my first booster shot I remain in awe of the science which so quickly produced the mRNA vaccination which mitigated my symptoms, not forgetting the decades of antecedent basic research when for much of the time the line of sight to impact would have been obscure at best.

This issue of Health Research Saves Lives features:

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- The code of expectations for health entities’ engagement with consumers and whānau p3
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Paerangi Future Pathways RSI Green Paper, and the Health Research Strategy being at its half way point; and the need for increased investment to meet the growing expectations of the health research system, including to:

- Improve premature amenable and non-amenable premature mortality and morbidity outcomes
- Enable Te Whatu Ora, Te Aka Whai Ora and Manatū Hauora to undertake their research functions
- Enable improved health outcomes to be recognised and securely resourced as a key RSI priority
- Create a research culture embedded within health services delivery where clinicians routinely engage in health research as a key component of their practice
- Resource continued implementation of the health research strategy
- Support investigator led and other research where line of sight to impact is difficult to articulate
- Free up health and medical researchers to get on with what they're good at rather than being tied up with repetitive grants funding applications

Subsequent feedback both from those who were there and those who heard about it from others suggests that the presentation was well received, and we're happy to deliver it to other forums if requested. The presentation can be seen [here](#)



## Health System Improvement and Innovation

Following the 2022 Budget's allocation of new Ministry of Health funding of \$23m for "health science research, leadership, analysis and publishing quality evidence, data and insights", I took the opportunity to meet with some of the members of the team responsible for the deployment of this funding including Dean Rutherford, Sayali Pendharkar and Michelle Ingram. Although it's early days it was encouraging to learn about the Ministry's sharpening focus on health research, the commitment to implementing the Health Research Strategy, and the team's hopes and prospects for engaging positively with both Te Whata Ora and Te Aka Whai Ora.



## Code of expectations for health entities' engagement with consumers and whānau

The final version of the code of expectations for health entities' engagement with consumers and whānau has been released and is available [here](#).

NZHR seeks to represent the voice of consumers of health research through the results of our public opinion polls and through our networking with health consumer and advocacy organisations. In our submission on the code we said that health consumers should be involved in the design of health research that involves them, and that they should expect to experience programmes and services based on best available evidence.

While the final version of the code does not reflect these imperatives directly it does require health entities to promote quality and safety when engaging with consumers, whānau and

communities. It also requires health entities to apply its expectations by “co-designing with consumers, whānau and communities so there is collective development of organisational priorities, processes and evaluation, and consumers, whānau and communities are involved at all levels”

While the code and these particular provisions are positive developments, we continue to be mystified by the systemic reluctance to commit specifically to the provision of evidence based services - apparent not only in this code but also in the health reforms legislation generally.



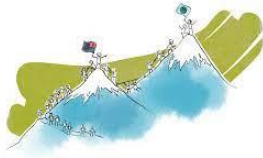
## Government Policy Statement on Health

The Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act requires the regular production of a Government Policy Statement (GPS) on Health which “sets the Government’s priorities for the publicly funded health sector in Aotearoa New Zealand in order to protect, promote and improve the health of all New Zealanders, to achieve equity in health outcomes, in particular for Māori, and to build towards pae ora (healthy futures) for all New Zealanders. It is a public statement of what Government expects the health sector to deliver and achieve, what funding and support are available, and how progress will be measured and monitored”. The first such policy statement is available [here](#).

In his forward to the GPS Minister Little refers to five shifts in how our system works and what it delivers for people. While NZHR is pleased to see that “specialist and emergency ...services will be .... informed by the best evidence” we would have preferred it if the GPS had set out an expectation that all services and programmes should be evidence based, not just specialist and emergency services. Indeed, we believe that a commitment to evidence based services and programmes, including the embedding of health research as an essential component of all aspects of the health system, should constitute a sixth key shift in its own right.

