

# Ka Whakarauoratia te Hunga e te Rangahau Hauora

## Health Research Saves Lives!

Newsletter of New Zealanders for Health Research (NZHR)  
December 2022; No. 54

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



**Greetings, tēnā  
koutou and meri  
kirihihime from  
Chief Executive  
Chris Higgins**



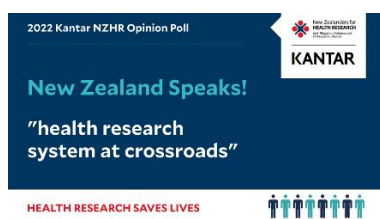
Welcome to the final issue of NZHR’s newsletter for 2022 - an opportunity to celebrate some of the recent “gifts” to New Zealand’s health research sector - gifts which build upon the landmark features of the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) legislation mandating health research as an embedded component of New Zealand’s health sector. This issue of Health Research Saves Lives therefore features:

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As we approach the festive season this is a good time to thank all of our supporters and to wish you well for the coming Christmas/New Year break. As one who is currently enduring the inconvenience of isolating from a second dose of Covid (despite being otherwise in good health and fully up to date with my vaccinations) I'm reminded about there being no room for complacency.

Covid infections in New Zealand are on the increase and there is evidence that mortality is [three times that of the flu](#). Nobody wants to face the disruption of isolating or being unwell over Christmas so let's ensure that we're fully vaccinated ([only 14% of the total population and 43% of over 50 year olds are](#) despite the latter being most at risk from the virus), and that we remain diligent in observing basic evidenced based infection control precautions such as staying home and testing if symptomatic, thorough hand washing, and not being self-conscious or blasé about mask wearing in public places (such as public transport, crowded shopping malls and markets, retail outlets etc).

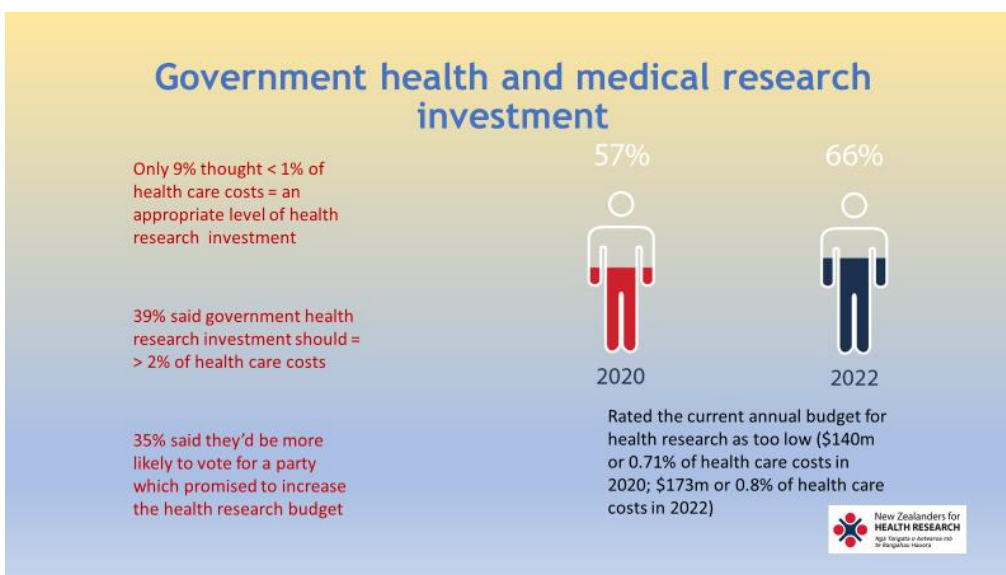
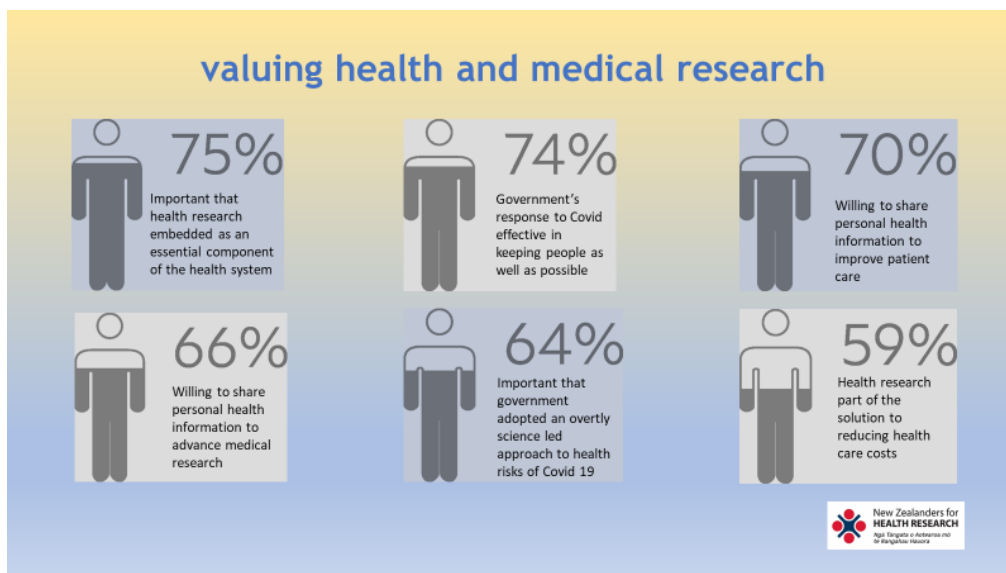
So, stay safe and well, all the very best for the festive season, and we look forward to engaging further in 2023.



