

25 June 2014

Helen Lockett
Strategic Policy Advisor
Wisegroup

By email: Helen.lockett@wisegroup.co.nz

Re: Equally Well Project and Draft Consensus Position Statement

Dear Helen

Thank you for alerting the New Zealand Medical Association (NZMA) to the Equally Well project, apprising us of its main objectives, and inviting our association to give feedback on a draft consensus position statement.

The NZMA is the country's largest voluntary pan-professional medical organisation with over 5,000 members. Our members come from all disciplines within the medical profession and include specialists, general practitioners, doctors-in-training and medical students. The NZMA aims to provide leadership of the medical profession, and promote professional unity and values, and the health of New Zealanders.

We share concerns about the well-established association between serious mental illness (SMI) and/or addiction and poorer physical health outcomes, and we welcome the Equally Well project which aims to develop an informed, collaborative response to this challenge. We note that the first phase of this project is to undertake an evidence review of the research to better understand the extent of this issue in New Zealand as well as the key drivers and possible interventions. This step is clearly necessary in order to undertake the next phase of the project which, we understand, is to initiate and sustain a collaborative programme of action to make the necessary changes at a policy, service delivery and individual level to support better physical outcomes in patients with SMI and/or addiction.

We note that the draft consensus position statement you are seeking feedback on summarises the findings from the evidence review – it describes the extent of the problem, the contributing factors and some promising interventions – but that the evidence review document itself and the sources to support the interventions that are mooted are not yet available. The NZMA is supportive of the Equally Well project and we endorse, in principle, the draft consensus position statement. However, we would request the opportunity to see the full evidence review document as well as the finalised consensus position statement before we are in a position to provide our unequivocal endorsement.

We congratulate Platform and Te Pou on the work they are doing to support better physical health outcomes in people with SMI and/or addictions. We consider the Equally Well project to be broadly aligned with advocacy that the NZMA has been doing on health equity,¹ the social determinants of health, reducing smoking and tackling obesity,² as well as our calls for a ‘whole of system’ approach to the issue of health disparities.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to input into this valuable initiative. We look forward to seeing the finalised consensus position statement as well as the full evidence review, with a view to being able to provide official endorsement of this statement at that time.

Yours sincerely



Dr Mark Peterson
NZMA Chair

¹ New Zealand Medical Association. Health Equity Position Statement. 2011. Available from http://nzma.org.nz/sites/all/files/pos_healthequity.pdf

² New Zealand Medical Association. Tackling Obesity: Policy Briefing. May 2014. Available from http://nzma.org.nz/sites/all/files/NZMA%20Policy%20Briefing%202014_Tackling%20Obesity.pdf