Nevertheless NZHR commends this interim policy statement as a good start and we are particularly pleased to see that:

- “evidence and insights, including whānau voice, will provide a clearer understanding of system performance for Māori. Information will be readily available to inform innovation, service design and models of care. Whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori organisations will have access to, and the capacity and capability to utilise, powerful insights, evidence and data to transform services and wellbeing for individuals, whānau and communities”. (Embedding Te Tiriti o Waitangi across the health sector, p 17);
- “clinical leadership, science, research, intelligence, analytics and innovation, including mātauranga Māori, will be harnessed and embedded across the new health system, with plans established to grow capability”. (Laying the foundations for the ongoing success of the health sector, p 39), and
- “the Ministry of Health will publish a health sector outcomes framework to outline the shared expectations of Ministers, New Zealanders and health agencies for the performance of the health system overall”. (p 46).



## Frontier Firms

In April 2021 the Productivity Commission released its final report “New Zealand firms: Reaching for the frontier”, and in March 2022 the government released its response, including to the report’s specific recommendations for both use of genetically modified organisms, and health sector participation in the healthtech innovation ecosystem (which includes health research). As the Commission’s recommendations directly reflect submissions made by NZHR (and others), we report on the government’s responses as follows:

Commission’s recommendation	Government’s response	NZHR comment
The Government should undertake a full review of the regulation of genetic modification (GM), to ensure it is fit for purpose and supports domestic innovation.	Government has long considered that the New Zealand brand and value is best met by maintaining a ‘proceed with caution’ approach. However, we consider it timely to start informed conversations around New Zealand’s use of GM technologies.	Following a joint NZHR/MIMR submission to the Environment Committee highlighting issues with the autologous use of GMOs in CarT clinical trials we understand that work is underway to review the use of GM technologies in medical research where there is no risk of GMOs being released into the environment.
The Government should use its intended major health system reform to improve the mandate, funding and incentives for DHBs to participate in the healthtech innovation ecosystem, for the mutual benefit of the healthtech sector, and the efficiency, effectiveness and accessibility of New Zealand’s health and disability system.	Government agrees with this recommendation. There are reforms made in this space through the establishment of Health NZ and the Māori Health Authority.	The health reforms legislation provides new mandates for Health NZ and the Māori Health Authority to engage in health research. However there is still much to be done to ensure that this will positively impact on the efficiency, effectiveness and accessibility of New Zealand’s health system.

in Aotearoa New Zealand, as well as the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Contributions from all voices, individuals, communities and organisations are welcomed and encouraged.

The publication notes that as the pandemic progressed, it became very clear that, while science has provided the evidence on which to base decisions, ethical principles were needed to establish how that evidence is applied for example:

- Individuals who have recovered from infection may have some degree of future immunity, but is it ethical to attribute forms of privilege to these individuals (for example, being able to undertake air travel) due to this immunity?
- Should some communities be prioritised when distributing vaccines and treatments during a pandemic?
- Is it ethical to mandate vaccines for incarcerated individuals?
- When is it ethical to restrict a citizen's freedom of movement?

“The threat of future pandemics to Aotearoa New Zealand means that we should prepare and learn from the COVID-19 pandemic. This publication is designed to establish the ethical principles that will help prepare us for such conversations and decisions”.

Have your say here: <https://consult.health.govt.nz/ethics/egap/>. Consultation closes on 20 September 2022.

## Opportunities



**The Digital Ecosystem and Marketing of Unhealthy Products: Finding a Way Forward. October**

This seminar will bring together an exciting line up of speakers, practitioners, advocates and researchers. They will be examining AI, data commodification and the social licenses/regulation of digital platforms in the marketing of unhealthy products.

**When:** Wednesday 5 October 2022, 8am-2pm

**Where:** Wharewaka Function Centre, Wellington

**Hosted by:** SHORE & Whariki Research Centre, Massey University

Lunch and Refreshments will be provided.

Registration links and a full agenda will come soon from the organisers. If you wish to indicate your interest or have any queries in the meantime, please contact [shoreandwhariki@massey.ac.nz](mailto:shoreandwhariki@massey.ac.nz).



**Powering Potential**

**Powering Potential. October**

Royal Society Te Apārangi has announced the opening of applications for [Powering Potential](#). This event on 12-15 Hakihea December will give 60 Year 12 or Year 13 taura/students who have a passion for science, technology, or social sciences the opportunity to research some big science questions or social issues.

