



## **Auckland DHBs Reduce Lab Test Services to Aged Care Sector**

**30 October 2009**

The aged residential care sector is disappointed that the three Auckland DHBs have decided to reduce lab test services to the elderly in care.

Without any consultation or warning the three Auckland DHBs decided to implement an immobility test for residents in aged care to reduce community lab test costs.

“Nobody knows why they decided to change a well-established collection process, which allowed all residents in a facility to have their samples collected. The new system is different. Each resident must undergo an immobility test, and if they fail that test they will have to be taken off site to a public collection centre,” said Martin Taylor CEO of the New Zealand Aged Care Association.

“It is well established that the lab test transition has been poorly handled. However, we never expected they would target the elderly for cost cutting” said Mr Taylor.

“Initially we were told there was no intention to reduce services, but when we asked straight questions to clarify the situation, we received no answers. The questions DHBs refuse to answer are:

- Before 19 October 2009 was there an immobility test for residents in a rest home, aged care hospital, or dementia unit?

DHBs have acknowledged they developed the immobility test, but claim some sort of ‘other’ test existed before 19 October. To date no documentation has been produced to support this claim. Furthermore, no aged care provider in Auckland was aware of any such criteria.

- Before 19 October 2009 did residents in a rest home, aged care hospital, or dementia unit have to be transported for any reason to a collection center?

Providers in Auckland say they have never had to transport residents off site for these tests.

- Who were the rest homes consulted with before the October 16 notification of change letters were sent?

The approach to consultation on this issue has been arrogant in that there was none. In the DHB letter to aged care providers dated 16 October it is claimed, *'rest homes are aware of the service changes and have confirmed they are confident they are ready to go live on Monday'*. To date they have been unable to say which rest homes they consulted with.

"We were hoping to resolve this issue without a fuss, but when you are not consulted on a policy that negatively affects elderly residents and then you cannot get straight answers to straight questions you are left with no option but to speak out, Mr Taylor said.

ENDS

**For further information please contact Martin Taylor, CEO, NZ Aged Care Association on 0274535348.**

**The New Zealand Aged Care Association represents 80% of all aged residential care facilities throughout New Zealand**