

# Use of medicines in New Zealand

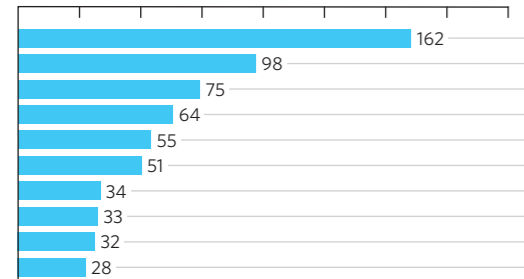
In 2016:<sup>1</sup>  
**\$800 million**

spent on medicines in the community  
 (excludes medicines used in hospitals)

with **44.4 million**  
 funded prescription items filled



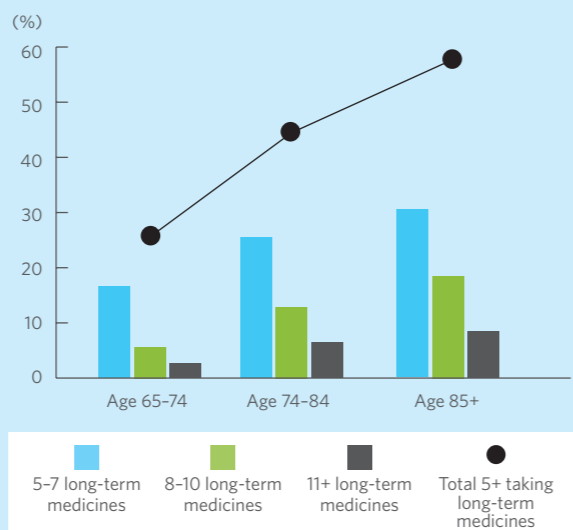
(Million \$)



The top 10 medicine groups by expenditure (main use)

On average, New Zealanders take many medicines<sup>3</sup>

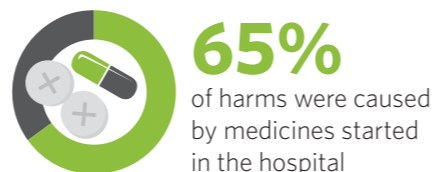
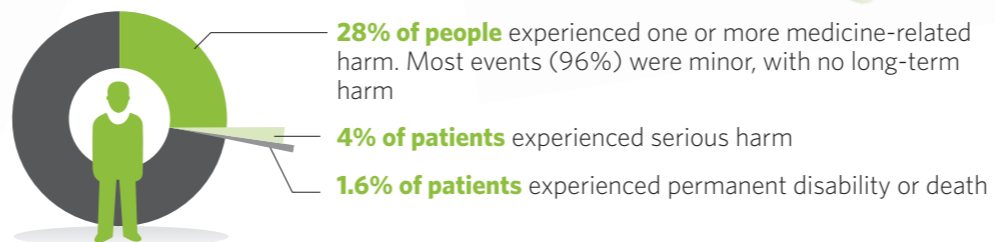
People over 65 receiving long-term medicines



1. PHARMAC. 2016. Annual Report of Pharmaceutical Management Agency (PHARMAC) for the year ended 30 June 2016. Wellington: PHARMAC. 2. Statistics New Zealand, 30 June 2016. 3. Health Quality & Safety Commission. nd. Atlas of Healthcare Variation: Polypharmacy in older people. Wellington: Health Quality & Safety Commission. URL: www.hqsc.govt.nz/our-programmes/health-quality-evaluation/projects/atlas-of-healthcare-variation/polypharmacy-in-older-people/#[2] (accessed 21 July 2017). 4. Robb G, Loe E, Maharaj A, et al. 2017. Medication-related patient harm in New Zealand hospitals. New Zealand Medical Journal 30: 146. 5. Davis P, Lay-Yee R, Briant R, et al. 2002. Adverse Events in New Zealand Public Hospitals I: Occurrence and impact. NZMJ 115(1167): U271. 6. Health Quality & Safety Commission. nd. Primary care patient experience. Wellington: Health Quality & Safety Commission. URL: www.hqsc.govt.nz/our-programmes/health-quality-evaluation/projects/patient-experience/primary-care-patient-experience (accessed 21 July 2017). 7. Ahern F, Sahn L, Lynch D, et al. 2014. Determining the frequency and preventability of adverse drug reaction-related admissions to an Irish University Hospital: a cross-sectional study. Emerg Med J 31(1): 24-9. 8. Fulton MM, Allen ER. 2005. Polypharmacy in the elderly: a literature review. J Am Acad Nurse Pract 17(4): 123-32. doi:10.1111/j.1041-2972.2005.0020.x. 9. Health Quality & Safety Commission. Atlas of Healthcare Variation: Gout. Wellington: Health Quality & Safety Commission. URL: www.hqsc.govt.nz/our-programmes/health-quality-evaluation/projects/atlas-of-healthcare-variation/gout (accessed 21 July 2017). 10. Health Quality & Safety Commission. Atlas of Healthcare Variation: Opioids. Wellington: Health Quality & Safety Commission. URL: www.hqsc.govt.nz/our-programmes/health-quality-evaluation/projects/atlas-of-healthcare-variation/opioids (accessed 21 July 2017).

# Medicine-related harm

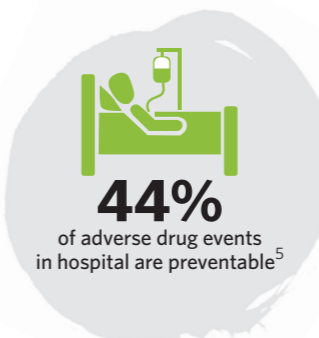
In hospitals<sup>4</sup>  
 for every 100 admissions



Medicines most commonly implicated for causing medicine-related harm:

30% Opioids (strong painkillers like morphine and oxycodone)

7% Anticoagulants and antiplatelet (blood thinners like aspirin, warfarin and enoxaparin)



In the community<sup>6</sup>

8% of patients surveyed experienced a medication error (prescribing or dispensing) in the last 12 months

46% (3.9% of the total number of people responding to the survey) of those people experiencing an error had to seek medical advice or attention

9% of emergency hospital admissions were related to medicine-related harm started in the community<sup>7</sup>

Frequency of medicine-related harm<sup>8</sup>

The risk of medicine-related harm increases with the more medicines taken



## Medicine use case studies

Gout medicines<sup>9</sup>

Māori and Pacific men are most affected by gout



Less than half of people with gout regularly received allopurinol to prevent gout attacks (allopurinol is a medicine used to prevent gout attacks)

People receiving allopurinol treatment for gout (%)

33% Pacific peoples, 39% Māori, 43% European/other

Total 41%

Although Māori and Pacific peoples have more gout, they were less likely to regularly receive allopurinol treatment

	Total %		Total %
	Female	Male	
Māori	3.9	11.8	7.6
Pacific peoples	6.0	19.8	12.7
European/other	1.9	6.3	4.0
Total	2.4	7.7	4.9



Strong pain killers<sup>10</sup>

An average of 1.6/100 people in New Zealand receive a strong opioid painkiller (such as morphine and oxycodone)

Prescribing of strong opioid painkillers is increasing year on year

Strong opioids can cause harm such as constipation, nausea (sickness) and vomiting, breathing difficulties and addiction (dependence)