

Tū Whakaruruhau: The evaluation of treatment outcomes for methamphetamine dependence in Aotearoa New Zealand – design of a prospective longitudinal cohort study and longitudinal qualitative study.

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Introduction: *Methamphetamine is the second most used illicit drug in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ). People who regularly use methamphetamine are likely to develop methamphetamine use disorder (MUD), and significant physical and psychiatric harm. Effective treatments for MUD are limited, and relapses are common. Tū Whakaruruhau is a programme of research that aims to understand what treatment approaches are effective in managing MUD and related harms, in NZ.*

Method: Tū Whakaruruhau comprises two studies: 1) A 24-month longitudinal cohort study that will follow people in treatment and those not in treatment at baseline and 3-, 12-, and 24-months. The primary outcome is self-reported methamphetamine use (days used past month) at 12-months. Secondary outcomes include psychiatric comorbidity, polydrug use, change in MUD diagnosis, criminal involvement, healthcare utilisation, and expectations/experiences of treatment. 320 participants (50% Māori, 240 in Treatment Group, 80 not in treatment Group) will be sought for 90% power on the primary outcome; 2) A longitudinal qualitative study involving interviews at baseline, 6-, and 12-months with 30 participants (50% Māori) from the Treatment Group, to explore their expectations of treatment and lived experiences of treatment for MUD over time.

Key Findings: Discussion will focus on the study design, including challenges and progress with recruitment (at time of writing approximately 160 participants have been enrolled in Study 1 and 15 participants into study 2).

Discussions and Conclusions: This programme of work will provide the first evidence of treatment outcomes for MUD, and the relative effectiveness of current treatment approaches, in NZ. The research will provide information on what factors predict better/more equitable health outcomes. Incorporation of qualitative interviews ensures that the participants' treatment experiences are captured - informing perspectives about what treatment approaches work (do not work), so that the most appropriate interventions are made available to support consumer needs.

Implications for Practice or Policy: Tū Whakaruruhau is a te reo (Māori language) name gifted by the study Māori advisory committee. Translated the name means 'to stand as a protection, to be a beacon of manaakitanga (to show respect and care for others)'. Findings from Tū Whakaruruhau will inform and provide the basis for the ongoing establishment of an evidence base for treatment for problematic methamphetamine use (including MUD) in Aotearoa NZ.

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