

Māori leadership in science and health

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Te Whanganui a Tara/Pari-rua



Riga, Latjiva



Kingdom of Fife
Scotland



Te Herenga Waka VUW



Te Whare Wānanga o
Otāgo, Otago
Wellington

Brief intro

Why do we need more Māori in science and health?



What I've learned about how to 'be a leader' in the health and research space

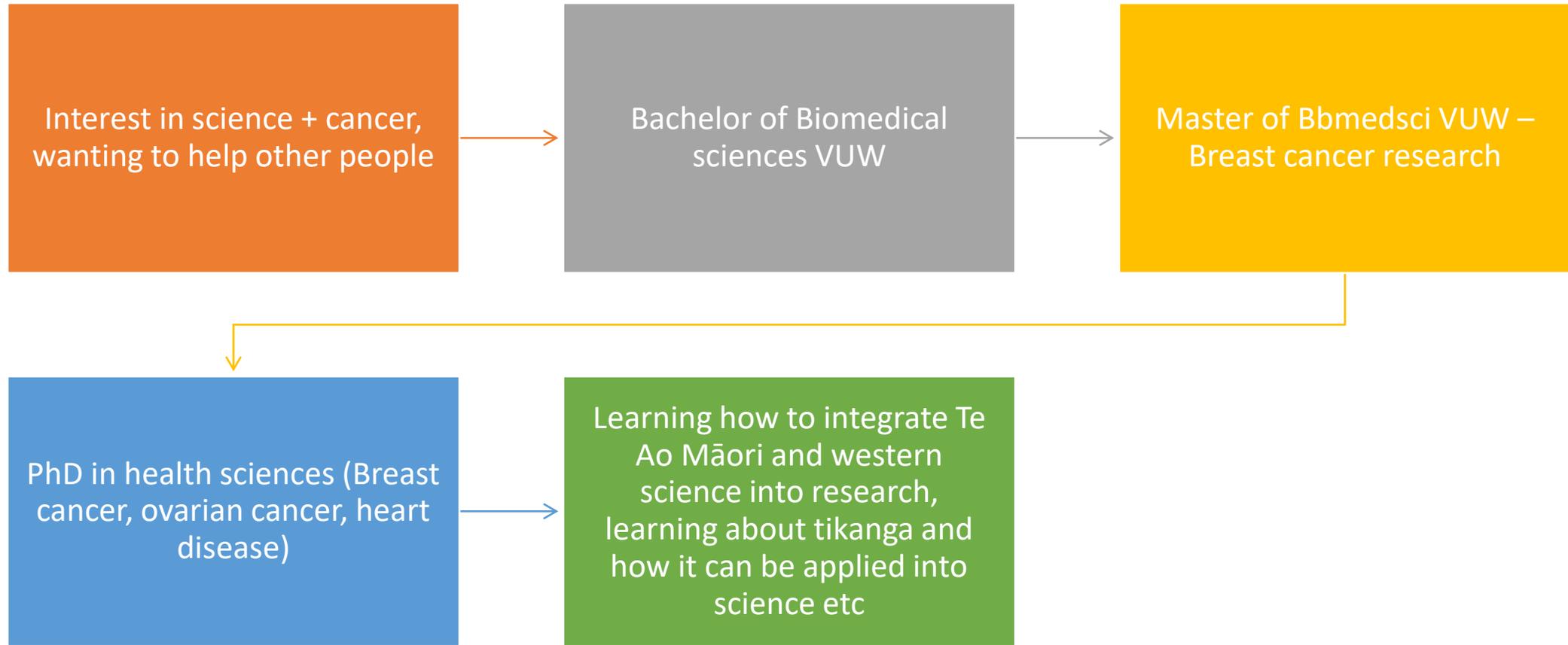


My research, what am I trying to do about it?



