



Your Community Pharmacist: the health professional you see most often

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Committee Secretariat

Māori Affairs

Parliament Buildings

Wellington

RE: PARLIAMENTARY MĀORI AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO THE DETERMINANTS OF WELLBEING FOR MĀORI CHILDREN

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the above inquiry.

The Pharmacy Guild of New Zealand (Inc) (the Guild) is a national membership organisation representing community pharmacy owners. We provide leadership on all issues affecting the sector and advocate for the business interests of community pharmacy. The Guild is a member of the Smokefree Coalition, and a health partner of Smokefree.

The Guild supports the inquiry, and recommends that in order to improve the wellbeing of Māori children, the Committee address as a priority the risk factor of smoking among Māori adults. The Guild believes that pharmacists can play a significant role in helping patients quit smoking. Pharmacists can also help patients to understand the importance of providing a healthy environment for their children to grow and develop.

Pharmacy offers an economical and readily accessible way to help smokers quit. Pharmacists are the health professionals that people see most often, available without an appointment. As the medicines experts, pharmacists are well placed to advise smokers of the medicines options available and to support patients in smoking cessation. Dispensing NRT through pharmacies directly to the public would be a cheaper option for both patients and for the Government.

The Social Report 2010, published by the Ministry of Social Development (2010), highlights that the smoking prevalence among Māori is considerably higher than that among non-Māori. The Ministry of Health's (2011) *Māori Smoking and Tobacco Use 2011* profile, reports that in 2009 the prevalence of current smoking for the total population stood at 21 percent. Māori smoking rates were more than double that of non-Māori,

at 44 percent compared to 18 percent, with Māori females having current smoking rates three times that of non-Māori females (48.3 percent compared to 16.2 percent).

The wellbeing of children is strongly linked to the risk factors and behaviour of their parents and other adults in their community. For instance, the Ministry of Health profile relates that Māori non-smokers are more likely than non-Māori non-smokers to be exposed to second-hand smoke in their homes and cars, and are much more likely to be exposed to second-hand smoke at home in the past week in households with at least one child. Māori youth also start smoking at a significantly earlier age than non-Māori youth: 11.5 years compared to 12.7 years.

As *The Social Report 2010* reiterates, smoking is a risk factor for a number of cancers and respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, and exposure to environmental tobacco smoke is a key risk factor contributing to both Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and respiratory problems in children.

A recent Māori Affairs Committee (2010) report, *Inquiry into the tobacco industry in Aotearoa and the consequences of tobacco use for Māori*, recommends that community pharmacists be allowed to be Quitcard providers. That report recommended to Government that pharmacists should be Quitcard providers so as to improve access to nicotine replacement therapies (NRT). It also recommended that PHARMAC be strongly encouraged to subsidise a wider range of effective cessation medicines.

According to the Māori Affairs Committee report, the use of NRT during a quit attempt doubles the chance that a smoker will quit. NRT reduces nicotine withdrawal symptoms which can include cravings for nicotine, irritability, anxiety, difficulty concentrating, restlessness, sleep disturbances, decreased heart rate, increased appetite and weight gain. These symptoms all make quitting difficult.

Thank you for taking the time to read our feedback. The Guild does not wish to present a verbal submission to the Committee, but if you have any questions about our feedback, please contact Guild Policy Advisor, Jasmine Freemantle, at jasmine.freemantle@pgnz.org.nz or 04 802 8205.

Yours sincerely,



Annabel Young

Chief Executive