



## ORAL PRESENTATION

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**It's a gout time! A look at the prevalence of colchicine tablets in New Zealand and reported cases to the New Zealand National Poisons Centre of self-harm involving colchicine.**

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#### **Introduction:**

Colchicine overdose carries a high risk of mortality with limited effective treatment options. In New Zealand, gout is estimated to affect 6% of all adults, and rates are particularly high amongst Māori and Pacific peoples.<sup>1</sup> The District Health Board (DHB) region with the highest total population rates in New Zealand is Waitematā, with the highest concentration of Māori and Pasifika being in the Counties Manukau catchment area<sup>2</sup>.

#### **Aim and objectives:**

This study aimed to determine the quantities of colchicine tablets available in the community in New Zealand, the number of cases of self-harm involving colchicine reported to the New Zealand National Poisons Centre (NZNPC) between 2017 and 2021 and to review hospital discharge data related to colchicine poisoning for the same period.

#### **Methodology:**

A retrospective analysis of calls to the NZNPC and hospital discharge data between 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2021 was conducted focusing on colchicine related cases by DHB area. Publicly available colchicine prescribing data<sup>3</sup> for the corresponding period was also examined.

#### **Results:**

In 2017, 30,967 patients received a combined total of 4,206,558 colchicine tablets. By 2021, this had risen to 34,207 patients receiving 4,975,440 tablets. Cases of self-harm involving Colchicine reported to the NZNPC varied year to year, with a total of 18 cases ranging from 0 in 2017 to 8 in 2021. Patient ethnicity in these cases were 27% Pasifika, 22% Māori, with the remaining 51% comprising all other ethnicities. Thirty-six percent of the reported self-harm cases during the study period originated from the Counties Manukau area. Dispensing rates for colchicine tablets were greatest in the Counties Manukau region. The hospital discharge



data<sup>4</sup> revealed 8 cases where the patient died after a colchicine overdose, 7 occurring in 2021.

**Conclusions:**

There was an increase in the number of colchicine tablets prescribed from 2017-2021, with 2021 having the greatest number of tablets prescribed, highest number of colchicine self-harm cases reported to the NZNPC and the most hospital deaths. Increased availability of colchicine may increase the risk of colchicine self-harm exposures occurring, and Māori and Pacific populations may be disproportionately at risk given their prevalence of gout.