



News Release

15 February, 2006

New Breast Screening Service for Counties Manukau

Women in the Counties Manukau District Health Board region who are eligible for free breast screening, will have improved access to services with the formal opening of a new screening facility at the Manukau Super Clinic.

BreastScreen Counties Manukau (BSCM) Medical Director Dr Sally Urry says, "Our hope is that by improving access to these services, more women will be diagnosed with breast cancer at an earlier stage – meaning they can have a better chance of receiving treatment and ultimately surviving".

The BSCM service has been running since September, though staff have only been operating out of the new unit for the past five weeks. During this time a total of 2500 women have been screened, with several already receiving a diagnosis of early-stage cancer. BSCM has installed a new mammography machine to increase screening capacity and in the future there are plans to operate a mobile unit throughout the region.

Currently BSCM is focussing on recruiting Medical Radiation Technologists (MRTs) to enable the facility to work at full capacity. This would mean 1500 women being screened in an average month, effectively doubling the current numbers.

The aim of breast screening is to diagnose cancer before it is clinically evident. Women are well if over 70% of eligible women are screened regularly every 2 years, the mortality from breast cancer can be reduced by up to 30%.

Sally Urry says traditionally, coverage rates in the greater Auckland and Northern regions have been less than the target. "The new facility will give us the opportunity to build on the success of the South Auckland Breast Clinic, the symptomatic service established at Counties Manukau DHB over 12 years ago. In particular, BSCM will focus on groups who are traditionally under-screened, with the formation of a team who will work in the community alongside the numerous DHB networks".

Breast Screen Counties Manukau is part of Breast Screen Aotearoa, the national breast screening programme offering free screening for women aged between 45 and 69 years. Free phone number 0800 270 200.

The BSCM service will be formally opened by Minister of Health Pete Hodgson on February 21st at the Manukau Super Clinic.

For media enquiries please call Lauren Young and Associates on 09 378 8433 or 027 243 9900.