



## Spotlight on Indigenous health research

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A series of articles addressing Indigenous health issues in both Australia and New Zealand, and suggesting ways of addressing these challenges more effectively, are a feature of the latest issue of the *ANZ Journal of Surgery*.

In the lead-up to the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons' Annual Scientific Congress, to be convened in Auckland in May and at which the issue of Indigenous health will be a focus of attention, the January/February issue of the journal showcases the high standard of Indigenous health research while recognising the need for greater Indigenous participation in the health workforce.

"The authors of the four publications in this issue of the journal are all recognized leaders and demonstrate that, like any other area of investigation, careful analysis of data can, and should, with objective debate, inform policy," Mr Jonathon Koea writes in an editorial piece.

Mr Koea highlights the work of Dr Sarah Hill and her University of Otago co-authors, who outline disparities in the incidence and treatment of cancer among New Zealand Maori.

According to Dr Hill, Maori with Stage 3 cancer are less likely to undergo lymphadenectomies or receive post-operative chemotherapy.

Dr David Paul from the University of Western Australia discusses the importance of workforce development and creating pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to enter careers in the health sector.

In the area of service delivery, Dr Vanessa Blair and her colleagues at Whangarei Hospital describe their experience with a Maori family in north eastern New Zealand with a long history of gastric cancer. The authors emphasise three points in the process by which researchers and family leaders discovered the cause of these cancers: *whakapapa*, or the family tree in Maori culture, was of significant assistance in defining inheritance patterns; the development of a clinical management arm undertaken by local specialists at the nearest metropolitan hospital; and, despite the fact that no initial clinical or investigative staff were Maori, non-Indigenous health workers with the right attitude and processes were able to address an Indigenous health issue.

The editorial notes that the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons established its Indigenous Health Committee in 2008, driven by the College's Trauma and Rural Surgery Sections and their understanding of the huge health disadvantages experienced by Indigenous communities.

"The College has a significant history of influencing social policy based on careful data collection and analysis," Mr Koea said.

"Indigenous health represents an immediate challenge and a similar opportunity for the College and its Fellows."

The *ANZ Journal of Surgery*, published by Wiley-Blackwell, is the pre-eminent surgical journal published in Australia, New Zealand and the South-East Asian region. The Journal is dedicated to the promotion of outstanding surgical practice, and research of contemporary and international interest.



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