

Canterbury

District Health Board

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MEDIA RELEASE

TO: News Room

FROM: Amy Milne, Media Liaison

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SUBJECT: Canterbury Health System patients first to benefit from ground breaking new equipment

Canterbury Health Laboratories (CHL) is the first in New Zealand to begin medical diagnostic testing of bacteria and yeasts with revolutionary microbiology equipment.

The team in the CHL Microbiology Laboratory have begun using a MALDI-TOF (matrix-assisted laser desorption ionisation time of flight mass spectrometry) for the identification of bacteria and yeasts on all suitable medical diagnostic samples entering the laboratory.

Dr Anja Werno, Microbiology Medical Director, says the machine works by firing a laser at bacteria and then measuring the protein fingerprint the bacteria leave behind, which is then matched against a library of almost 4000 known bacteria and yeasts.

“The new MALDI-TOF system is enabling the laboratory to cut an average identification time from around 22 hours down to an average of 50 minutes in routine situations. In urgent situations the identification of a grown bacterium can be achieved in as little as five minutes,” Dr Werno says.

“What this means is we will be identifying bacteria much faster, in a more accurate manner and at a far cheaper cost than with previous traditional and sometimes inefficient methods.”

Dr Werno says this machine will improve patient care and management in cases of suspected bacterial infection because of faster availability of full bacterial identifications, ensuring the correct treatment is given.

“This machine is revolutionising microbiology globally and is the most ground breaking development in this area of microbiological diagnostics that I’ve seen in my lifetime,” she says.

For more information contact Canterbury DHB Media Liaison Amy Milne on (03) 364 4122, 027 502 7523, or amy.milne@cdhb.health.nz