Goals for the future and next generations of scientists, doctors and health experts

My research journey so far





Māori representation

- Between 2008 and 2018, Māori comprised only 0–8% of the scientific workforce employed in the publicly funded science sector (Universities, Crown research institutes) - McAllister et al (2020)
- Obligation to Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- Māori scientists can be asked for ‘cultural advice’, fulfilling cultural responsibilities as well as their research
- Māori population in 2022: 17.4%, yet Māori doctors make up 4.6% of the total

→ By Māori, For Māori

why is it important to study these things?

- Wāhine Māori 33% more likely to die of breast cancer than pākehā women BUT improving over time
- Wāhine Māori > pākehā HER2+ breast cancers (17.9% vs 14.6%).
- 15% wāhine Māori w/ stage III/IV diagnosis 2018-2019.
- Ovarian cancer = 2nd leading gynaecological cancer in Aotearoa, most lethal (survival rate of approximately 38%)
- Wāhine Māori ↑ diagnosed with late-stage, high-grade cancers, higher incidence and mortality compared to pākehā
- Māori more than twice as likely to die from cardiovascular disease, and 1.5x as likely to be hospitalized

Why did I decide to be a scientist?

- improving Māori representation in health care research
- Field that allows for creativity, innovation and the opportunity to address very important issues!
- Change how things are currently standing for the tangata whenua of Aotearoa – improve peoples lives
 - Cancer
 - Cardiovascular
- Personal connections + drive

What are we trying to do?

Things we need to consider as researchers/clinicians in health + working with Māori patients

Human tissue use

- Body is considered tapu
- Must be used with respect

Genetic research

- Genetics is associated with whakapapa
- Concern over new technologies and how that interacts with mauri

Informed consent

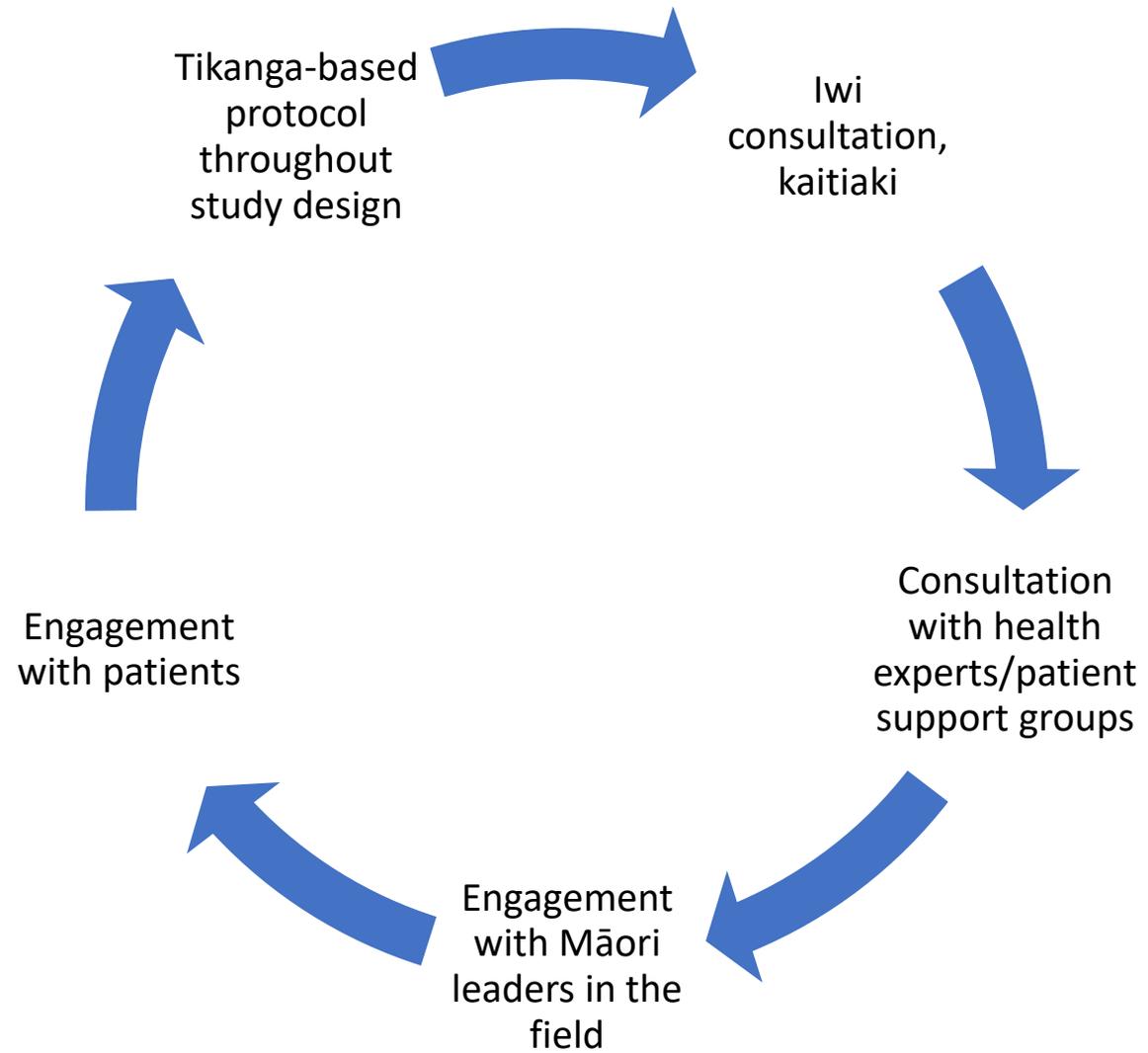
- Nature and specificity
- Individual vs collective consent