## 2022 Kantar NZHR Opinion Poll Report

We've called our latest opinion poll report "health research system at crossroads" because: it was produced at a time when health research had just been mandated as a requirement of New Zealand's newly reformed health system; MBIE's Te Ara Paerangi Future Pathways Green Paper was heralding significant reform of the country's research, science and innovation system (including health research); there was uncertainty about future implementation of the government's Health Research Strategy which had reached the half way point of its ten year time frame; and there continued to be persistent government resistance to addressing its chronic underinvestment in health research. The poll itself was undertaken just after the 2022 Budget was released in late May/early June.

The challenge presented by these crossroads is not in deciding which path to choose, but in identifying how we navigate them simultaneously. Our intention was that the results of the poll would provide a health consumers' perspective as to how to best respond to this challenge. From the snippets below it can be seen that our representative cross section of 1000 respondents placed a high value on health and medical research, that this is reflected in overall awareness of and beliefs about the results of health research, and that most believed that the government should be lifting its investment in health research.



When presented with a random selection of 28 issues for the government to prioritise in the forthcoming years more funding for health and medical research was an important issue for 76%. Keeping New Zealanders well and out of hospital was an important issue for 82%, yet only 28% believed that the health reforms would be effective in bringing about improved health (21% thought they'd be ineffective; 50% didn't know). Furthermore improving hospitals and the health care system continued as New Zealanders' number one issue, despite significant growth in other issues such as keeping prices and the cost of living down, and reducing crime.

The full report is available [here](https://www.nz4healthresearch.org.nz) on NZHR's website, and we'd be pleased to be invited to present the results in more detail, together with their policy implications, to any forums, workshops, conferences etc. If interested please contact Chris at [ceo@nz4healthresearch.org.nz](mailto:ceo@nz4healthresearch.org.nz). In addition to the three presentation events we've already had this year (including a "crossroads" workshop in Wellington earlier this month) we'll be offering additional events in 2023 customised to specific audiences - watch this space!

NZHR members have additional opportunities to ask for new questions to be included in our 2023 poll, and for more detailed analyses than what's offered in the report.



## NZHR Health Research Advocacy Award

As part of our “crossroads” workshop in Wellington NZHR was delighted to honour Graham Malaghan with its inaugural health research advocacy award. Graham has not only chaired New Zealanders for Health Research since its formation in November 2015, but for many years before that it was his leadership and perseverance that secured the necessary financial commitment to enable NZHR to come into being.

For many years Graham has been a tireless advocate for health research and increased health research investment and it was fitting that his award comprised a piece of New Zealand pounamu featuring both the toki or adze (a symbol of courage, power and authority) and the koru (a symbol of creation, new life and growth).



Congratulations to Graham for a well deserved award, which we intend to make an annual feature of our events calendar for 2023 and beyond.



## Economic value of health research investment

New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (NZIER)’s Principal Economist Sarah Hogan (pictured) has produced an NZHR commissioned report titled “Valuing Health Research in New Zealand: A feasibility Study”.