Students will work in teams of 5-6. Each team will be assigned a mentor who will work with the students over the course of three days. All travel, kai, accommodation and activities are covered by the programme. Powering Potential 2022 will be a blast!

Applications close 14 Whiringa-ā-nuku October.

## Opportunities



### Prime Minister's Science Prizes. October

Applications and nominations for Ngā Puipuiaki Pūtaiao a Te Pirimia the 2022 Prime Minister's Science Prizes – New Zealand's most valuable science awards – are open!

The Government of New Zealand introduced The Prime Minister's Science Prizes in 2009 as a way of raising the profile and prestige of science in Aotearoa. There are **five prizes** with a combined value of \$975,000:

- [The Prime Minister's Science Prize](#)
- [The Prime Minister's MacDiarmid Emerging Scientist Prize](#)
- [The Prime Minister's Science Communication Prize](#)
- [The Prime Minister's Science Teacher Prize](#)
- [The Prime Minister's Future Scientist Prize](#)

Closing date: 18 October 2022



### Future-proofing NZ clinical cancer research at a time of major systems change. September

This year is a critical time for determining the future of clinical and translational cancer research in Aotearoa NZ. This includes both challenges and opportunities arising from major revisions to our healthcare system: the expectation that research becomes a core activity of Health NZ and the Māori Health Authority, the HRC/MOH project 'Enhancing New Zealand's Clinical Trials', the broadening role of Te Aho o te Kahu, and the recognition of the need for improved National data governance which embeds Māori data sovereignty.

To make the most of these changes, Cancer Trials NZ is holding a special meeting to bring together people interested in clinical and translational cancer research to discuss the role of cancer trials and cancer clinical research in Aotearoa NZ. How could these best operate in the new healthcare environment,



### KiwiNet Research Commercialisation Awards October

The KiwiNet Research Commercialisation Awards are described as a one-of-a-kind celebration for the science and research sector, honouring the entrepreneurial spirit of those who are bridging the gap between research and business, for the greater benefit of New Zealand.

This year KiwiNet celebrates collective success over the past decade with their 10th Annual Awards

Buy your ticket [here](#) to participate in "New Zealand's premier event for research commercialisation to connect, celebrate, and be inspired by the incredible work taking place across our sector".

Thursday 6 October 2022, 5:00pm - 9:30pm, Auckland



### Value of Medicines Awards 2022. September

The Award Scheme now includes two awards: the Innovation Jump Start Award designed to provide financial assistance for an early career researcher and the Award for Excellence in Innovative Medicines Research which recognises an already established researcher for the contribution they have made to biopharmaceutical research in New Zealand.

The Innovation Jumpstart Award Applications are open now with a closing date of 23 September. Click [here](#) for more information on both awards

## Opportunities

and what infrastructure is needed to serve our needs for the next 20 years?

This focussed meeting of presentations followed by discussions and sharing of thoughts, will be in place of our usual Annual Scientific Meeting.

Date: Thursday 22 September 2022

Time: 10am to 12pm

Location: Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre or virtual

[Register here](#)



**Digital Health  
Week  
December**

Health Informatics New Zealand (HiNZ) events bring together all the key players within the digital health sector. HiNZ delegates include clinicians, IT professionals, health sector managers, government, industry, academics, students, and other NGOs. HiNZ builds and strengthens connections between these groups and encourages the sharing of ideas across the sector. See the [website](#) for more information



**New Zealanders for  
HEALTH RESEARCH**

*Ngā Tāngata o Aotearoa mō  
te Rangahau Hauora*



**World Evidenced  
Based Health  
Care Day  
October**

World Evidence-Based Healthcare (EBHC) Day is held on 20 October each year. It is a global initiative that raises awareness of the need for better evidence to inform healthcare policy, practice and decision making in order to improve health outcomes globally.

“It is an opportunity to participate in debate about global trends and challenges, but also to celebrate the impact of individuals and organisations worldwide, recognising the work of dedicated researchers, policymakers and health professionals in improving health outcomes”.

More [here](#).



**Joan Donley  
Midwifery  
Research Forum  
November**

The 10th Biennial Joan Donley Midwifery [Research Forum](#) will be held on 17 & 18 November 2022 at the Trustpower Baypark Stadium, Tauranga.

