

Guidelines on Pacific Health Research

The Guidelines have been written purposely to assist research with Pacific peoples living in Aotearoa, New Zealand. They focus on the New Zealand context of Pacific health research. The scope of the guidelines is not intended to encompass health research in the Pacific region outside of New Zealand. There is an acknowledgement that the expertise for the development of research guidelines for undertaking health research in Pacific nations, lies with Pacific nations themselves.

The Guidelines on Pacific Health Research is an evolving document. It is the beginning of work that seeks to articulate Pacific ethical standards of research. Despite undertaking a process of extensive consultation, the Guidelines are best conceived as the initiation of a dialogue. The Guidelines will, with constructive criticism and care, be refined over time and improve with each revision.

The Guidelines focus on the “Ethical Principles of Pacific Health research”. The overarching principle is that relationships are the foundation of all ethical conduct. It is within the context of relationships that all significant ethical decisions, actions and practice occurs. Therefore, the development, cultivation and maintenance of principled relationships - or ‘relationship conduct’ - is integral to all ethical practice.

For each principle there is an additional section on putting these principles into practice, within the context of the research process. The same headings are used, however, instead of high-level descriptors of the ethical value of the concepts, this section aims to give more practical advice and ‘best practice’ guidance, and explain how to translate the principles into culturally effective research practice.

The guidelines are structured so that the guiding ethical statements for each principle are highlighted (see over for Summary). These are explicit, prescriptive and unambiguous. For each ethical statement, a descriptive and contextual discussion is provided to help researchers further understand the meaning and position of the guiding principle.

For a copy of the Guidelines on Pacific Health Research refer to the HRC website: <http://www.hrc.govt.nz>

A definition of Pacific health research

Pacific research is a broad descriptor that encompasses various approaches to research. The primary role of Pacific research is to generate knowledge and understanding both about, and for, Pacific peoples. The primary role of Pacific health research is to gain knowledge and understanding that will improve the health of Pacific peoples.

Pacific research requires the active involvement of Pacific peoples (as researchers, advisors and stakeholders), and demonstrates that Pacific people are more than just the subjects of research. Pacific research will build the capacity and capability of Pacific peoples in research, and contribute to the Pacific knowledge base.

The source material for Pacific health research will most likely be derived from Pacific peoples, and from within Pacific realities - past, present and future.

Pacific research design, methods and approaches, will be informed, first and foremost, from within the continuum of Pacific world-views. Pacific approaches to research will aim to be responsive to changing Pacific contexts. Pacific research will be underpinned by Pacific cultural values and beliefs, and will be conducted in accordance with Pacific ethical standards, values and aspirations.



Summary of the Ethical Principles of Pacific Health Research

1. Relationships

- To develop, cultivate, and maintain principled relationships is integral to all ethical practice.

2. Respect

- The relationship between the researcher and the research participant is based on respect for the inherent value of each human being.

3. Cultural Competency

- To practice in a culturally competent manner, the researcher must have awareness of their own cultural beliefs, values and practices, and an awareness of how these impact upon their interaction with others.
- The beliefs, knowledge and experience of the research participant is true to himself/herself, and the researcher must respect this even if it is different from his/her own beliefs, knowledge and experience.
- Researchers are encouraged to build their cultural knowledge of the Pacific communities they work with.
- Researchers are encouraged to create a safe and enabling research environment that supports culturally competent practice.

4. Meaningful Engagement

- To conduct ethical research with Pacific peoples there must be meaningful engagement.

5. Reciprocity

- Reciprocity should be a guiding principle for research relationships. It should be demonstrated in practical ways (e.g. capacity and capability building, reimbursement for time, accessible dissemination).
- Reciprocity in research requires that knowledge gained through research will be used to benefit research participants and (where relevant) other people.
- If knowledge acquired from research generates significant financial returns, then the people from where the original knowledge came must share in the financial gain from the research.

6. Utility

- Improving the health outcomes of Pacific peoples should be the key objective of all Pacific health research.
- Researchers should always endeavour to explicitly link research and its findings with tangible improvements in health outcomes.
- Researchers should work closely with the health sector, where possible, to ensure the pragmatic utility of the research.

7. Rights

- Research should not be detrimental to research participants, as individuals, as members of a community, or as members of an identified ethnic group.
- Each individual, group, or community, has the right and freedom to make an informed choice as to whether to participate or not, in any research.
- Any risks inherent in a particular type of research must be made clear to the research participant and they must feel completely free as to their decision whether to participate or not.
- Participants must be able to withdraw at any stage of the research process with dignity, respect, and without any disadvantage.
- All research relationships are embedded with both rights and responsibilities to the other.

8. Balance

- Balance is critical when practicing the ethical principles of Pacific research.
- Any research partnerships formed with Pacific peoples should be equitable and fair for both parties, engendering symmetry in the balance of power.

9. Protection

- Primary knowledge that is based on experience and expertise belongs to the research participants and should be acknowledged as such.
- Where appropriate, researchers should uptake protective measures that will safeguard indigenous Pacific knowledge and knowledge holders appropriately.
- Recognising that Pacific research relationships are often based on structural societal inequalities, care must always be taken to protect those less powerful.

10. Capacity Building

- Capacity and capability building is critical to improving Pacific health outcomes through research.
- Capacity and capability building is a tangible example of reciprocity in action and demonstrates a commitment to the empowerment of the Pacific community.

11. Participation

- Research that targets the Pacific population entails the participation of Pacific peoples at all levels of decision-making and implementation of the research project.