

He Oranga Pumau: The campaign for Rongoa Māori (Māori Health Practice) in the Health System

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An exciting role of Arts in Action is to celebrate the power of the arts to highlight and address social issues that may not otherwise have gained visibility or traction. Arts in Action is also a source of empowerment as it provides an additional voice to those that often struggle to be heard.

On Saturday (6.5.18) I was privileged to attend, in the packed Rawene Town Hall, the premiere of He Oranga Pumau, a film which launched the movement for a significant change in the existing health services, one which would recognise and give equal status to Rongoa Māori, Māori healing practices.¹

In He Oranga Pumau -The Four Sides of the House, producer Tanya Folia (Nga Puhi, Ngai Tahu), with co-director Jessie McVeagh, tells the story of turning back to her Maori cultural traditions and healing practices after she was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer in 2015. The film documents Tanya's journey with cancer, through the mechanistic medical system to use of traditional and complementary healing ways.²



¹ <https://teara.govt.nz/en/rongoa-medicinal-use-of-plants>

² <https://i.stuff.co.nz/auckland/local-news/northland/102823347/woman-with-brain-tumour-wants-natural-therapies-subsidised-by-pharmac>

Some of the further readings³ document Tanya's remarkable achievements from her diagnosis when she was beloved principal of Kohukohu Primary School to the present, as she and Jessie head to Wellington to present their film to Parliament as part of the movement to promote the recognition and implementation of natural therapies and rongoa Māori - Māori health practices- alongside western health practices in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Tanya and co-director Jessie McVeagh are campaigning for:

- the establishment of a rongoa Māori clinic alongside the western health model at Hauora Hokianga (Hokianga Hospital)
- a case worker in each WINZ (Work and Income NZ) office that specifically works with and supports clients who have a terminal diagnosis
- subsidies and support for people who choose natural therapies instead of Chemotherapy
- subsidies for intravenous Vitamin C
- access for tangata whenua to the cultural traditions of rongoa Māori, as is guaranteed under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.



Below is the campaign document in full:

³ <http://www.tepanui.co.nz/2016/09/congratulations-56/>

The aim of **He Oranga Pumau** is better care and support for all New Zealanders who are diagnosed with serious or terminal illness.

Rongoā Māori is informed by a body of knowledge that has at its core the enhancement of Māori wellbeing. In this way, Rongoā Māori differs from a Western medical paradigm, whose focus is principally the absence of health and wellbeing and treatments/interventions to return to a state of health. In a traditional Māori approach, the inclusion of taha wairua (the spiritual dimension), the role of the whānau (family) and the balance of the hinengaro (mind) are as important as the physical manifestations of illness. (www.health.govt.nz)

Aim 1: Te Tiriti o Waitangi Obligations: Equal recognition of Rongoā Māori within the healthcare system.

Article Two of Te Tiriti o Waitangi guarantees Māori tino rangatiratanga over nga taonga katoa- this includes Māori health practices. Within the NZ medical system the availability of traditional Maori practices varies but is generally limited. We are aware that there is funding for Rongoā Māori but in our region (Hokianga) we have funding for a mere 3 hours a week of Rongoā to provide for the needs of around 5000 enrolled Maori patients.

Recommendation

- Review the health care system, and work with Māori to develop a system that values Rongoā Māori as a valid method of healthcare.
- Provide access to natural therapies and all forms of Rongoā Māori as a part of the healthcare system.

Aim 2: Patients' Rights to access Rongoā Māori, Natural and Complementary Therapies.

Patients have the right to options with regard to their care, including access to Rongoā Māori and other complementary therapies. For many, the cost of these treatments prohibits their use. Providing access for all New Zealanders with serious or terminal illnesses will go some way toward addressing health inequality within the country.

Recommendation

- Pharmac to form a working group to review recent research on vitamin C and Natural Therapies, particularly with regard to quality of life in terminal illnesses.
- Access to complementary therapies be subsidised for people with a terminal diagnosis.



Aim 3: Financial Support for people with terminal illness

“Work and Income NZ has a disconnect between what they say is provided, and what the actual reality is. The harder my husband works to support our family and to pay for treatments that keep me alive, as well as to provide for our quality of life, the more we are penalised.” -Tanya Folia, client,

Recommendation

- That clients with terminal diagnosis have one case-manager only, who discloses all that the client is eligible for and provides ongoing support and follow-up for the client.
- That a higher rate of disability allowance is provided for terminally diagnosed clients, and that they immediately qualify for this.
- That terminally diagnosed clients are immediately eligible and qualify for Temporary Additional Support (TAS).
- That a review of the income threshold for TAS be undertaken.



Tanya Folia: Tanya is heavily involved in her local marae, hapū and rūnanga. In 2016, she graduated with an achievement of extra special significance because during her studies she was recovering from a grade 4 brain tumour operation. Tanya had to travel regularly from her home in Ōmāpere, Hokianga for aggressive chemotherapy and radiation treatment at Auckland Hospital.

Jessie McVeagh: Jessie is a passionate filmmaker, committed to community development and to the Hokianga, where she lives with her whanau, including her son Kahu, in Rawene. Jessie was coordinator for the successful 2017 Hokianga Film Festival and has recently been appointed to organise the Hokianga Book Festival to take place in September 2018.