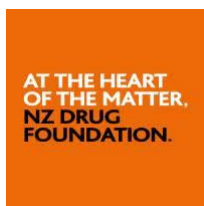
The purpose of the forum is to provide an opportunity for midwives and others to share ideas, experiences and knowledge through research, audits and postgraduate studies relating to midwifery and maternity care.

**NZHR AGM**

NZHR's AGM 2022 will be held on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> October at 10.30 am by videoconference. Agenda papers will be forwarded separately to NZHR members.



## Health research in New Zealand and around the world



### Minimising the Harms from Methamphetamine

The Helen Clark Foundation and the New Zealand Drug Foundation have co-commissioned a [report](#) on Minimising the Harms from Methamphetamine. The report is co-authored by Philippa Yasbek, Kali Mercier, Dr Hinemoa Elder MNZM, Dr Rose Crossin, and Prof Michael Baker MNZM, and makes evidence-based recommendations on how to tackle methamphetamine harm in Aotearoa New Zealand including:

- Rolling out successful treatment partnership programme Te Ara Oranga nationally.
- Providing culturally appropriate support and programmes for Māori and other groups.
- Ensuring services are available in the areas with the highest demand, such as in small towns in the Bay of Plenty, Northland, and Hawke's Bay.
- Addressing underlying issues or unmet health needs for groups of people who use methamphetamine, e.g. improve pathways into diagnosis and well-managed treatment for those who suffer from ADHD, given that it is a risk factor for methamphetamine use, especially when undiagnosed and untreated.
- Funding a pilot programme based on international evidence to provide a stimulant under supervision in limited circumstances, such as to those who have remained addicted despite two rounds of traditional treatment.



### New malaria vaccine

This RNZ [article](#) reports that a malaria vaccine with "world-changing" potential has been developed by scientists at the University of Oxford. The team expect it to be rolled out next year after trials showed up to 80 percent protection against the deadly disease.

Crucially, say the scientists, their vaccine is cheap and they already have a deal to manufacture more than 100 million doses a year.

The charity Malaria No More said recent progress meant children dying from malaria could end "in our lifetimes".

"It has taken more than a century to develop effective vaccines as the malaria parasite, which is spread by mosquitoes, is a spectacularly complex and elusive. It is a constantly moving target, shifting forms inside the body, which make it hard to immunise against."

The Oxford team claim their approach is more effective than a previously [approved GSK vaccine](#) and can be manufactured on a far greater scale. Trial results from 409 children in Nanoro, Burkina Faso, have been published in the Lancet Infectious Diseases. It shows three initial doses followed by a booster a year later gives up to 80 percent protection.

The team will start the process of getting their vaccine approved in the next few weeks, but a final decision will hinge on the results of a larger trial of 4800 children due before the end of the year.



## Lung cancer immunotherapy

A collaboration between the University of Auckland's Auckland Cancer Society Research Centre (ACSRC) and the Malaghan Institute aims to address Aotearoa's leading cause of cancer death by improving immunotherapies that target lung cancer.

Funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand and the Maurice Wilkins Centre for Molecular Biodiscovery, the collaboration aims to create new immunotherapeutic tools or stimulants that boost the effectiveness of existing anti-cancer immunotherapies, improving overall patient response rates to this disease.

“Lung cancer has a large inequity in health outcomes for Māori” says ACSRC Associate Professor Adam Patterson, who is leading the research. “Although immunotherapies like immune checkpoint inhibitors are on their way, experience from overseas indicates only about 10-30% of patients respond, so there is significant room for improvement.”

“We’re developing novel adjuvants or immune stimulating agents that would potentially make lung tumours more responsive to immunotherapies like checkpoint inhibitors” says ACSRC lead medicinal chemist Associate Professor Jeff Smail. “Studies to confirm this are being undertaken at the Malaghan Institute, with the aim of identifying a lead candidate to move forward into clinical trials in the near future.”

The Malaghan Institute’s Professor Ian Hermans says the aim is to make the site of the tumour more immune-responsive. “There are immune cells in and around tumours, but their activity is suppressed which makes them unable to effectively respond to therapy, or to recruit other immune cells to the site”.

