

Media Release

RACP: Make health equity the norm

Thursday, 10 August 2017

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) is calling for New Zealand politicians to take urgent action to make health equity the norm.

RACP New Zealand President Dr Jonathan Christiansen said that current inequities in health outcomes will persist until the social inequities that impact on health are addressed.

“As physicians and paediatricians we are treating patients who are struggling with preventable illnesses every day,” Dr Christiansen explained.

“We need more holistic approaches to addressing the social determinants of good health, including healthy housing, ‘good’ work and whānau wellbeing.”

Paediatrician and RACP New Zealand President-Elect Dr Jeff Brown agreed. “I’m seeing an increase in repeat hospital admissions of kids with respiratory illnesses, including pneumonia, caused by living in cold, mouldy homes,” he said.

“We treat them, and send them right back to the same unhealthy environment.”

Dr Christiansen said the evidence overwhelmingly supports action on the social determinants of health and requires a whole-of-society response. Central and local government, communities, non-government organisations and industry need to work together to support the health and wellbeing of all New Zealanders.

“Health and wellbeing must become the norm,” Dr Christiansen said.

“Where people live, how they spend their time, and who they live with, all have a major impact on human health. The best way to enable health equity is to look at the conditions in which people grow, live, work and age, and how these can support positive health outcomes.”

The RACP believes there are immediate actions policymakers can take to improve health outcomes for the most vulnerable people in our communities. These include:

- making **Healthy Housing** the norm by introducing a regulation to mandate a Warrant of Fitness and Health for residential dwellings;
- making **Good Work** the norm by promoting the Living Wage to support the health and wellness of employees and their whānau; and
- making **Whānau Wellbeing** the norm by taking a child-centred approach to all legislation, policy and regulation.

“Ensuring whānau are supported to lead healthy lives by addressing the causes of poor health will lead to reduced costs for the health system and greater health equity,” Dr Christiansen said.

To read the RACP's full statement visit <https://www.racp.edu.au/fellows/resources/new-zealand-resources/new-zealand-election-statement-2017>

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About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP): The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of almost 2,000 physicians and paediatricians and close to 1,000 trainees in New Zealand.

The RACP trains physicians, often referred to as specialists, in more than 33 medical specialities

Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients. www.racp.edu.au