Based on the twin assumptions that health research is key to saving the lives of those for whom effective treatments and cures are yet to be discovered, and that our health system’s aspiration should be for New Zealanders to live well for as long as possible (ie until at least the “ripe old age” of seventy five years), the report

estimates that the potential “size of the prize” from investing in health research in New Zealand stands at over \$3b worth of productivity gains per year.

The report also estimates that the main contributors to lost productivity as a result of premature non-amenable mortality are neoplasms (18,000 years of life lost in 2017), disorders of the respiratory system (6000), digestive system (2400), circulatory system (2400), and skin (2200) and mental unwellness (2200).

The actual economic value of health research investment in New Zealand is difficult to assess directly partly because of the lack of a register of historical and current health research projects, and partly because of the length of time (said to be seventeen years on average) between discovery, translation into policy and clinical and personal practice, and generation of health gains.

However, based on relatively robust overseas studies where baseline prevalence of health conditions, health systems and economies are comparable to New Zealand’s, the NZIER report estimates that New Zealand’s current investment in health research from all sources (government, business and philanthropy) yields benefit flows of between \$64m and \$148M per year, which can be expected to be sustained for at least 20 to 36 years.

Sarah presented an overview of her report to NZHR’s December “crossroads” workshop, and a copy of her PowerPoint presentation can be viewed [here](#).

The report is available free of charge to NZHR member organisations and the report’s co-funders, and to others on a POA basis. NZHR gratefully acknowledges the financial support offered by both the Ministry of Health and the Malaghan Institute of Medical Research which enabled this report to be commissioned.



## New Zealand Health Research Strategy

As we’ve noted previously NZHR had concerns that the changing accountabilities and functions associated with New Zealand’s health reforms might result in the Health Research Strategy (HRS) being left homeless and orphaned. We attempted to address this in our [submission](#) to MBIE’s Te Ara Paerangi Future Pathways Green Paper, in our [oral and written submissions](#) on the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) legislation, and a subsequent [plea](#) to the Minister of Health (where we recommended - unsuccessfully - that the Health Research Strategy be included in the suite of plans and strategies already required by the legislation).

With the Strategy being half way through its ten year time frame we were concerned that if momentum were to be lost in its implementation it would put at risk completion of important outstanding actions including: investing in research for healthy futures for Māori and Pacific people; developing a strong health research workforce; strengthening health sector participation in research; and enabling and embedding translation across the health sector.

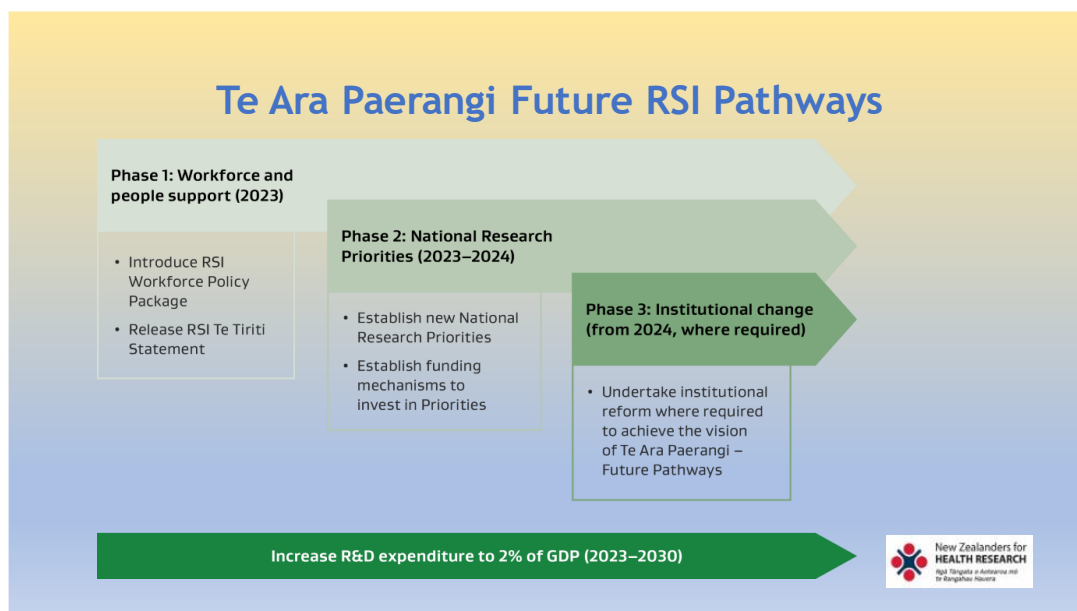
We invited the Ministry of Health’s Chief Science Advisor, Dr Ian Town, to our December “crossroads” workshop to shed some light on this and other health research developments. We’re delighted to advise that: the Strategy is due to be refreshed in 2023; it is to be jointly overseen by the Minister of Health and the Minister for Research, Science and Innovation; Manatū Hauora/Ministry of Health will be the Strategy’s lead agency; Manatū Hauora’s stewardship of the HRS will be enabled by the establishment of an Evidence, Research & Innovation Directorate; and that a review of the HRC Act (1990) is being discussed.

