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## 25th Anniversary of the release of the ‘Cartwright Report’ remembered

Women’s Health Action’s annual Cartwright Anniversary Seminar, to be held on the 13th August in Auckland, will mark 25 years since the release of the ‘Cartwright Report’ which followed the Inquiry into the Allegations Concerning the Treatment of Cervical Cancer at National Women’s Hospital in 1987 and 1988, known as the ‘Cartwright Inquiry’ after the presiding judge, Dame Silvia Cartwright.

In 1987, health activists Sandra Coney and Phillida Bunkle published an article called ‘An unfortunate experiment at National Women’s Hospital’ in the monthly Auckland magazine - Metro. The article outlined an unethical study at National Women’s Hospital, the country’s

premier women’s hospital. The study, led by Dr Herbert Green, started in 1966, and involved

following women with major cervical abnormalities without deﬁnitively treating them, and

without their knowledge or consent. By 1987 many had developed cervical cancer and some

had died. The revelations led to public outrage and ultimately to the Ministerial Committee

of Inquiry. The Inquiry, and the subsequent Report had important implications for the future of health care in New Zealand that remain relevant today. The report was a blueprint for patients’ rights in New Zealand and also recommended the establishment of a Health and Disability Commissioner, a system of ethical review of medical and health research, and the establishment of a National Cervical Screening Programme. It was also the ﬁrst time that there was a serious focus on patients and consumers in the health care system and a consideration of the need for patient-centred health care. As Fertility Action, Women’s Health Action was at the centre of the Inquiry, as instigator and also as the principal voice for women’s interests. In the years that followed, the organisation was strongly focused on ensuring that the recommendations were implemented and we remain committed to keeping the legacy of the Cartwright inquiry and Report alive today.

“The victims of the ‘Unfortunate experiment’ were all women and the ‘Cartwright Inquiry’ exposed systemic gender bias against women in medical care at the time, whereby the doctor knew best and female patients were treated as irrational, hysterical and incapable of making choices for themselves” says Julie Radford-Poupard, Women’s Health Action Director. “It is therefore fitting, in order to mark the 25th anniversary of the release of the report, to examine other site where women, in this case as the majority of survivors of sexual violence, are fairing particularly badly at present- and that is in the justice system”.

This years’ Cartwright Anniversary Seminar, organised in partnership with Counselling Services Centre, HELP, Rape Prevention Education and Tu Wahine Trust is titled ‘One in a hundred: Improving justice for sexual violence survivors’ and will examine why New Zealand has such low rates of conviction for sexual violence offences. Latest statistics show that only 7% of sexual violence incidents are reported, 3% of all incidents are prosecuted and a mere 1% of all incidents result in a conviction. A panel of high profile speakers, including Survivor Advocate Louise Nicholas and Victoria University Associate Professor of Law Elisabeth McDonald, will explore some of the barriers to justice for survivors of sexual violence in New Zealand with a focus on court processes, and what can be done about it.

The seminar will be held at Parnell Trust Jubilee Building from 1-3 pm on Tuesday 13th August, 2013, followed by afternoon tea. Registration costs $10 and can be obtained from Women’s Health Action [www.womens-health.org.nz](http://www.womens-health.org.nz) or (09) 520 5295.

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