

Air Ambulance Flight 17 August 2020

An air ambulance aircraft from New Zealand departed Rarotonga this afternoon transporting a very sick patient to critical care services in Auckland. This patient was deemed too ill to wait for the regular flight to New Zealand on Friday.

The patient, a 47 year old woman, has complications arising from diabetes and septic shock. The illness is NOT associated with COVID-19. However as a precaution the patient was tested for the coronavirus and returned a negative result.

Health authorities have noticed an increase in people delaying seeking medical attention for health issues especially relating to diabetes and heart disease and this is leading to further complications and increased severity of illness.

“This could be avoided if people took better care of their health or presented earlier to their nurses in their community health clinics. We are seeing a number of patients presenting with cellulitis or other skin infections, which are largely preventable with good care at home” says Dr Herman, Secretary of Health. “Additional factors such as obesity, smoking and alcohol overuse are also contributing to the increased presentations of patients suffering strokes, heart attacks and cancer.”

Two emergency flights to Pukapuka over the past week were required to uplift three sick patients.

“Our health system is experiencing increasing pressure to manage a wide range of complex health issues. Our communities can help us lessen this load by living healthier lives, eating wholesome healthier foods, moving more, taking their medicines when requested by health professionals, and having regular checks with their nurse or doctor” said Dr. Herman.

Authorities point out that getting patients who need further treatment to New Zealand is exacerbated and made far more expensive now that there is only one commercial flight a week between Rarotonga and Auckland.

The air ambulance flight was staffed by four intensive care staff, two doctors and two nurses caring for the patient during the flight. The patient is in a stable condition but required urgent resuscitation yesterday.

ENDS: Enquiries to Jaewynn McKay +682 55486