Ian said that although the future looks bright for health research and innovation continued advocacy will be essential. A copy of Ian’s PowerPoint presentation can be seen [here](#)



## Research, Science and Innovation Te Ara Paerangi - Future Pathways White Paper

NZHR welcomes the release of the [White Paper](#) and will comment in more detail next year. For now we can say that the paper presents an opportunity for health research to be more clearly articulated as a national research priority, for it to receive a significant increase in government investment, and for the security of the health research workforce to be significantly enhanced. NZHR will engage with all these and other imperatives as set out in the following White Paper key graphic.



Our one significant reservation is the intention to support development of the RSI system through the government’s aspirational R&D target of 2% of GDP by 2030. This was originally set to occur by 2028 but has now quietly been pushed out to 2030 and remains manifestly unambitious and inadequate.

When the target was originally set the OECD average R&D expenditure was 2.4% of GDP, and it has since increased to 2.7% currently. Furthermore the Productivity Commission’s recent “Frontier Firms” [report](#) points to comparable small advanced

economies typically reporting R&D investment levels of about 3%, and we ourselves at NZHR have long argued that government health research investment should be secured at a level equivalent to at least 2.4% of government health care costs.

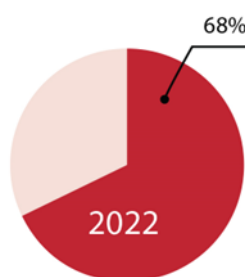
We will therefore continue to challenge the adequacy of this figure both as we engage further with MBIE re the White Paper and in our submissions on the government's annual Budget Policy Statements.



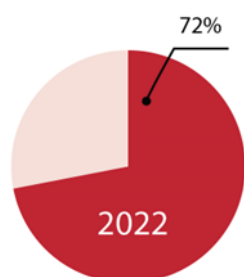
## Enhancing Aotearoa New Zealand Clinical Trials

The long awaited Otago and Auckland Universities' *Enhancing Aotearoa New Zealand Clinical Trials* [report](#) has now been released. An Auckland University [media release](#) affirms that ensuring that the latest clinical research opportunities, and the healthcare benefits that flow from them, are available to all New Zealanders is at the heart of a new report.

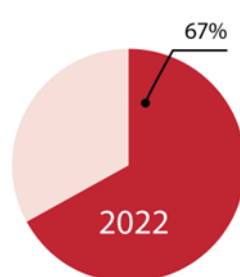
New Zealanders for Health Research sought to contribute to the report on behalf of both health services consumers and New Zealand's health research sector as a whole, and we were particularly pleased to have been acknowledged in the report as a member of the Consumer Focus Group. Indeed our 2022 opinion poll indicates the high value that potential and actual health consumers accord to clinical trials, as per the charts below



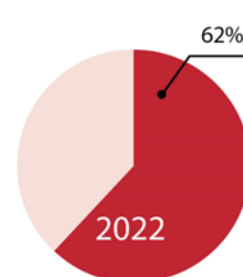
Important that New Zealanders are able to participate in clinical trials



Willing to participate in a clinical trial of a new medicine if they had a condition it might be able to treat



Should be more opportunities to participate in clinical trials of new medicines



Participating in clinical trials for new medicines as important as donating blood

We endorse the report as a whole and support all of its recommendations, especially the following:

- responsibility for ensuring high-quality research activity must be woven into the job descriptions of all senior clinical leaders in Health NZ and the Māori Health Authority. There must also be targeted measures of accountability for these senior clinical leaders.

