

Guidance on how to achieve Vision Mātauranga for child health research

Cure Kids aims to transform the health and wellbeing of children in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. This requires a meaningful commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and equitable health outcomes for tamariki and taitamariki Maori through high-quality research, leadership, and advocacy.

Cure Kids considers that every researcher can benefit from actively considering how their projects might better address health equity for tamariki Maori, including through collaborations and partnerships that enhance and expand their project plans. In the words of Tā Mason Durie, Māori and Pakeha worldviews can and should be “integrated without conflict or compromise” and in ways which are both robust and mutually beneficial.

Cure Kids assesses every research proposal according to [Vision Mātauranga](#) – the goal to support Māori to achieve maximum health and wellbeing through research which is consistent with tikanga Māori and enriched by mātauranga Māori. Some studies, by their very nature, will be well positioned to deliver on these principles because they have a specific focus on Māori health outcomes, incorporate Māori methodologies, or are led by Māori researchers. In other cases, opportunities to incorporate Vision Mātauranga may be less obvious. Researchers should consult with Māori and consider a range of options, including partnering to identify research priorities, co-design their research questions and methodology, incorporate relevant aspects of Mātauranga Māori, develop Māori research capacity, and create mechanisms to engage Māori audiences when they share their results.

Cure Kids is committed to Te Tiriti, and to enabling research with the potential to improve outcomes for tamariki Māori, who experience inequitable health and social outcomes. Cure Kids acknowledges that for some researchers, the necessary consultation to incorporate Vision Mātauranga will require additional work and effort – but should also be viewed as an opportunity to enhance the quality of the research and the outcomes achieved. To this end, research teams should foster sustainable ongoing relationships with communities, based on the principal of reciprocity. Cure Kids hopes that by presenting this wero, or challenge, for all researchers, we will stimulate novel and nuanced approaches to the problems facing our children.

Health equity for tamariki Māori

Cure Kids aims to support and encourage research that will enable Māori children to be healthy and to thrive. The Ministry of Health has acknowledged that [“In Aotearoa NZ, people have differences in health that are not only avoidable but unfair and unjust.”](#) To deliver equity in health outcomes for Māori children, we need research which can uncover the complex factors which cause the existing disparities; incorporate the best available evidence including traditional knowledge; innovate to develop and test practical solutions; and implement these rapidly across the health system to prevent, treat, and cure diseases for our children.

One example of research which targets inequitable health outcomes for Māori children is [Dr Anneka Anderson’s pilot study of a patient-centred clinic, designed to offer culturally appropriate care to reduce the disproportionate burden of rheumatic heart disease for rangatahi Māori.](#)

An example for researchers investigating access to paediatric healthcare services could be incorporation of a specific aim to identify barriers in access to care for Māori whānau, and engage with Māori to co-design strategies for service delivery that will better uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Holistic concept of health

Cure Kids will support health research which is integrated and holistic, encompassing the wellbeing of the whole child within their whānau, their community, and their environment. The Ministry of Health’s strategy to deliver healthy futures for Māori, [He Korowai Oranga](#), presents health as interdependent systems:

- **Mauri ora / Hauora** – individual health and wellbeing, including the dimensions of taha tinana, taha hinengaro, and taha wairua (physical, mental and emotional, and spiritual health, respectively),
- **Whānau Ora** – the ability of families and communities to manage their own health autonomously,
- **Wai ora/ Oranga Taiao/ Oranga Tāngata** – the health of the environment and whenua.

One example of research which encompasses rangatahi Māori in their wider contexts is [Dr Leonie Pihama’s research, which draws on te reo, tikanga, kawa and mātauranga Māori to offer practices which whānau can use to foster the mental health, wellbeing, and connectedness of their mokopuna.](#)

An example for researchers developing a new pharmaceutical treatment for a specific condition could be consulting with Māori children and whānau about their experiences of the health condition, and their needs and preferences for treatment. They could then co-design the formulation, dosage, delivery method, and information provided with the treatment to ensure maximum benefits for Māori children.

Kaupapa and tikanga Māori

Cure Kids considers that all paediatric research could be enhanced through innovative application of Māori methodologies, and by utilising principles such as manākitanga, whanaungatanga, and kaitiakitanga.

