



MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Collective Māori-led approach brings equity for flu vaccinations

Whanganui are sitting at the top in New Zealand on the Equity Breakdown for Māori influenza immunisations by DHB, followed by Lakes DHB.

What do these two DHB regions have in common? A cross-system, collaborative response to Covid-19, led by Māori and iwi organisations.

Iwi health organisation Te Oranganui Trust's Mātai Whetū (CEO), Wheturangi Walsh - Tapiata says, "Collaboration around our flu vaccinations, including iwi organisations, DHB and PHO's, started way before the lockdown and we had a high level of success. For Māori, they really saw this as one mechanism of staying well during this period."

937 kaumātua 65+ received vaccinations and Whanganui has achieved a +14% equity rate so far which is the highest in New Zealand.

"Another factor that has contributed to our high vaccination rates is that in addition to GP clinics offering influenza vaccinations including drive by clinics, community clinics were run in Kaiwhaiki, Ratana, Marton and Waverley.

Iwi have played a critical role in organising these clinics and connecting with their people to come and have their flu vaccinations done," adds Walsh - Tapiata.

But Walsh - Tapiata says while Whanganui is at the top with kaumātua vaccination rates at 73%, the goal is to reach 95%.

"Our communities need to be congratulated in encouraging our kaumātua over 65, under 65 with co-morbidities and hapū māmā to have their flu vacs. However, there are still some people out there who are deemed high risk and they need to be encouraged to come and have their free flu vaccinations."

Te Ranga Tupua Iwi Collective spokesperson Gerrard Albert says, "The vaccination rates are a great start, getting vaccinated, being tested for Covid-19 and making appointments to see doctors for general health issues at this time is important."

So far there have been pop-up clinics in Whanganui, Ngā Wairiki/Ngāti Apa and Ngaa Rauru/Ngāti Ruanui for flu & and now child immunisations, Covid-19 testing as well as general health assessment and further clinics are planned.

The Te Ranga Tupua Iwi Collective is also encouraging other district health boards and public health organisations to collaborate with iwi authentically in order to achieve better equity for Māori.

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