“Through our collaborative efforts we have designed a number of promising candidates that target hypoxic regions,” says Professor Hermans. “This grant will help evaluate these different candidates so that we can optimise the design to get the best targeting in combination with checkpoint inhibitor. We’ll also be studying the exact mechanisms behind this hypoxia-activated immunostimulant, to make sure it’s targeting the immune cells in the ways we anticipate and that we more fully understand any potential side-effects or toxicities that may arise.”

Read more [here](#)



## Batten disease: a glimmer of hope

Thanks in part to funding from Cure Kids there’s a glimmer of hope in the Batten disease battle: A world first treatment from New Zealand researchers for a rare and lethal genetic disorder is moving to human trials.

“In the wake of a phenomenal world-first breakthrough, a treatment for Batten disease developed by researchers from Lincoln University and the University of Otago has just been approved for trials in humans. Batten disease is a rare inherited neurodegenerative disorder

that sees children diagnosed with the disorder suffer from symptoms akin to those of epilepsy, blindness, Alzheimer's disease, and Parkinson's disease as their brain cells die away. Those diagnosed often only live to their teens, and there is no known cure for the disease.”

Cure Kids CEO Frances Bengé says she is thrilled with the world-first breakthrough and the funding role that Cure Kids has played in enabling researchers to reach this milestone.



## Effectiveness of mental health and addiction services for young people

When thinking about health research the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) may not spring to the top of mind, so it is interesting to see that the OAG is undertaking a performance audit to look at how effectively New Zealand government agencies are working together to understand and meet the mental health and addiction needs of people aged 12 to 24 years.

The OAG plans to talk to a range of government agencies with responsibilities for funding or providing mental health services for young people or that are associated with significant entry points into the system for young people. These are the Ministry of Health, Te Whatu Ora, Te Aka Whai Ora, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand Police, Oranga Tamariki, and the Department of Corrections. They will also talk with young people about how mental health and addiction services are working for them, and how they think the system could be improved.

The OAG [website](#) reports that “our work will provide an independent view to Parliament and the public on how effectively government agencies are working together to meet the mental health and addiction needs of young people... will aim to highlight examples of good practice, and, where necessary, identify areas for improvement...and might identify changes that government agencies can make to improve the way they work together to better understand and meet the mental health and addiction needs of young people”.

Completion of this exercise is expected in mid-2023.

## News from NZHR’s global family



## 19th Annual Health and Medical Research Awards

Research Australia will hold its 19th Annual Health and Medical Research Awards on Thursday 8th December 2022, at the Metropolis, Melbourne. As the national peak body for health and medical research, Research Australia’s Awards are highly regarded and coveted by the health and medical research sector. “These prestigious awards are our recognition of the outstanding efforts and achievements of individuals and teams who drive and support the opportunities that health and medical innovation bring to each and every one of our lives.”

“Acknowledging talent and excellence in our sector is not only a key part of Research Australia’s role in advocacy for health and medical research, it is also paramount to encouraging future generations of great researchers. This event allows student, early to mid-career researchers and the sector’s more prominent influencers to share an experience

which not only celebrates current innovation but encourages future growth in research, funding and corporate leadership”.

For more information and how to nominate someone to win one of these awards visit the [website](#).



## Celebrating increased investment in health research

Research!America applauds the funding levels included in the [House FY23 Appropriations Bills](#) for “priorities vital to the health and well-being of the nation and global community”, noting that 85% of Americans say it is important for the U.S. to be a global leader in research to improve health, according to a [national public opinion survey](#) commissioned earlier this year by Research!America. Substantive increases have been achieved for:

- National Institutes of Health (NIH), funded at \$47.5 billion, \$2.77b or 6.2% over FY22
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC), funded at \$10.5 billion, \$2.10b or 25% over FY22
- Food and Drug Administration (FDA), funded at \$3.65 billion, \$335m or 10.1% over FY22
- National Science Foundation (NSF), funded at \$9.63 billion, \$790m or 8.9% over FY22
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), funded at \$385 million, \$35m or 10% over FY22
- Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H), funded at \$2.75 billion, \$1.75b over FY22 (its first year of funding)



## Top Talent, Research and Innovation

In a recent [submission](#) to Canada’s Standing Committee on Science and Research’s study on Top Talent, Research and Innovation, Research Canada says “at the centre of our health care and health research enterprises are people—the diverse researchers and clinicians at all career stages that make up Canada’s health research and innovation talent pool”.