- there must be an adequately resourced National Research Office for Health NZ, co-governed with the Māori Health Authority, with research leadership at the executive level of the organisations.
- all publicly funded clinical trials should include consumer research partners.
- a clear responsibility for research knowledge translation and implementation must be established within Aotearoa New Zealand's new healthcare system that is well integrated with change management, clinical governance functions, and the health system's role and responsibilities as an effective Te Tiriti partner for Māori

NZHR is mindful that the last major review of New Zealand's clinical trials sector was undertaken by the Parliament's Health Committee, resulting in its 2011 report which included a set of excellent recommendations which were for the most part not implemented due to a lack of consistent health sector ownership and accountability. We're pleased to acknowledge therefore that Manatū Hauora, the Ministry of Health intends to set up a high-level multi-agency working group to plan how to best adopt the recommendations in the report consistent with its recent [media release](#), and as reflected in Ian Town's PowerPoint presentation referred to above.

NZHR will maintain a watching brief.



## 2023 Budget Policy Statement

NZHR regularly engages with the opportunity for public consultation on the government's annual budget policy statements. This is purported to be the public's opportunity to influence what the resulting Budget will look like, but the reality is that budget allocation decisions will have already been made well before the release of the relevant budget policy statement, and we suspect even more so this time round given that there will be an election budget in 2023.

NZHR has therefore attempted to influence the content of the Budget and the Budget Policy Statement before the latter is released for public consultation and in early November we conveyed our [concerns](#), together with requests to meet, to Treasury and the Finance, Health and RSI Ministers.

- The Minister of Finance responded by referring our case to the Minister for Research, Science and Innovation for a response
- The Minister of Health responded by referring our case to Ministry of Health officials (who we are yet to hear back from)
- The Minister for Research Science and Innovation, and Treasury, are yet to respond at all

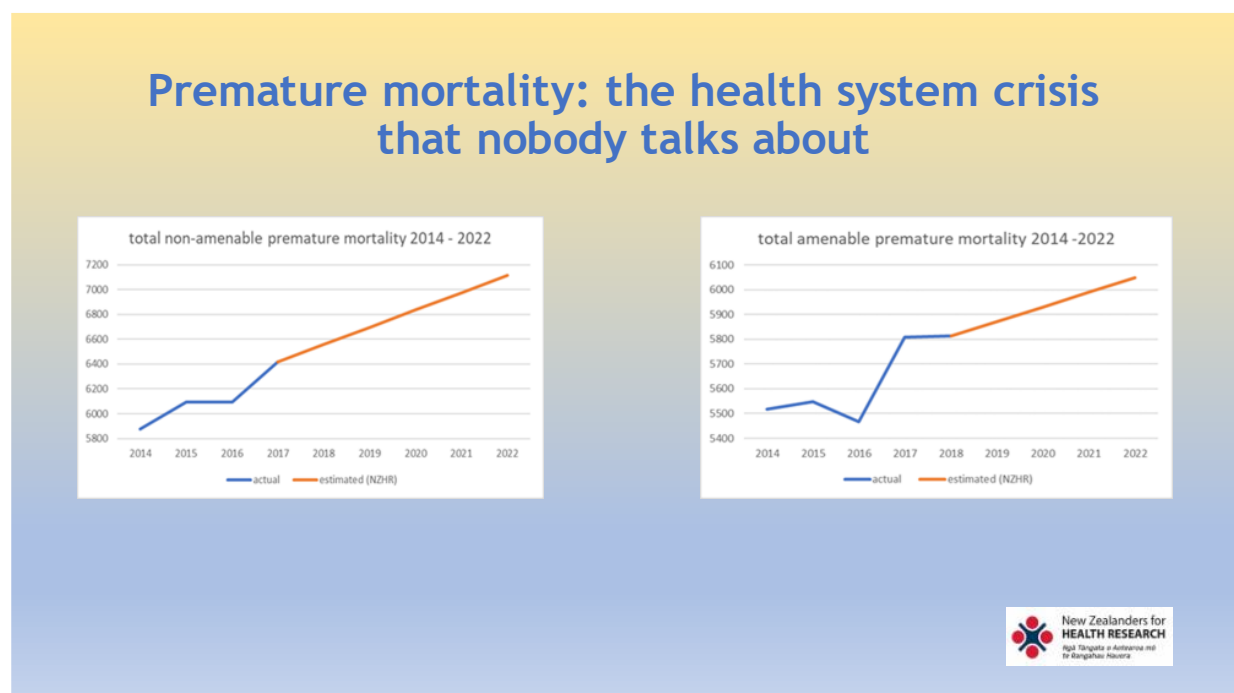


The gist of our argument is that the health component of Treasury’s Living Standards Framework (LSF) is deficient because its principal indicators of health outcomes are self-reported wellbeing and life expectancy (both of which are construed as positives), and that the Budget Policy Statement, which draws directly but selectively from the LSF, is therefore similarly deficient as a framework for informing the content of the Budget itself.

