



'Sharps' service set to cut costs

By MARYANNE TWENTYMAN - Waikato Times Last updated 12:00 12/11/2009

More than 250 Waikato diabetics under the age of 20 can now safely dispose of their needles for free.

Until now type 1 diabetics and their families have faced charges of between \$10 and \$15 for the safe disposal of needles, or sharps, used to inject insulin. But a new partnership between Waikato District Health Board and Pathlab has seen the charges dropped.

Hamilton mother Sarah Jane Mills said she was over the moon about the decision saying "it was about bloody time".

"My son David John was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes earlier this year and I worked out that disposing of his sharps would cost around \$18,000 while he was in school, which seemed unfair when drug addicts could access them for free," Ms Mills said.

Until now Waikato funding for the disposal of sharps was only available for IV drug users because of the higher risk of infectious diseases.

Waikato DHB diabetes clinical nurse Vikki Lowe-Reid said sharps were items that could cause cuts or puncture injuries.

"We are thrilled to offer this free sharps container service.

"We have the funding and a system to make this process work and we have the co-operation and assistance of Pathlab," Mrs Lowe-Reid said.

Diabetes NZ Waikato president Murray Dear said the risks and complications of diabetes – a chronic condition which could affect anyone – were not well known even among people with the condition and the group's annual awareness week from November 17 to 23 was aimed at spreading knowledge.

Diabetes is the biggest health issue facing New Zealanders, according to Mr Dear, who said 19 people were diagnosed with diabetes every day.

"For each person diagnosed there is another with the condition undiagnosed," he said.