

Cancer diagnosis and treatment impacted during start of Omicron outbreak

There was some impact to cancer diagnostics and treatment during January and February, according to the latest monitoring report by Te Aho o Te Kahu, the Cancer Control Agency.

The Agency [has been monitoring the impact of the current Covid-19 outbreak](#), with the latest report capturing data from the first two months of 2022.

The report showed there was some disruption to cancer services across the country, along with a decrease in cancer diagnosis for Māori and Pacific people.

“Any delay in diagnosis or treatment is concerning,” chief executive of Te Aho o Te Kahu, Professor Diana Sarfati said.

“We expected to see a decline in diagnosis and treatment during this period because of the Omicron outbreak.

“In response, we have moved from bimonthly to monthly monitoring of the cancer system to identify gaps and help to support services towards a rapid recovery.”

There were 16% fewer registrations for Māori in January and 17% fewer in February 2022 compared with the same months in 2021.

Registrations for Pacific peoples were fewer in both months, with 5% less registrations in January and February 2022 combined compared with the previous year. However, for Pacific peoples, February registrations were higher than 2018/19 and 2020.

“It is disappointing to see this dip. There could be a range of reasons why there has been a decline – not all caused by the Omicron outbreak. We will be working with the sector and our partners to ensure we see a quick recovery in diagnosis for these groups.”

It was important anyone who noticed unusual or concerning symptoms contact to their GP.

“It is always a good idea to talk to your GP about any unusual symptoms. This can be a scary prospect for some, but it is an important step to take.”

Cancer nurses and doctors were working exceptionally hard to ensure people got the care they needed, Sarfati said.

“I would like to again thank everyone in the cancer sector for working tirelessly to ensure whānau with cancer can be diagnosed, and undergo cancer treatment, no matter where they are in the country.”

Te Aho o Te Kahu will release data from March next month.

Ends

Media contact: 021 198 2196