



## **Media Release**

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### **Better patient management through electronic recording of growth information**

A child growth chart developed by a Dunedin-based medical team will allow improved clinical management through electronic recording of a child's growth information.

Professor Barry Taylor and his colleagues at the Southern DHB have developed an electronic system for documenting child health growth information based on height, weight and automatically calculated body mass index (BMI).

Other body measurements such as head circumference and waist circumference are also recorded. The recordings are plotted visually and their position in the normal range for that age and sex also calculated. The system remains useful for adults as it tracks weight and BMI over time.

The key measurements recorded on the Electronic Child Growth Chart are integrated within the child's health record and designed for use in any health assessment across all age groups.

The initiative has been championed by the Child Health Service Level Alliance, one of six health sector groupings operating under the umbrella of the South Island Alliance, a partnership between the five South Island District Health Boards (DHBs).

The growth chart initiative has gained unanimous support from paediatric clinical teams and primary care practitioners

Professor Taylor says there are a number of benefits for patients and health professionals using a record for all body measurements, no matter where they are measured.

He said change in these measurements over time is much more useful than just having one single measurement.

"For patients, the height, weight and BMI are recorded electronically for reference across the child's lifespan. This provides clinicians with growth assessment data to enable more informed decision-making for managing long-term conditions.

"Examples of improved clinical management include use in medication prescribing, access to diagnostic procedures; where weight is often needed, and planning and scheduling of operating theatre lists. This also enables sharing of reliable clinical information across health service providers," said Professor Taylor.

The Information Systems Service Level Alliance, another of the sector groupings under the Alliance, is progressing development of the growth charts into the 2012-13 South Island regional work plan, to ensure the initiative is integrated across the South Island.

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#### **Background on the South Island Alliance**

- New Zealand's 20 DHBs formed four regions (Northern, Midland, Central and South Island). Each has prepared a regional services plan describing how the member DHBs will plan and work together on a regional basis.
- The SIA comprises the five South Island DHBs: Canterbury, Nelson-Marlborough, West Coast, South Canterbury and Southern.
- The SIA is working to deliver shared services collaboratively under an Alliance framework as detailed in the South Island Regional Health Services Plan (SIHSP).
- Working collaboratively is a way of making the best use of resources in the region - supporting vulnerable services, improving access, and using present regional capacity more efficiently.
- The approach supports the Government's *Better, Sooner, More Convenient* health strategy – better, more effective health services closer to home.

**For more information on the South Island Alliance contact:**

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