



24 May 2021

### **New HPV self-testing research programme to launch in Auckland**

Waitematā DHB, Auckland DHB, Counties Manukau Health and Total Healthcare PHO will offer HPV self-testing at select Local Doctors clinics from June 2021, as part of a new 18-month research programme.

The announcement follows the Government's recent \$53 million commitment to roll out HPV self-testing nationwide in 2023. The research programme will be targeted at Māori and Pacific women and ultimately used to inform how the Ministry of Health operates the national HPV self-testing programme in two years' time.

Total Healthcare is one of the largest primary health organisations in New Zealand. Its provider arm, Tamaki Health, has Local Doctors and White Cross clinics in all three DHB catchments.

Total Healthcare General Manager Kate Moodabe says the PHO welcomes the Government's announcement.

"HPV self-testing's enhanced accuracy over the current screening method means mortality for cervical cancer could be reduced by a further 15-17 percent. This is a preventable cancer and we are dedicated to demonstrating how HPV self-testing can be used to reduce inequities and improve women's health outcomes."

The majority of cervical cancer cases in Aotearoa occur in women who have never been screened or are under-screened. Māori and Pacific women are the most under-served in the country, with the highest proportions of never and under-screened women.

The programme will canvas eligible women attending unrelated doctors' appointments at their usual Local Doctors clinics, whose records show they are due or overdue for a smear test. They will be offered the choice of doing an HPV self-test in the clinic or at home - instead of having the current test performed by health professionals.

Women who choose to take the self-test at home will be given the option of dropping the test back to the clinic or mailing the sample in.

The preference and uptake of in-clinic and at home HPV self-testing will then be analysed.

Waitematā DHB and Auckland DHB Director of Health Outcomes, Dr Karen Bartholomew says previous DHB research shows that Māori women are 10 times more likely to take a self-test at home than seek a standard cervical smear at a clinic. Pacific women are six times more likely.

"We've already proven that HPV self-tests are empowering and less-invasive for women - this programme will investigate how this research translates into a real-world, clinical setting.

“We’ll be looking at other aspects of cervical screening, too – like achieving a high follow-up rate for women who test positive for HPV to ensure they get the full benefit of screening, in a process led by experienced nurses.”

Counties Manukau Health Clinical Director Women’s Health Dr Sarah Tout says the current cervical screening method is a barrier to many women.

“Currently, wāhine Māori are dying from cervical cancer at a rate up to two to three times higher than other ethnicities. As a DHB, we are committed to improving Māori health outcomes and this research programme has the potential to benefit wāhine Māori.”

**Ends.**

**To arrange an interview with Waitematā DHB and Auckland DHB Director of Health Outcomes,  
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