

# • **Cultural Safety versus Cultural Competency: why it matters for Māori health**

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# Pepeha

Ko Matawhaura te maunga  
kohatu.

Ko Te-Rotoiti-a-Kite-a-Ihenga te  
moana.

Ko Ngāti Rongomai rāua ko  
Ngāti Pikiao ōku hapū.

He uri tēnei o Te Arawa waka.

Tēnā rā koutou katoa.



## Background

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Māori experience higher exposure to social, environmental and commercial determinants of poor health.

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Māori are 3.43 times more likely than non-Māori to experience unfair treatment by a health professional on the basis of ethnicity.

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Cultural Competency (CC) and Cultural Safety (CS) often referred to as mechanisms to address Māori health inequities.

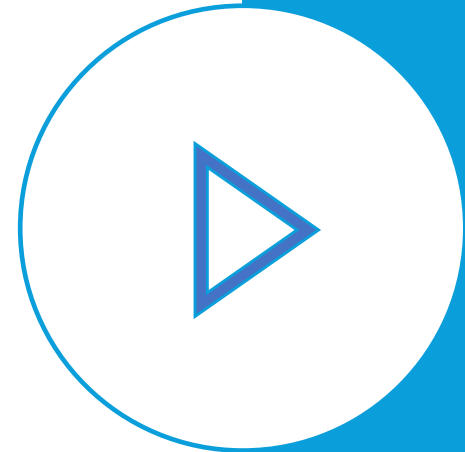
# Understanding Cultural Competency and Cultural Safety

- Mixed definitions and understandings
  - *cultural awareness; cultural sensitivity; cultural humility; cultural security; cultural respect; cultural adaptation; transcultural competence; transcultural effectiveness.*
- Most view CC in terms of gazing at the 'exotic other' v.s. evidence of inequities and professional complicity
- Variations in policy uptake across the sector



# Cultural Competency - risks

- Commonly seen as the acquisition of skills to better understand members of other cultures in order to achieve the best possible health outcome.
- Can support stereotypes & promote ideas of authenticity
- Often targets the 'nice to do' activities (e.g. learn waiata, visit a marae, practice te reo etc)
- Does not require health professionals to examine their own culture/behaviour/impact on health inequities



# Cultural Competency - risks

*“Achieving cultural competence is often viewed as a static outcome. One is ‘competent’ in interacting with patients from diverse backgrounds in much the same way as one is competent in performing a physical exam or reading an EKG. Cultural competency is not an abdominal exam. It is not a static requirement to be checked off some list...”*

Kumagai A, Lypson M. p783. Beyond cultural competence: critical consciousness, social justice, and multicultural education. Acad Med. 2009;84(6):782 –7.

# Cultural Safety

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- Rejection of transcultural nursing

*The skill for nurses and midwives does not lie in knowing the customs of ethnospecific cultures. Rather, cultural safety places an obligation on the nurse or midwife to provide care within the framework of recognizing and respecting the difference of any individual. (Ramsden & Papps, p.493-494)*

- Places an emphasis on the health worker understanding their own culture and identity

*Thus, cultural safety is concerned with both systemic and individual change with the aim of examining processes of identity formation and enhancing health workers' awareness of their own identity and its impact on the care they provide to people from indigenous cultural groups. (Downing, Kowal et al. 2011, p.249)*







## Dr Chelsea Watego

“The solution 2 racism is  
NOT cultural awareness.  
The solution is a critical race  
consciousness which has  
nothing 2 to with my culture”

12 Sep 2017



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## Cultural safety

- Requires **health professionals and organisations** to examine themselves and the potential impact of their own culture on clinical interactions and healthcare service delivery.
- Must **acknowledge and address your own biases, attitudes, assumptions, stereotypes and prejudices.**
- Encompass a '**critical consciousness**', engage in ongoing self-reflection and self-awareness.
- Influence healthcare to reduce bias and improve equity within the workforce and working environment.

# Why it matters for Māori health

- The health system needs to perform better for Māori in every sphere, for every condition, through every service and every interaction.
- How we think about the problem determines how we intervene.
  - Cultural competency frames 'Māori culture'
  - Cultural safety frames 'non-Māori culture'
- Need to do both (and be clear about what we are doing - where and why).
- Time to do the hard work (rather than cultural decoration) to eliminate Māori health inequities.

# Resources

- Curtis E, Jones R, Tipene-Leach D, Walker C, Loring B, Paine S-J, et al. Why cultural safety rather than cultural competency is required to achieve health equity: a literature review and recommended definition. International Journal for Equity in Health. 2019;18(1):174.
- <https://e-tangata.co.nz/comment-and-analysis/i-love-my-culture-but-its-not-the-answer-to-maori-health-inequities/>
- <https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/news/2020/01/08/why-we-need-to-abandon-cultural-competency.html>