

4 May 2018

Tēnā koe

I am writing to you to encourage consideration of your organisation funding influenza vaccinations for your staff, if this is not something that you are already offering staff.

You may be aware that the winter of 2017/2018 in the Northern Hemisphere has been particularly bad for influenza with a more severe strain circulating. It is likely that this strain will also begin to spread in the Southern Hemisphere when the influenza season starts. This year we are very lucky in New Zealand to have a special vaccine that has been made up to protect against this particularly nasty strain as well as three other strains that we expect to circulate.

Nelson Marlborough Health funds the vaccination of groups most vulnerable to the flu (those over 65 and others with various chronic conditions) but the cost of absenteeism among the working population to businesses can be significant. A study has estimated that during 2012 the average absence level per employee was 4.5 days at a typical cost of \$837 per employee<sup>1</sup>. A significant flu outbreak could have a large impact in terms of cost and ability to continue normal business. In contrast to the common cold, influenza is a serious illness that frequently lasts 7 to 10 days.

The vaccine is now available and I would strongly recommend considering funding the vaccination for your staff members. There are several organisations that will undertake the vaccinations for you on site.

You should also consider ensuring staff members who do become ill are not returning to work too early, or working through an illness, as the flu is easily transmitted.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely



Nick Baker  
Chief Medical Officer

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.businessnz.org.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/74615/Wellness-in-the-Workplace-Survey-2013-Report.pdf](https://www.businessnz.org.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/74615/Wellness-in-the-Workplace-Survey-2013-Report.pdf) Wellness in the Workplace Survey Report 2013: BusinessNZ, Gallagher Bassett & Southern Cross Health Society.