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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **NZ Cancer Patients Reduced to Third World Medicine Access**

New Zealand cancer patients are being denied modern medicines that are available to patients in other parts of the developed world claims the Cancer Society of New Zealand, responding to a Swedish study released today.

Cancer Society Chief Executive, Dalton Kelly, is shocked at the findings of the international research by the Karolinska Institute. He says: “In spite of the fact that we now have many effective medicines to help people fight their cancer, New Zealanders aren’t getting access to them. In fact, we are right down there with the Czech Republic, Poland, and South Africa in terms of access to modern oncology drugs designed to treat cancer.”

There are two major findings which the Cancer Society finds alarming.

“The report tells us that New Zealand’s investment in cancer medicines is very low in comparison with other countries.

“This also says that even when new medicines are considered, they are subject to unreasonable delays. New Zealand’s medicines’ appraisal processes are subject to remarkable foot-dragging through their registration (Medsafe) and reimbursement (PHARMAC) processes.

“The report also confirms what we already know; that medicines are an easy target for reducing costs. They may keep a lid on government expenditure, but this is such a false economy,” Mr Kelly warned.

The international report is a wake-up call for officials and politicians alike who are currently considering Hon Peter Dunne’s draft NZ Medicines Strategy.

Mr Kelly continues: “Record budget surpluses and the strategy development mean that government could easily move to solve these access to medicine problems.”

The Cancer Society is calling on Government to carefully consider the Karolinska Report and the Society’s own submission on the medicines strategy, and is urging it to adopt the policies recommended in both.

“The reports contain principled policy suggestions that are far more appropriate to the health system we need, and the first world country we like to think we are,” Mr Kelly concludes.

The UK was also ranked as one of the worst in the world in terms of per capita drug sales, and is behind 18 countries including Hungary.

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