

The Hepatitis Foundation of New Zealand



www.hepatitisfoundation.org.nz

Hepatitis B for NZSG website

Hepatitis B in New Zealand

Hepatitis B affects approximately 100,000 individuals in New Zealand. Most of these people have no symptoms from their hepatitis B and are living well in the community. The ethnic groups with the highest prevalence of hepatitis B are Tongan (13 percent), Chinese (nine percent), Niuean (nine percent), Southeast Asian (nine percent), Cook Is (seven percent) and Maori (six percent) (Robinson T, et al. NZ Med J. 2005;118: No.1211). Only a small proportion of people infected with hepatitis B require assessment and treatment in secondary care. For the majority who are asymptomatic there is a small but significant lifetime risk of liver failure and hepatocellular carcinoma. Every year an estimated 200-300 New Zealanders die from hepatitis B-related liver disease. International guidelines recommend monitoring of infected persons for deterioration in liver function or hepatocellular carcinoma if certain risk factors are present.

New Zealand monitoring program

The Ministry of Health has contracted the Hepatitis Foundation of New Zealand to provide a monitoring programme for New Zealanders infected with chronic hepatitis B. This is a not-for-profit organisation staffed by 10 specialist hepatitis community nurses located throughout the country, as well as two part-time consultants who address clinical queries, and administrative support.

The foundation has approximately 25,000 people undergoing regular six-monthly monitoring blood tests. It also provides education and advocacy to the public. It is often asked for support regarding immigration and employment.

The foundation has three Fibroscan machines and, in many regions, can perform this assessment prior to referring a person to a hospital specialist.

Members of the public and those under surveillance can contact the foundation on 0800 33 20 10 or visit <https://www.hepatitisfoundation.org.nz> for further information.

World Health Organisation Elimination of Viral Hepatitis by 2030 Targets

The WHO has developed the “Elimination of Viral Hepatitis by 2030 Targets” and New Zealand is a signatory to this. These targets include a reduction in incidence of new infections by 90 percent, an increase in treatment uptake to 80 percent of those who meet current treatment criteria and a 65 percent reduction in HBV-related mortality. The Hepatitis Foundation is working with key stakeholders to develop a Framework for Action towards achieving these targets in New Zealand.