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Title: Exploring palliative care experiences and options for Maori patients and their whānau
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Introduction

Palliative care aims to improve the quality of life of patients and their whānau facing the problems associated with life-threatening illnesses. The approach is through the prevention and relief of suffering and issues related to physical, psychosocial and spiritual health.

The Palliative Care Council ethnicity projections estimate the percentage of Māori who will die aged 65+ will grow from 51.4% to 63.6% in 2026 indicating a likely growing demand for Māori in palliative care¹. Additionally, the literature widely notes that palliative care services do not meet the needs of Māori.

These two assertions, that there is a need for Māori responsiveness in palliative care delivery and that current services are not meeting the needs of Māori patients/whānau, provided the impetus for the Ministry of Health commissioned *Palliative Care and Māori from a Health Literacy Perspective* report which draws together systematic literature reviews, interviews with patients, whānau and health workers and analysis of written resources. The Health Literacy Report provides best practice recommendations across seven interrelated areas: guidelines, workforce, resources, service orientation, monitoring and evaluation, research and addressing structural barriers.

Nurse Maude

Nurse Maude (NM) is a home based support service that provides district and specialist nursing home cares, hospice and community palliative care and allied health support to patients and their whānau in Canterbury. NM's Māori Health Action Plan 2016-2018 recognises a commitment to equitable access to Māori, of services that are developed and delivered in a way that is appropriate to Māori. The Māori Health Action Plan has ten objectives with associated action plans based around the following five areas of focus: access to care: mauri ora, developing our workforce; o tātou kaimahi, understanding our population o tātou tāngata; NM Māori health outcomes pae ora rangatiratanga.

Aim

1. Complete a 4-week clinical attachment alongside NM staff to provide context to understand current palliative care services for Māori in Canterbury.
2. Evaluate the NM Māori Action Plan against the recommendations of the Health Literacy Report in order to highlight current effective practice and opportunities for ongoing and future development.

Impact

This project provided clinical opportunities and allowed me to develop literature search and policy skills.

Method

This internship had two components. The first was a 4 week Clinical Placement at Nurse Maude within the Hospice and Community Palliative Care Teams. The purpose of the Clinical Placement was to provide contextual engagement with whānau Māori (Māori families), their carers', kuamātua (respected elders), clinicians and allied health professionals.

¹ Data projections have been difficult due to differing information systems and a lack of clarity around prioritisation of recording ethnicity data.

The second part involved collating best practice recommendations alongside the Nurse Maude Māori Health Action Plan to highlight current effective practice and highlight areas for further/ongoing development.

Results:

The Māori Action Plan aligns to the best practice recommendations from the Health Literacy Report in the following ways:

1. Guidelines and standards – NM show a commitment to developing policy focused on equitable delivery to Māori.
2. Research – NM outlines a desire to improve current services in consultation with Māori stakeholders.
3. Workforce – NM has set clear goals around population parity for staff employment and ongoing development and funding towards developing cultural competency.
4. Service Orientation – NM have objectives inclusive of Clinical referral resource development, community representation at a governance level and a regional hui to bring together Māori stakeholders to assess the Māori Action Plan.
5. Monitoring and evaluation – NM record ethnicity data for 83% of users and have continued goals for collection of accurate data.
6. Address Structural Barriers – reviewing health literacy domains through policy and continue Māori stakeholder engagement to proactively raise awareness of NM services.

The key opportunities for continued development are:

1. Implementation and monitoring – While the NM Māori Health Action Plan outlines many goals around policy and process it is important to monitor implementation alongside key performance indicators to ensure targets are being met and reported on. This major point stretches across all of seven priority areas from the Health Literacy Report².
2. Culturally appropriate Māori and Palliative Care specific resources – at present there is no attention focused on this key priority.
3. Translational research – many of the action points (particularly around resources and incorporating Māori worldview) require specific research to be undertaken.
4. Palliative care specific goals – one of the major limitations of the Māori Health Action Plan is it stretches across a large, diverse organisation. Palliative care is a specialised area of medicine that may require specific goals, policies and protocols.

Conclusion:

NM has a clear, ongoing commitment to whānau Māori in Canterbury demonstrated by the goals of the Māori Health Action Plan. However, there remain continued areas for development in monitoring and implementation of policy and improving resources and competencies in te ao Māori. It is vital NM has a systemic accountability structure for reporting, and monitoring is linked to quality assurance measures.

² Some of the goals have Key Performance Indicators stated in the Māori Health Action Plan, however, not all are publically monitored.