

# ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH INDICATORS RELEVANT FOR MAORI IN NEW ZEALAND

**Frances Graham**, *Ministry of Health, New Zealand*

**Dr Nicholas Jones**, *Hawkes Bay District Health Board, New Zealand*

**Jenny Mauger**, *Hawkes bay District Health Board, New Zealand*

**Dr Amber Pearson**, *University of Canterbury, New Zealand*

**Background and Aims:** Māori, the indigenous peoples (tangata whenua) of New Zealand, comprise 15% (565,329 people - 2006 census) of the total New Zealand population. Māori are heavily over-represented in low socio-economic groups but evidence exists which shows that Māori suffer worse health compared to non-Māori of similar socio-economic status. Robust Māori environmental health indicators that are relevant and meaningful are a fundamental foundation for effective planning, policy development, service delivery and monitoring for improved Māori health outcomes. The aim of this study was to assess the feasibility for developing a set of indicators to gauge factors of Māori environmental health in Māori terms.

**Methods:** The primary method for developing environmental health indicators was extensive consultation with Māori to ensure that indicators aligned with Māori concepts of health and environment. The Hawkes' Bay region was chosen as a pilot study to obtain feedback from stakeholders on both the process and specific environmental health issues that should be covered by a set of indicators with an initial focus on water quality.

We also conducted a literature review which included recognised Māori health models to ensure that the sets of indicators reflected Māori understandings of environmental health and provided an empirical base for jurisdictional environmental health agencies to identify areas of greatest risk.

Data from government and non-government agencies (including longitudinal data sets) were identified and assessed for completeness, usability, accuracy and applicability at the regional level and match Māori health priorities.

**Results:** We present a set of proposed Māori environmental health indicators for stakeholders to inform local planning and decision-making.

**Conclusions:** A review of the current Māori health indicator sets showed that they are essentially Government driven measures that are intended to assess progress towards State-defined objectives for Māori health. The development of a specific set of Māori environmental health indicators in consultation with Māori will assist towards addressing Māori needs for healthy Māori futures.