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| **Māori understandings of alcohol use: Implications for policy and practice in Aotearoa** |
| **Background**  Alcohol use among Māori has undeniable harmful effects on hauora Māori. Despite attempts to minimize such effects, national data in Aotearoa show harmful alcohol use among Māori has not reduced in the last two decades and that Māori consistently suffer more alcohol related harm in comparison to non-Māori. Together these factors highlight the need for more to be done. This presentation is based on research that explored the social context of alcohol use from the perspectives of older Māori to develop an indigenous and nuanced understanding Māori alcohol use.  **Methods**  A Māori centred research framework was utilised to conduct three studies. The first, a quantitative study, drew on existing survey data to explore older Māori alcohol use, and its relationships to socio-demographic variables. The second and third qualitative studies explored the personal experiences of Māori alcohol use across the lifetime, and, the broader and socially shared meanings of alcohol use from the perspectives of older Māori.  **Results**  Across the findings of these studies three central features of Māori alcohol use were identified. These are: whānau, whanaungatanga and, diversity; namely in relation to understandings of older Māori alcohol use, Māori experiences of alcohol use, and, social influences of Māori alcohol use.  **Discussion**  The three central features of whanau, whanaungatanga and diversity are understood to underpin Māori alcohol use and have important implications for alcohol policy and health promotion. The findings from this research highlight the social realities of Māori alcohol use which are not necessarily reflected in current alcohol policy thus limiting its effectiveness. Attending to whānau and whanaungatanga in the context of alcohol use at the policy level may lead to more comprehensive and culturally effective policy. These findings support the notion that health promotion initiatives should be grounded in the context of whanau; where whānau are empowered to determine safe alcohol use practices within whānau and Māori communities. Health promotion initiatives should also look to harness the potential of kaumātua capability. In the context of alcohol use, this may mean utilizing kaumātua potential to establish clear tikanga around the safe use of alcohol in all social contexts of Māori alcohol use as well as supporting kaumātua and whānau to ensure that tikanga is upheld. Such approaches within health promotion will support more equitable health outcomes for Māori in the context of alcohol use in Aotearoa.  **Keywords**  **Māori, alcohol use, social context, Māori centred research** |