

More immunisation needed for Māori and Pacifica

More effort must be made to lift immunisation rates for Māori and Pacific peoples, and other population groups, says the NZ College of Public Health Medicine (NZCPHM).

NZCPHM has released an updated policy on immunisation and is raising its concerns to mark World Immunisation Awareness Week, an annual World Health Organization event (30 April – 6 May).

The College recognises immunisation as a highly effective means of preventing a number of infectious diseases and some cancers.

“Inequities in immunisation rates between population groups, for example between Māori and Pacific groups and Europeans, contribute to disparities in health outcomes between those ethnicities,” College President, Dr Felicity Dumble, said.

She said universal programmes like immunisation reduce health inequities.

The College is also recommending more effort to promote the immunisation of children and adults according to the National Immunisation Schedule and to immunise healthcare workers against influenza, measles and pertussis infections.

“This is not only for their own protection, but also to reduce the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases to vulnerable patients, including the unborn children of pregnant women.”

This would help achieve the high coverage rates required to prevent outbreaks, eradicate disease, and provide personal protection.

Dr Dumble said it is also important to develop new vaccines to reduce inequitable diseases such as rheumatic fever,

Dr Dumble said immunisation rates in New Zealand have improved significantly in recent years. However there remain areas and population groups where immunisation rates are below recommended levels and targets, and this must be addressed as part of improving the health of the New Zealand public.

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