“From the early-career researchers—including graduate students, trainees and postdoctoral fellows—who are the future of our health research and health care workforces, to the innovators who transition to careers in the health and biosciences industry; from the laboratory researchers advancing our knowledge base of fundamental science, to the clinician-researchers conducting clinical studies with patients in our hospitals across the countries, and to the countless other health care workers and clinicians—including nurses, personal support workers and other care providers— who bring these health innovations directly to patients”.

“Canada is home to an incredible, diverse health research talent pool, and we need to ensure that our health research and innovation ecosystem is able to remain attractive and provide viable career paths for both Canadian and international researchers. Bolstered investment in fundamental science is clearly a non-negotiable prerequisite to this, but we must also ensure that any steps we make are made with the goals of inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility in mind”.

11<sup>th</sup> September is polling day for Sweden’s general election and in earlier [media release](#) Research Sweden notes that government investment in medical research is declining in relation to GDP, and urges the future government to prioritize investments in citizens’ health.

The media statement says that public costs for healthcare continue to increase and amounted to SEK 573 billion in 2020. According to Research Sweden’s 2021 public opinion poll 73% of voters believe that medical research is part of the solution to rising health care costs, and moreover 5 out of 7 of the contesting political parties agree.

89 percent of poll respondents believe it is important that Sweden is a world-leading medical research nation. The corresponding figure for parliamentary candidates is 99 percent and all parties agree. “Nevertheless, government investments in medical research and health sciences are decreasing in relation to GDP”.

“It is worrying that politicians do not give higher priority to investments in medical research. This is despite a pandemic that has led to devastating effects on the voters’ health and the country’s economy, and where the solution was completely dependent on medical research” says Research Sweden’s founder and Secretary General Anna Nilsson Vindefjärd.



## Support the NZHR cause

[Join](#) or encourage other organisations to join NZHR’s alliance to be part of lifting New Zealand’s investment in health and medical research and to advocate for:

- increased government investment in health research
- embedding health research as an essential component of the health system, creating clear pathways for results to impact on New Zealanders’ health outcomes
- an environment which encourages the opportunity for industry organisations’ health and medical research initiatives to flourish and grow
- a well informed society which highly values health and medical research



## Membership benefits

In addition to enhanced organisational profile through publicly supporting a great cause and a brighter future for kiwis through increased investment in health and medical research, NZHR membership benefits include:

### Lobbying and advocacy

- Peak body lobbying support for your organization’s pan-sector issues
- Opportunity to benefit from increased investment in health research
- Opportunity to contribute to and have brand acknowledgement on NZHR advocacy and lobbying position papers

### NZHR Influence

- Contribute to NZHR strategic and work plans
- Participation in NZHR governance including Board representation and general meeting voting rights

### NZHR Kantar annual public opinion polls

- Request poll questions
- Customised poll data
- Free attendance at presentation events

### NZHR communications

- Enhanced members only versions of newsletters and publications
- Contributions to newsletter and website content
- Newsletter, publication and website advertising, profiling and branding
- NZHR promotional collateral branding

### Workshops and conferences

- Complementary registrations
- Speaker nominations
- Collateral and activity/event branding
- Prior access to delegate lists

Membership is open to any organisation with an interest in health or medical research and its outcomes. For more information and a membership application form potential new members can email Chris Higgins, [ceo@nz4healthresearch.org.nz](mailto:ceo@nz4healthresearch.org.nz). Logos of current members and supporters are displayed below.

We hope you appreciate reading our newsletters, and we welcome any suggestions both for topics to cover and for improving how we do things. Feedback can be given to us by clicking [here](#)

Visit our website [www.nz4healthresearch.org.nz](http://www.nz4healthresearch.org.nz) to find out more about what we do and like and follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and Twitter

Ngā mihi, stay well and until next time

Chris Higgins  
Chief Executive

## Our partners and supporters

