

NZSSD EXECUTIVE MEDIA RELEASE

WORLD DIABETES DAY – 14 November 2008

New Zealand falls behind in Provision of Specialist Diabetes Services.

Resources for managing diabetes have become seriously inadequate compared to other countries, impacting adversely on patient care, according to the Executive of the New Zealand Society for the Study of Diabetes (NZSSD).

“Whilst the prevalence of diagnosed diabetes has increased by 50% over the last 7 years, the provision of specialist diabetes services has remained largely unchanged.” says Associate Professor Patrick Manning, President of the Society.

The majority of people with diabetes are now cared for in primary care, partly because that is appropriate, but also because specialist care cannot cope with the demand. Typically complex patients with difficult diabetes or with complications of the disease are seen by specialists in hospital clinics.

“Despite diabetes being one of the Government’s listed health priorities, this has not translated into a funding priority for specialist services.” says Manning.

“It is also time that specialist diabetes services were funded appropriately, so that those high risk patients with this disease receive appropriate care.

“Not only does this make sense in terms of improving health and well-being, but it is cost effective because it reduces the expensive complications that are associated with diabetes (for example eye disease which leads to blindness and kidney failure leading to dialysis).”

New Zealand is also slipping behind other similar countries in terms of access to modern treatments for diabetes. Examples of this discrepancy include access to modern insulins and insulin pump treatment. The NZSSD has urged the government to address this issue with some urgency. Improved access to these treatments would have a significant and immediate impact on the management of diabetes.

Given the vast number of New Zealanders affected by diabetes, NZSSD hopes that the National Government elected last Saturday will keep diabetes as one of the country's listed health priorities and make a real investment to manage this chronic disease.

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