BARRIERS TO HEALTH FOR KAUMATUA-KUIA (ELDERS) IN TE TAI TOKERAU (NORTHLAND). ANDERSON A, MURU-LANNING ML, WILES J, SPENCER M, FULLER R. JAMES HENARE MAORI RESEARCH CENTRE AND TE KUPENGA HAUORA MAORI, THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND.

This new qualitative research will explore the diversity of experiences of kaumatua-kuia and their whanau in Te Tai Tokerau and identify what facilitates or obstructs their access to and utilisation of healthcare services.

Maori kaumatua (male) and kuia (female), are valued members of New Zealand society who often hold leadership roles in their whanau and wider community. There are changing demographic trends amongst kaumatua-kuia. Maori life spans are increasing, “by 2021 it is estimated that one in every 12 persons of Maori ethnicity will be aged 65 years or more compared to just one in 33 in 2001”. Although more Maori are living longer, pronounced differences in life expectancy exist between Maori and non-Maori. From 2010-2012, life expectancy at birth for Maori women was 76.5 years and 72.8 years for Maori men compared with 83.7 years for non-Maori women and 80.2 years for non-Maori men. Within NZ there are notable regional variations in distributions of life expectancy in older Maori.

Te Tai Tokerau Maori experience greater barriers to healthcare than non-Maori in the region and have higher unmet health needs and lower healthcare utilisation. Impediments to health for Maori in Te Tai Tokerau include geographical barriers, inability to get appointments with health providers, cost of services, lack of trust and rapport with health professionals, experiences of discrimination and racism in the health sector and other structural determinants of health.

We will use a strengths-based approach to explore the lived health experiences of kaumatua-kuia, and their whanau within Te Tai Tokerau. Our aim is to understand what facilitates access to and use of healthcare as well as the barriers encountered. The results of our research will be used to promote the wellbeing of kaumatua-kuia, and their whanau through the development of recommendations to inform health service practices and delivery.