

Māori Health Review

Making Education Easy

From Issue 30:6 – 2011

Is bowel cancer screening important for Māori?

Authors: Sarfati D et al

Summary: This paper discusses the evidence in support of the importance of bowel cancer screening in Māori New Zealanders. Currently, Māori have lower incidence of colorectal cancer compared with NZ Europeans, but the rates are increasing more rapidly among Māori. Moreover, despite this lower incidence, the colorectal cancer mortality burden is similar for Māori and NZ Europeans. Notably, colorectal cancer mortality rates have generally increased since the early 1980s among Māori, yet have remained stable or declined among NZ Europeans. In addition, survival among Māori with colorectal cancer is lower than that for non-Māori. There is evidence of poorer access and quality of care contributing to poorer colorectal cancer survival in Māori compared with non-Māori patients. A pilot bowel cancer screening programme is planned; the authors of this paper stress that attention must be paid to the effectiveness of this programme for Māori as well as European New Zealanders. Its introduction has the potential to reduce ethnic disparities in colorectal cancer survival, if screening is accompanied by investment in diagnostic and treatment services (such as colonoscopy).

Comment: With the roll-out of bowel cancer screening, and potential for further cancer screening programmes to be developed/implemented with advancing technologies, it's timely to consider the place of such initiatives for Māori. This opinion piece provides a description of the issues that is both comprehensive and relevant so that when faced with a similar question – is this important for Māori – we can respond appropriately.

Reference: *N Z Med J.* 2010;123(1320):9-12.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20720598>

Independent commentary by Dr Matire Harwood

Dr Matire Harwood (Ngapuhi) has worked in Hauora Māori, primary health and rehabilitation settings as clinician and researcher since graduating from Auckland Medical School in 1994. She also holds positions on a number of boards, committees and advisory groups including the Health Research Council. Matire lives in Auckland with her whānau including partner Haunui and two young children Te Rangijura and Waimarie.

Research Review publications are intended for New Zealand health professionals.

Disclaimer: This publication is not intended as a replacement for regular medical education but to assist in the process. The reviews are a summarised interpretation of the published study and reflect the opinion of the writer rather than those of the research group or scientific journal. It is suggested readers review the full trial data before forming a final conclusion on its merits.

Subscribing to Maori Health Review

To subscribe or download previous editions of Māori Health Review publications go to:

www.maorihealthreview.co.nz

