

Māori Health Review

Making Education Easy

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Kōrero Mārama: Health Literacy and Māori – Results from the 2006 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey

Authors: Ministry of Health

Summary: This report describes the health literacy skills of Māori compared to non-Māori, using data sourced from the OECD 2006 Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey. Health literacy is defined as the ability to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services in order to make informed and appropriate health decisions. Māori have poorer health literacy skills compared to non-Māori across all of the measured variables. A total of 80% of Māori males and 75% of Māori females were identified with poor health literacy skills.

Comment: As alluded to in the previous study and comments, the area of health literacy is increasingly recognised as an important enabler (or barrier) to good health, well being and self determination. Importantly, it is the responsibility of service providers to assess health literacy levels. Interventions may be more difficult given the dearth of published evidence, particularly for Māori and other Indigenous peoples. Dr Sue Crengle and other Indigenous health researchers from Canada and Australia will be trialling an 'Indigenous health literacy intervention' designed not only for clients but their also whānau/carers and service providers. I'll continue to keep readers informed.

Reference: Ministry of Health. 2010. Kōrero Mārama: Health Literacy and Māori. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

<http://www.maorihealth.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/korero-marama-health-literacy-maori-feb2010>

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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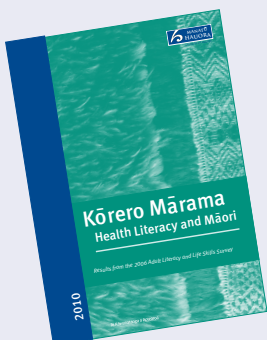
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