

Let's ramp up efforts to make Aotearoa smoke free by 2025

The College of Public Health Medicine welcomes the announcement by the Government of the development of a Smokefree 2025 Action Plan to speed the country towards achievement of its Smokefree 2025 goal.

As a country, we are making progress to reduce the level of smoking, says College President Dr Jim Miller. But we are not yet on target to meet the 2025 goal.

Smoking remains a leading cause of preventable death in New Zealand, contributing to the deaths of more than 4500 people in New Zealand every year. It is also linked to many diseases including asthma, chronic obstructive respiratory disease, lung cancer and other cancers. In children second-hand smoke can increase the risk of sudden infant death syndrome, asthma attacks, chest infections, and otitis media ('glue ear').

Māori and Pacific peoples are disproportionately affected by smoking and its effects on health, with both Māori and Pacific peoples more likely to smoke than other New Zealanders.

The country will not reach its Smokefree goal by focusing solely on individual smoking behavior, says the College.

The proposals include a set of actions including making smoked tobacco products less available.

"Quitting smoking is not easy, but research has shown that population-level control initiatives, such as reducing access to tobacco products, can help people to quit and prevent them from relapsing", says Dr Miller. Regulating and reducing retail availability of tobacco products is an approach that the College has previously called for.

"Making tobacco products less addictive will also help people to quit", says Dr Miller.

A recent survey of smokers and those who have recently quit smoking show that there is strong support for New Zealand's goal of being Smokefree by 2025.

"It is great to see ambitious proposals to tackle this very important public health issue, and we would encourage everyone to take part in the consultation."

Ends

For more information, contact Pam Watson 04 472 9183

Additional information:

According to the 2019/20 New Zealand Health Survey, current smoking prevalence is 31.4% among Māori, 22.4% among Pacific peoples and 13.4% in the population as a whole.

The Smokefree 2025 goal is to reduce the prevalence of daily smoking to minimal levels by 2025 (generally understood to be below 5% of the population).

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Further background

About the NZCPHM

The New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine is the professional body representing the medical specialty of public health medicine in New Zealand. It has 222 members, all of whom are medical doctors, including 185 fully qualified Public Health Medicine Specialists, with most others being registrars completing advanced training in the specialty of public health medicine.

Public Health Medicine is the branch of medicine concerned with the assessment of population health and health care needs, the development of policy and strategy, health promotion, the control and prevention of disease, and the organisation of services. The College strives to achieve health gain and equity for our population, reducing inequalities across socioeconomic and cultural groups, and promoting environments in which everyone can be healthy.