



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Doctors, nurses get behind free EpiPen® initiative**

Health professionals gave a huge thumbs up to Allergy New Zealand's recent free EpiPen® campaign, according to the organisation's Chief Executive Mark Dixon.

FundaPen™, which has recently ended with nearly 3,000 New Zealanders at risk of anaphylaxis receiving a free EpiPen, was wholeheartedly supported by prescribers including General Practitioners and Nurse Specialists.

"Not one health professional we approached asked why they should support this initiative," Dixon said. "They all asked 'how' they could support it. That 'can-do' attitude was critical and really demonstrated to us the overwhelming support for EpiPens to be funded like any other essential medicine."

Lifesaving EpiPen® (adrenaline autoinjector pens), which last only 12 – 18 months, are not currently funded by Pharmac and can cost between \$120 and \$350 each. Through the FundaPen™ campaign, which was made possible through a \$300,000 Pub Charity donation, Allergy New Zealand was able to reach people who are least able to afford this lifesaving medicine. A total of 2,875 EpiPen®(adrenaline autoinjector pens), were distributed between November 2019 and July 2020.

"We have received so much support for FundaPen™ from prescribers and the allergy community, it has re-energised our push for adrenaline auto-injectors to be government funded," Dixon said. "In Australia, people who are at risk of anaphylaxis, are now eligible for two funded adrenaline auto-injectors each year. In this country, none are funded, and the speed at which the free EpiPens were taken up under FundaPen™ demonstrates to us that there is significant unmet need."

"Support from the allergy community was unbelievable," Dixon said, "Our Facebook page received 100,000 hits in the first 24 hours, following the public launch. However, now the project has finished, the question turns to how do we meet the incredible need that FundaPen™ has highlighted?"

"We would love to work with the government and Pharmac to find a way to fund this lifesaving medicine. Until then we'll keep battling for people with life threatening allergies, who really deserve a whole lot better than they are getting at the moment," Dixon said.

**ENDS**

For more information, or to organise an interview, please contact Michele Hider on 0275513458 or email [Michele@prioritycomms.co.nz](mailto:Michele@prioritycomms.co.nz)

Allergy NZ is a 35-year-old national charity that aims to improve the quality of life for New Zealanders living with allergies, providing evidence-based information and support to them.

#### **KEY FACTS**

- FREE EpiPen® auto-injectors were available through the FundaPen™ initiative on an unrestricted basis to eligible patients between November 2019 to July 2020.
- An eligible patient had to be prescriber-diagnosed, at risk of anaphylaxis and needing an EpiPen® as per prescribing guidelines
- 1 EpiPen® per eligible patient
- The exclusive distributor was [www.AllergyPharmacy.co.nz](http://www.AllergyPharmacy.co.nz)

#### **CONDITIONS**

- Patients eligible for this offer, were doctor-diagnosed with an allergy that put them at risk of anaphylaxis, and needing an EpiPen® as per prescribing guidelines.
- Each recipient received training and education in the use of the EpiPen® and management of their allergy to avoid anaphylaxis.
- Each EpiPen® prescribed under this initiative was supplied at a fixed cost to Allergy New Zealand. That is, single point of distribution = single pharmacy = Allergy Pharmacy (online).
- Only one FREE EpiPen® was available per eligible patient.
- Allergy Pharmacy dispensed each EpiPen® back to the prescriber who complied with the FundaPen™ conditions, not directly to the patient. 'Local' Pharmacies could not fulfil the prescription.