NZHR further argues that the government, and therefore the LSF, should have an explicit focus on ensuring that New Zealanders live as well as possible for as long as possible, and that two fundamental measures of how well we’re doing in this respect comprise premature amenable and premature non-amenable mortality (neither of which are included in the latest version of the LSF, nor any Budget Policy Statements to date, nor, as illustrated by the charts below, can they be construed as representing positive outcomes).

If Treasury is failing to measure what really matters then it is not surprising that its advice is contributing to a failure to respond appropriately through Budget resource allocation decisions. We’re particularly concerned that successive budgets have failed to allocate increased resources to government health research investment, and believe that recognition of New Zealand’s non-amenable premature mortality figures in both the Treasury’s Living Standards Framework and the Budget Policy Statement will make it that much more difficult to justify this continuing neglect.

We’re continuing to push for a considered response from someone before the Budget 2023 BPS is released for public consultation. We’ll keep you posted.



We would also add that failure to include premature mortality in the health component of the Living Standards Framework as an essential indicator of wellbeing compromises the comprehensiveness of other important policy development initiatives, including the Productivity Commission’s review into breaking the cycle of persistent disadvantage. This is set out in our [submission](#) to Commission’s review.

Following NZHR's AGM in October we're pleased to make available our 2022 [Annual Report](#) (which indicates a largely successful and influential twelve months), and to confirm the NZHR Board through to October 2023



## Opportunities



**Therapeutic  
Products Bill  
February 2023**

Reportedly some ten years in the making this piece of legislation has implications for the use of therapeutic products in clinical trials and it will be important for the views of all health research stakeholders to be heard. The closing date for submissions is 9<sup>th</sup> February. NZHR will be making a submission and contributions will be welcome. Details can be seen [here](#).



**Evidence and  
Implementation  
Summit 2023  
9-11 October**

The Evidence and Implementation Summit to be held in Melbourne is billed as one of the leading evidence and implementation sector events on the global calendar. The event hosted by CEI, BISI and Monash University, focuses on the intersection of research, policy and practice, with a focus on the synthesis, generation, translation, and implementation of evidence to improve lives. More details at <https://www.eisummit.org/>



Life Sciences  
Summit March  
2023



Precision Health  
January 2023

Biotech for a better tomorrow 22 & 23 March 2023, Shed 6, Wellington  
<https://lifesciencessummit.co.nz/>

Brought to you by [BioTechNZ](#), the Life Sciences Summit will unite Aotearoa New Zealand's life sciences and biotech communities across all sectors – including agriculture, environment, industrial, human and animal health – for the first time. The summit provides an opportunity to recognise the breadth of expertise across the sector, showcase the high impact solutions created when life sciences is complemented with biotech and collaboratively develop solutions for the challenges New Zealand and the world is facing.

Don't miss it. Super saver pricing is available until 20 December 2022. [Register now >](#)

Manatū Hauora is seeking feedback on its proposed topic for the Ministry's first Long-term Insights Briefing (LTIB). They are proposing the topic of Precision health: Exploring opportunities and challenges to predict, prevent, diagnose and treat disease more precisely in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Precision health has significant potential to benefit health outcomes. In Aotearoa, however, this potential is under-developed compared with other countries. Research shows that there is potential for long term benefits, and advances in precision health are improving capacity to accurately screen to risk of cancer, diagnose rare conditions, and for health professionals to tailor treatment more effectively for their patients.

The Ministry is inviting feedback and input on what should be explored within its long-term insights briefing and want to hear about the opportunities and challenges that exist now and into the future and what areas might be suitable for case studies within the topic of precision health.

Public consultation closes at 5pm on Friday 27th January 2023. More details [here](#)



## 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

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