A New Zealand perspective on palliative care for Māori

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Summary: This paper discusses approaches taken to address Māori health issues and the implications for palliative care provision in New Zealand. In 2001, the New Zealand Palliative Care Strategy was introduced, with the stated objective of providing a “systematic and informed approach to the provision and funding of palliative care services”. Its implementation was supported by structural and systemic changes to community, hospice, hospital, and specialty services. Nevertheless, Māori continue to experience both a higher cancer incidence and a higher mortality rate than non-Māori. A number of obstacles remain that prevent the provision of targeted and tailored palliative care for Māori. Active consultation and involvement of Māori people and health providers is required to identify needs and plan appropriate services. The paper suggests ways in which palliative care may most appropriately meet the needs of Māori patients, their families, and communities.

Comment: There is minimal literature available about palliative care and the Māori experience, yet cancer statistics and anecdotal stories indicate that it is a major issue. The whole journal is dedicated to the indigenous perspective in palliative care and those of you working in this area may find the other articles useful.

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