



Hei  
Āhuru  
Mōwai

Māori Cancer  
Leadership  
Aotearoa

10 November, 2021

## COVID and Cancer

### Briefing paper for the National Iwi Chairs Forum

E ngā waka whakatekateka I te ia o te wai, koutou kua whakakūkū mai nei ki tēnei tauranga tēnā koutou katoa.

COVID continues to impact our whānau across the motu. This paper provides an update on national cancer issues for Māori and recommendations from Hei Āhuru Mōwai for the health system.

- Cancer Screening has opened up again and Māori and Pacific are being **prioritised**<sup>1</sup>
- National COVID and Cancer Guidelines that Hei Āhuru Mōwai helped develop, were resented to DHBs at the beginning of this lockdown advising services to **prioritise** Māori, Pacific and vulnerable populations across cancer diagnostic and treatment pathways<sup>2</sup>
- Te Aho o Te Kahu along with members of Hei Āhuru Mōwai reported on the impact of COVID on cancer for the month of August.
  - Cancer diagnoses in August 2021 were **down 9%** compared to August 2018/19<sup>3</sup>
  - Cancer treatment provision in August 2021 was relatively stable and uninterrupted
  - Cancer outcomes in August 2021 didn't appear to increase inequities for Māori - a fantastic outcome and likely influenced by the National COVID and Cancer Guidelines
  - September data are currently being analysed

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<sup>1</sup> National Screening Unit, MOH, personal communication 8/11/21

<sup>2</sup> Hei Āhuru Mōwai wrote into the guidelines that all services must prioritise Māori in order to minimise the risk of increasing inequitable cancer outcomes

<sup>3</sup> Te Aho o Te Kahu, August COVID 19 Cancer monitoring 2021. [www.teaho.govt.nz](http://www.teaho.govt.nz)

Māori cancer inequities has the potential to increase the longer that COVID is in Aotearoa and uncontrolled. To mitigate this risk, we released our *COVID and Cancer Minimum Equity Requirements* which were sent to Ashley Bloomfield, Minister Henare, Minister Verrall and Minister Little. We have attached the requirements for your perusal.

We are encouraging whānau who are on a cancer journey, or who are concerned about signs and symptoms that may be cancer, to speak directly to their doctor or cancer care team and also to visit our website; [www.heiahurumowai.org.nz](http://www.heiahurumowai.org.nz)

Thank you for receiving our report and for all of your mahi rangatira supporting our whānau, hapū and iwi across the motu.

Ngā manaakitanga

Moahuia Goza, Dr Nina Scott, Gary Thompson



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## Tangata whenua te tuatahi

### Tangata whenua first

#### Minimum COVID and cancer equity requirements

1. Māori especially those with cancer and their whānau, must be given **priority access** to COVID vaccinations
2. Māori who are immunocompromised must be given **priority access** to any third dose vaccinations
3. All health practitioners working with Māori and Pacific should be vaccinated
4. Māori must be **prioritised** across all early diagnosis and treatment pathways
5. During levels 3 & 4 primary care providers, DHB's and cancer centers should identify, contact, and provide wrap around services to Māori who are awaiting appointments, test results or receiving cancer treatment
6. All kaupapa Māori and kaupapa Māori cancer organisations should be offered a COVID cancer support fund
7. Cancer accommodation and travel providers should be offered a COVID cancer support fund.
8. Screening programmes should continue (with adequate safety mechanisms) and catch-up planning must prioritise Māori
9. Smokefree policy actions and access to stop smoking programmes for Māori should increase
10. Promotion to limit alcohol consumption should increase

These requirements must be robustly and regularly monitored (including independent, external, non-Crown monitors) and must be acted upon if requirements are not met.

Cancer equity gaps - caused by insufficient equity focus and action in health and cancer care services can be worsened during COVID lockdowns. Māori and Pacific<sup>1</sup> must have prioritised access to vaccinations, cancer prevention, screening, diagnosis, and treatment services. Deliberate and sustained prioritisation for Māori and Pacific will decrease the risk of exacerbating current cancer inequities.