

Maori hospital readmission rates to be examined

Maori hospital readmission rates are to be examined in a two-pronged project by HRC Clinical Research Training Fellow Dr Juliet Rumball-Smith.

Dr Rumball-Smith has recently completed an, as yet, unpublished dissertation looking at the quality of hospital care for the elderly using readmission rate. Early results pointed to a difference in the rate of readmission in Maori compared to NZ Europeans.

“Theoretically, if patients are discharged in an adequate clinical state, readmission should not occur. The rate of readmission should also not differ between ethnicities if confounding factors are controlled for.

“The argument in the past has been that Maori have worse health outcomes because they are more likely to engage in risky lifestyle behaviours like smoking, or be in a lower socio-economic group,” says Dr Rumball-Smith.

“However, research has shown that at every different level of socio-economic status, Maori still have worse health outcomes than non-Maori – this is the ‘outcome’ gap. We need to investigate possible causes of these discrepancies in health status between Maori and non-Maori.”

Dr Rumball-Smith says that one factor to consider is the quality of hospital care received by Maori.

“A New Zealand study has shown that even though there is a greater prevalence of cardiac disease in Maori, paradoxically they may not receive the same level of cardiac intervention as New Zealand Europeans. Similarly, another study demonstrates that Maori with chronic diseases may not receive the same medical management as non-Maori.

“We have to consider Maori may not be receiving the same quality of care as non-Maori.”

She will use both quantitative and qualitative approaches for her research.

The quantitative analysis will involve developing readmission rate as a quality indicator using the National Minimum DataSet. In order to minimise confounding from factors such as chronic disease, Dr Rumball-Smith aims to restrict the study to patients admitted for one of a defined set of elective surgical conditions. She will also perform a sub-analysis of Christchurch patients, to ensure that this population does not differ significantly from the rest of the country.

The Christchurch population will go on to form the sample group for the qualitative aspect of the study. Dr Rumball-Smith plans to perform a satisfaction survey with approximately 150 Maori and 150 non-Maori, who were recently discharged from Christchurch hospital.

“From the survey I hope to get information about their perception of the care they received, as well as assessing factors such as their smoking status and self-defined ethnicity.”

By combining information from the survey and analysis of readmission rates, Dr Rumball-Smith hopes to compare whether the quality of hospital care differs between Maori and non-Maori.

Dr Rumball-Smith will be working through the University of Otago Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences.

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Key words:

- Hospital care, Maori, non-Maori

Key facts:

- Research suggests there is a difference in hospital readmission rates in Maori and NZ Europeans.

Aims of this research:

- To develop a readmission rate as a quality indicator using the National Minimum DataSet
- To gain an understanding of the care received by Maori and non-Maori recently discharged from hospital
- To compare the quality of hospital care between Maori and non-Maori.