

PHARMAC

Pharmaceutical Management Agency

Media release

Green Prescriptions an effective investment in health

Green Prescriptions, a SPARC (Sport & Recreation New Zealand) and General Practice programme that helps doctors encourage people to become more physically active, is highly cost effective according to new research released today.

The Green Prescriptions programme involves General Practitioners and practice nurses giving a Green Prescription to patients who could benefit from physical activity. SPARC and PHARMAC jointly fund free patient access to follow-up support from their local regional sports trust for up to three months.

The programme is successful in encouraging people to be more active.

A paper by Auckland University researcher Dr Raina Elley, published in the British Medical Journal last year, and funded by the NZ Heart Foundation, showed that people in the Waikato had increased their levels of physical activity as a result of being given a Green Prescription, and had shown improvements in quality of life and trends in decreasing blood pressure.

The research carried out for PHARMAC by Wellington School of Medicine health economist Des O’Dea took the results of the BMJ paper and a cost effectiveness analysis by Dr Elley to estimate the cost per long-term health benefit from the programme. .

The results, says PHARMAC medical director Dr Peter Moodie, show that Green Prescriptions provide excellent value for money.

“It’s widely known that increasing levels of physical activity can have health benefits such as reducing people’s weight, reducing their chances of having a heart attack or stroke, or helping relieve depression,” Dr Moodie says.

“The work by Dr Elley at Auckland University gave us some excellent data on which to base a funding analysis. What this analysis shows is that taxpayers’ money is being well spent on a programme that is producing good results.”

“We’re delighted with the results which underline our belief that the programme is an appropriate use of public money, and an effective way of encouraging more physical activity.”

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* Eds note: A personal account of one person’s experience with Green Prescriptions is attached.

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