

MEDIA RELEASE

BRAIN TUMOUR SUPPORT NZ

Hamilton, New Zealand

[Thursday 28 October 2021, 1.00pm NZDT]

Shining a Light on Brain Tumours

International Brain Tumour Awareness Week – 30 October to 6 November 2021

This weekend Kiwis will be out trick or treating and dressing up in their scariest costumes for Halloween, with appropriate physical distancing of course.

But for around 1,200 New Zealanders who were diagnosed with a brain tumour in the past year, the shock and fear on hearing their doctor utter the words “you have a brain tumour” trumps anything that Halloween can dish up.

Brain tumours are a relatively rare cancer, representing less than 1.4% of all cancers diagnosed in New Zealand, but they are one of the most deadly. Despite aggressive treatment, the average survival for the most common form of primary brain cancer is just 15 months, a statistic that has barely changed in over 30 years.

Although more commonly diagnosed in people over 65 years old, brain tumours can strike at any age and are responsible for the most years of life lost than any cancer¹. They are also the biggest cancer killer of New Zealand children, responsible for 38% of childhood cancer deaths (leukaemia is the next biggest at 25%).²

Yet for all this, brain tumours are one of the least familiar cancers, with a lack of awareness among the general public and even among the medical fraternity. Due to the wide range of symptoms which patients can present with, cases are often mis-diagnosed as migraines,

¹ Burnet et al. *Years of life lost (YLL) from cancer is an important measure of population burden--and should be considered when allocating research funds*. Br J Cancer. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15655548/>

² Ballantine, K & the NZCCR Working Group (2017). *Child cancer survival in New Zealand 2005-2014: A report from the New Zealand Children's Cancer Registry*. Auckland: National Child Cancer Network <https://childcancernetwork.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Childhood-Cancer-Survival-in-New-Zealand-2005-2014.pdf>

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strokes or mental illness. Delays in diagnosis can waste precious time to initiate treatment and can often contribute to worse survival outcomes for the patient.

The 2021 International Brain Tumour Awareness Week is a global event that seeks to address the awareness gap by shining a light on brain tumours. During the week 30 October to 6 November, brain tumour patients, their families and advocates will hold events to raise awareness and fundraise for local brain tumour charities.

On Sunday, online retailer TJ and Co is holding a [sports day](#) at the Geyser City Squash Club in Rotorua from 9am to 3pm. TJ and Co was started by young entrepreneur TJ Inia-McGarvey, aged 10, following the [death of her grandmother](#) last year from brain cancer. Silver Fern and WBOP Magic star Erena Mikaere, who is a Brain Tumour Support NZ ambassador, will be attending the event.

From Friday to Monday, Auckland home chef Jess Kho will be donating \$10 from every order to her catering business Fusion Home Chef to Brain Tumour Support NZ in memory of her daughter Judith who passed away two years ago from a brain tumour at just 31 years old. Jess has also started a [Givealittle page](#) so people who live outside of Auckland can donate.

Brain cancer research is chronically under-funded in New Zealand. Earlier this month, terminally ill Wellington teenager Jemima Gazley made headlines here and overseas by raising close to \$700,000 for brain cancer research in a little over two weeks. Jemima raised more money in 14 days than the New Zealand government has allocated to brain cancer research in 14 years.

By increasing awareness of brain tumours, Brain Tumour Support NZ hopes to attract more funding into research, ultimately leading to more effective treatments and better supportive care for patients and families. For these Kiwis living in the land of brain tumours, this would be a Halloween treat definitely worth savouring.

Ends

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ABOUT BRAIN TUMOURS

- Brain cancer is the biggest cancer killer of children in New Zealand, being responsible for 38% of all childhood cancer deaths (the next largest is leukaemia with 25%)³
- Every year around 342 New Zealanders are diagnosed with primary brain cancer, representing 1.3% of all cancers diagnosed in New Zealand.
- Around 250 New Zealanders die each year from brain cancer, making it the 10th most fatal cancer.
- Brain tumours can affect anyone, of any ethnicity, and at any age. There is no effective screening or prevention.
- Brain tumours reduce life expectancy by on average 20 years – the highest of any cancer.⁴

ABOUT BRAIN TUMOUR SUPPORT NZ

Brain Tumour Support NZ is a registered charity formed in 2019 to provide much needed support, information and advocacy to brain tumour patients in New Zealand. Our Vision is that everyone living with a brain tumour has the support, information and access to best treatments, so they feel less afraid, less alone and more empowered.

Website: www.braintumoursupport.org.nz

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³ Ballantine, K & the NZCCR Working Group (2017). *Child cancer survival in New Zealand 2005-2014: A report from the New Zealand Children's Cancer Registry*. Auckland: National Child Cancer Network <https://childcancernetwork.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Childhood-Cancer-Survival-in-New-Zealand-2005-2014.pdf>

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