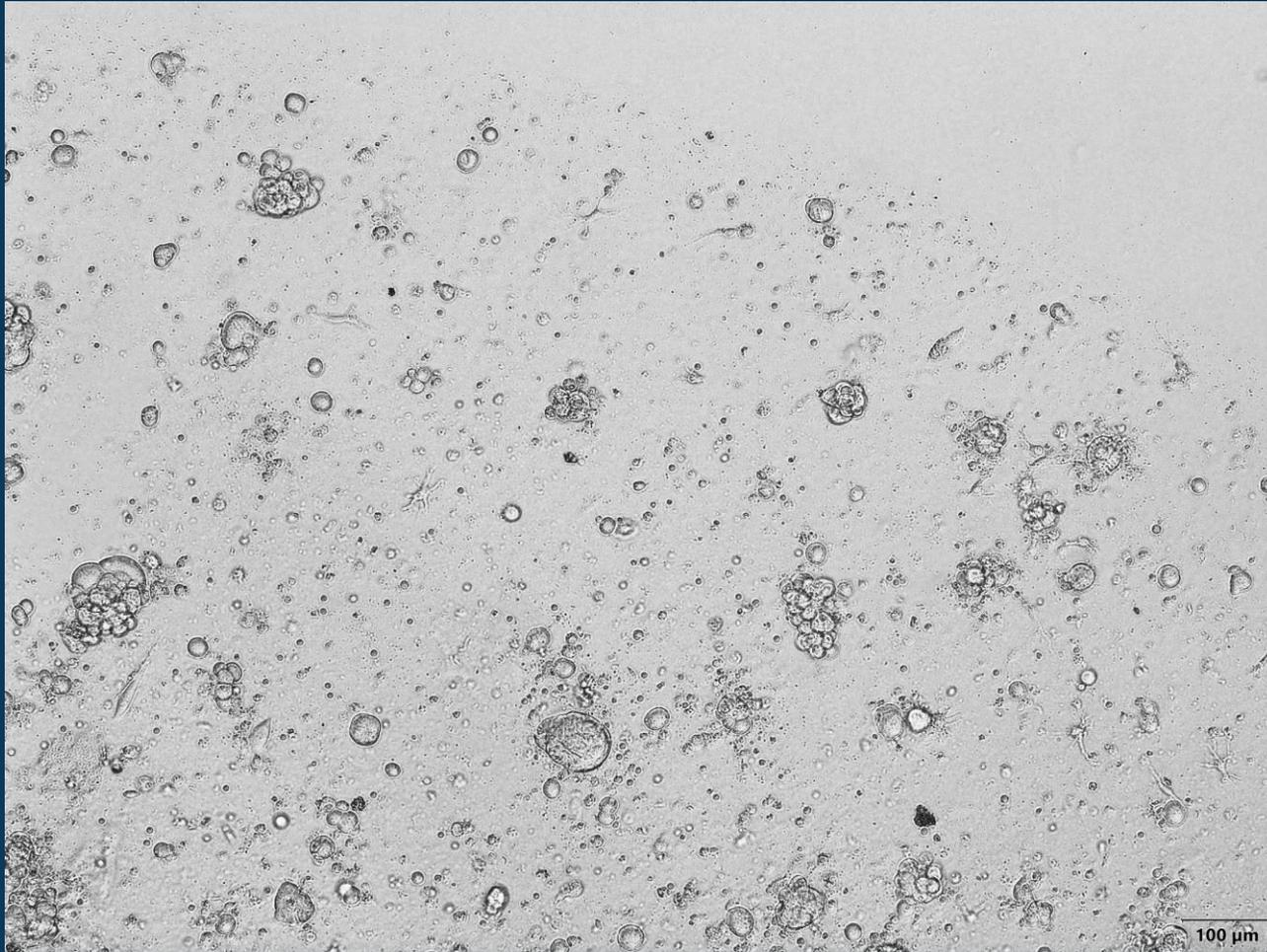
Communication with participants

- What has happened to the tissue donated?
- Mechanism for withdrawal and fully informed

Interpretation

- Avoidance of stigmatisation, stereotyping, underming
- Care with language used and interpretation of results





These tumor organoids were derived from a biopsy of a metastatic ovarian cancer patient.

Study aims

- Specifically recruit Māori patients with a diagnosis of cancer or coronary artery disease to donate tissue for the study of tumour heterogeneity, response to standard treatments, and immune cell function in the pathophysiology of CAD
- Using cutting edge techniques

Whakapapa

- Have we engaged with Māori?
- Have we dealt with appropriate informed consent
- Māori participants prime recipients of results?
- Use of Kaupapa Māori throughout?

Tika

- Maximising benefit for Māori?
- Participation of Māori in different stages of the research?

Manaakitanga

- Participants treated with dignity and respect?
- Privacy and confidentiality applied appropriately?
- Māori values, concepts, protocols observed as part of the research project?

Mana

- Open, honest, equitable?
- Engagement in meaningful relationship with mana whenua, tangata whenua

Te Tiriti o Waitangi + Health equity

- Health sector required to ‘work towards eliminating entrenched health inequities between Māori and non-Māori’
- This could look like:
 - Engaging and involving Māori in health initiatives
 - Shared leadership and culture of collaboration
 - Mutual understanding of attitudes + barriers towards health improvement + equity

What a leader in science could look like (from someone who doesn't consider themselves a leader necessarily!)

- Not settling for what the current standard or status quo is – take the chances to do better by patients etc
- Takoha – giving back without expecting anything in return → future scientists/generations, mentorship/mentees etc
- Take every opportunity to learn and grow
- Lead by example
- Failing is okay!

What a leader in science could look like

- Listening to others and learning from those who are more knowledgeable than you
- Māori having the autonomy to lead and maintain equitable health outcomes
- Rangatiratanga – sovereignty, self-determination, leadership, bringing people together and sharing wisdom, building mana

Difficult conversations...

- How to increase this Māori leadership capacity?
 - Opportunities for Māori to go into science, medicine and health
- Supporting those that are already there
 - Often over-subscribed and have additional stressors of being a 'cultural advisor' → catch 22!
 - Ensuring their own well-being

Goals for the future generation of Māori scientists and doctors

- See more Māori in the sciences and medicine and see them being supported in that area
- Growing capability, capacity and understanding within our health and science systems
- Improve the lives of Māori patients in Aotearoa however possible