Improving Māori health through clinical assessment: Waikare o te Waka o Meihana

Authors: Pitama S et al.

Summary: It is widely acknowledged that biomedical, social, political and cultural factors contribute to health inequalities of indigenous communities. Health professionals have an important role to play in addressing these inequalities. This paper describes how the Indigenous Health Framework developed at the University of Otago, Christchurch, has been designed to translate the principles of cultural competency and safety into an approach that health practitioners can use in everyday practice and thereby improve health service delivery for Māori patients/whānau. The Indigenous Health Framework comprises the Hui Process and the Meihana model, which together have formed the indigenous health framework in the University of Otago, Christchurch undergraduate medical education programme for 4th-6th year medical students over the past 5 years. The components of the framework are defined in this paper, which goes on to describe how they are applied to clinical assessment. Favourable evaluations of the Indigenous Health Framework by medical students, health practitioners, Māori patients and whānau position it as a clinically relevant framework that supports health practitioners to work effectively with Māori patients and whānau.

Comment: The Hui Process is now taught at both medical schools. In my experience, students enjoy the opportunity to work in small groups with Māori patients. For some, this is their first clinical experience and sets them up well for their clinical years.


Abstract

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 Rangiura and Waimarie.

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