One example of research informed by kaupapa Māori methodologies is the work of [Dr Yvonne Anderson and the Tamariki Pakiri Trust, together with Taranaki whānau, to co-design a programme to promote healthy lifestyles for children.](#)

An example for clinical researchers could be incorporation of tikanga into clinical trials, through co-design of culturally appropriate protocols for kanohi-ki-te-kanohi enrolment of participants, communication throughout the trial and follow-up, and handling of sensitive data and samples.

Mātauranga Maori

Cure Kids aims to support research that transforms the health of children by integrating traditional knowledge, concepts, or mātauranga.

One example of research grounded in mātauranga Māori could be research which investigates rongoā Māori and the traditional use of indigenous flora and fauna for medicinal purposes, in combination with pharmacological studies of their clinical safety and effectiveness.

An example of incorporation of mātauranga Māori into research could be research evaluating the use of wahakura or pepi-pods, based on traditional woven flax baskets for babies, to reduce the risk of sudden unexpected death in infancy by enabling safe sleeping in shared beds. The research could include engagement with Māori experts and practitioners to co-design the study in relation to the Mātauranga Māori associated with weaving and childrearing, and to use culturally appropriate frameworks for working with Māori whanau, along with a literature search for relevant Mātauranga Māori, along with ongoing consultation, and dissemination of the results in a range of formats, from scientific publications and guidelines to oral presentations in both te reo Māori and English.

Sustainable partnerships and co-design

Cure Kids considers that Māori communities are often best placed to advise on how to prioritise, deliver, and implement research to improve the health of Māori children. We encourage researchers to engage in meaningful relationships with Māori communities through mutually beneficial, mana-enhancing partnerships, that may extend well beyond the timeframe of any one research project.

An example would be research commissioned by a specific iwi as an investment in the health of future generations which is led by Māori paediatricians, and trains a range of researchers, students, and healthcare workers to increase the capacity for further research and raise health literacy in the community.

An example for any researchers collecting health information could be co-designing their study with the leaders of a specific hapū or iwi, including consultation on ethical dimensions and on Māori principles for data sovereignty, [Te Mana Raraunga](#). The study could include the option for fully informed and active participation of iwi members, including in sharing of the final results.

Non-exhaustive list of resources and websites for further information

- NZ Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment. Vision Mātauranga Policy. 2005.
- Rauika Mangai. A guide to Vision Mātauranga: lessons from Māori voices in the New Zealand science sector. 2020.
- Health Research Council. Māori health advancement. 2018.
- Royal Society Te Apārangi. Vision Mātauranga: A conversation with Associate Professors Melinda Webber and Angela Wanhalla. 2021.
- NZ Ministry of Health. He Korowai Oranga. 2014.
- NZ Ministry of Health. Equity in health. 2019
- Health Research Council. Guidance on Māori health research. 2010.
- Hagen P. Co-design in Aotearoa: Ways of being, knowing and doing. 2021.
- Health Research Council (HRC) & Ministries of Health and Business, Innovation and Employment. NZ Health Research Strategy 2017–2027. 2017.
- Health Research Council. Te Ara Tika – Guidelines for Māori Research Ethics. 2010.
- [Health Research Council. Māori Health Advancement Guidelines. 2019.](#)
- Allen, W et al. Kia pono te mahi putaiao—doing science in the right spirit. *J Royal Soc NZ* 2009; 39: 239-242.
- Crawford, S. (2009). Matauranga Maori and western science: The importance of hypotheses, predictions and protocols, *J Royal Soc NZ* 2009; 39(4): 163–66.
- Broughton D and McBreen K. Mātauranga Māori, tino rangatiratanga and the future of New Zealand science. *J Royal Soc NZ* 2015; 45(2), 83-88.
- Moewaka Barnes, H. Transforming Science: How our Structures Limit Innovation. Te Puna Whakaaro, 2006; 29: 1-16.
- Smith LT et al. What is the role of methodology in producing indigenous insights? A discussion from Mātauranga Māori. *Knowledge Cultures* 2016; 4(3): 131–56.
- Hikuroa D. Mātauranga Māori - the ūkaipō of knowledge in New Zealand. *J Royal Soc NZ* 2017; 47(1), 5-10.
- Mercier O. Mātauranga and science.
- [Waikato District Health Board.](#) Approaching Māori Responsiveness and Vision Mātauranga. 2017.
- [University of Otago. Māori health research advancement.](#) 2022.