



Press Release

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TOP DOCTOR SAYS KIWI MEN COMPLACENT ABOUT THEIR HEALTH

Kiwi men are risking their lives by not taking better care of their health says one of New Zealand's most respected doctors.

Former All Blacks doctor and now Vodafone Warriors medical director, Dr John Mayhew, says research released today shows that one in five Kiwi men aged over 50 have never been checked for prostate cancer – despite widespread publicity campaigns.

The independent research* commissioned by men's health charity Movember also found that one fifth (20%) of Kiwi men said they did not know where their prostate gland was located.

Dr Mayhew says he's astounded at the number of men he sees in his general practice who don't have a good understanding of their own body and who fail to get regular medical checks.

Prostate cancer is of particular concern, he says. Every year 3000 Kiwi men are diagnosed with the disease and around 600 die. This makes prostate cancer the second largest cause of male cancer deaths, after lung cancer. Dr Mayhew says knowing how to recognise the symptoms can result in early diagnosis and treatment of this disease.

"The new research shows that more than a third (34%) of Kiwis have themselves, a family member or someone they know been affected by prostate cancer," he says.

The survey showed that one in five men over 50 said they had never been checked for prostate cancer.

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Dr Mayhew who has been at the coalface of men's health issues for over 30 years says it's disappointing that Kiwi men are not taking action and are so ill prepared when it comes to looking after their health.

"Men don't seem to realise that a little bit of knowledge could potentially save their lives. They really need to recognise what is normal for their body and discuss any changes with their GP. This is a good habit to get into and can help address health concerns much earlier."

Movember, the moustache growing event held during November each year, aims to tackle this problem and raise awareness and knowledge of men's health issues - last year 13,000 men in New Zealand took part raising almost a million dollars for charity.

This year's charity partners are the Cancer Society of New Zealand in support of prostate cancer and the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand in support of its "Out of the Blue" depression awareness campaign.

Dr Mayhew says recognising the symptoms of prostate cancer could save many lives down the track. "When detected early, the successful treatment rate for prostate cancer is very high so the important thing is to not be afraid to visit your GP and they can advise whether you should be checked."

Symptoms to look out for include straining to begin urinating, a dribbling or thin stream of urine, a sudden urge to pass urine, not being able to pass urine or having to go to the toilet to pass urine frequently, especially at night.

Dr Mayhew says in most cases, these symptoms are not caused by cancer but due to pressure on the urethra from an enlarged prostate which is just part of normal aging.

"However if you do experience one or more of these symptoms, you should definitely be checked by your doctor," he says.

The causes of prostate cancer are not yet fully understood but Dr Mayhew says there is increasing evidence to suggest there are some risk factors such as increasing age - 82% of prostate cancers are diagnosed in men over the age of 60 - and family history.

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“Knowing if your father, brother or uncle has had prostate cancer is very important and should be shared with your doctor, if you display any of these symptoms as it means your risk might be increased,” says Dr Mayhew.

Taking part in regular exercise to help maintain a healthy body weight and reducing the amount of red meat that is eaten are also ways to reduce your risk he says.

To pre-register or find out more information, visit www.movember.co.nz.

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Written on behalf of Movember by Impact PR. For further information or images, please contact Fleur Revell-Devlin fleur@impactpr.co.nz (ph.021509600) or Mark Devlin mark@impactpr.co.nz (ph. 021509060).

Notes to editor:

The Survey

The survey was commissioned by Movember and conducted by Consumer Link (a division of Colmar Brunton) in New Zealand. Five hundred male and female respondents were interviewed nationwide.

Results of the Movember Research Survey:

One in five (20%) Kiwi men admit to not knowing where on their body their prostate gland is located.

Nearly half (48%) of all Kiwis have themselves, a family member or someone they know been affected by mental illness and more than a third (34%) have been affected by prostate cancer

One in three Kiwi men aged over 40 have said they have never been checked for prostate cancer.

About Movember

Movember (the month formerly known as November) is an annual, month-long men’s health charity event that raises money for Cancer Society of New Zealand and the New Zealand Mental Health Foundation. At the start of Movember, men register with a clean shaven face and have the remainder of the month to grow and groom their moustache, raising as much money and awareness as possible to benefit men’s health.

2008 figures

Number of participants: 13,000

Amount of money raised: \$927,000

Biography – Dr John Mayhew: MBChB, DipObst, DOccMed

Dr John Mayhew is the medical director of the Vodafone Warriors and was previously the All Blacks team doctor for 15 years recounting those experiences in his book, *Doc Mayhew: Rugby's Medicine Man*.

Dr Mayhew has also had roles with the New Zealand Squash Team where he was the Medical Advisor from 1988-1992, the 1990 New Zealand Commonwealth Games team as the Medical Officer and the I.R.B as a Medical Representative on the Medical Committee from 1996-2004.

Dr Mayhew also runs busy practice at the Millennium Institute on Auckland's North Shore and is the Clinical Director at Sovereign Insurance.