



**MEDIA RELEASE**

**18 August 2011**

## **AUCKLAND DHBS JOINING FORCES TO TACKLE FRAUD**

Auckland's district health boards have joined forces to tackle fraud in the region's public health system.

The three DHBs – Counties Manukau, Auckland and Waitemata – have signed up to a public hotline (0800 424 888) to tackle the small but growing problem of fraud. Nationally, more than \$11 million in health sector funds were recovered last year from fraud investigations.

Northern Region Internal Audit Manager Ramon Manzano says the hotline, set up and run by the Ministry of Health, would make it easy for staff and members of the public to call in and report – confidentially – any suspicions of fraud.

“Whilst fraud always has an impact – on organisations as well as individuals – healthcare is the one sector where fraud has the most direct negative impact on people's lives.”

Fraudulent activity uncovered in the region included the recent case of an Auckland pharmacist who pleaded guilty to 93 charges of using a document for pecuniary advantage, filing false claims worth nearly \$70,000.

“This is not solely limited to people working within the DHB or wider health sector – it can also involve people obtaining treatment they are not legally entitled to receive.

“While we do our best to ensure that our systems are robust to prevent fraud from occurring in the first place, healthcare is a complex sector. Each instance of fraud uncovered provides us with a learning opportunity to fix any gaps we may have in the system.”

Calls to the hotline would be managed by the Ministry of Health's Audit and Compliance unit and reported to the DHB for investigation.

The unit's Acting National Manager Paul Johnstone said fraud hotlines have worked well in the past and have resulted in a number of successful prosecutions, saving millions of dollars in public health funds.

Over recent years there have been a number of prosecutions in the Auckland region involving a wide range of people, including health providers, members of the public, DHB employees and contractors.

“The aim is to mobilise the honest majority to prevent vital funds from being taken away from our health services,” says Mr Johnstone, “We are encouraging all members of staff and the public to be vigilant and report genuine suspicions of fraud.

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“Health fraud ultimately hurts patients as it diverts funds away from providing healthcare services to our communities.”

Funds recovered will go back into the health budget.

If you have any concerns about health fraud, call the hotline on 0800 424 888 or email [fraudhotline@moh.govt.nz](mailto:fraudhotline@moh.govt.nz). All calls and emails are confidential.

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