



IMPACTS OF COVID-19 IN AOTEAROA NGĀ KAWEKAWE O MATE KORONA

COVID-19 study guided by Tiriti o Waitangi framework

A Tiriti o Waitangi-based research study is appealing to nearly 9,000 survivors of COVID-19 to share their experiences of the virus and influence improvements in New Zealand's health system.

The “Impacts of COVID-19 in Aotearoa—Ngā Kawekawe o Mate Korona”, launched on 8 February by Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington, will survey people in Aotearoa aged 16 years or older, who had COVID-19 before 1 December 2021.

“We particularly want to hear how having the coronavirus has impacted Māori, Pacific peoples, and whānau hauā (disabled), as well as those who contracted it in their workplace,” says co-principal investigator and rōpū Māori lead Dr Lynne Russell (*Ngāti Kahungunu, Rangitāne, Kāi Tahu, Ngāti Porou*).

“We have a good idea about infection, hospitalisation and death rates from the virus, but little is known about the lived experiences of people who've had it, or what it's been like for their whānau (families).”

The research is funded by the Ministry of Health. Since the study began on 8 February 2022, 8,700 survivors of COVID-19 have been contacted by letter and text message inviting them to participate in the study.

Anecdotal evidence suggests many survivors have not had good experiences of health, social or care services in their whaioranga (recovery).

“Understanding the equity impact on Tāngata Whenua who tested positive for COVID-19 or were deemed a probable case is especially important,” says Dr Russell. “It's a Tiriti issue.”

Māori are more likely to get infected and hospitalised, and more are likely to die, because of social and economic inequities already disproportionately experienced, greater rates of comorbidity (having two or more diseases or medical conditions at the same time), lower access to health services, and racism.

“Insights from Māori can help the Crown build a more robust Tiriti partnership and more equitable health care,” says Dr Russell. “When Māori benefit, everyone benefits.”

Dr Russell says the study is intentionally underpinned by a Tiriti o Waitangi framework that guides the research process and the conduct of the research team, which includes six Māori and six Pacific researchers.

She says manaakitanga (care), kaitiakitanga (guardianship), and mahi tahi (working together) are applied to build context, trust and relationships with people, from the kupu (words) in survey questions to protocols for interviewing people.

With epidemiologist Dr Mona Jeffreys, Dr Russell leads a multi-disciplinary team of researchers, primarily from the University's Te Hikuwai Rangahau Hauora—Health Services Research Centre.

The study is also guided by a Tiriti partnership-based Rōpū Kaitiaki overseen by Pou Tikanga Witeria Ashby (*Ngāti Hine, Ngāti Kawa*), and led by Tangata Whenua Kaitiaki Iris

Pahau (*Te Aupouri, Te Rarawa, Ngāti Kuri, Ngāti Awa*) and Tangata Tiriti Kaitiaki Tuiloma Lina-Jodi Vaine Samu (*Salelesi, Faleula, Sapunaoa, Falealili, Pu'apu'a i Savai'i, Samoa*).

People who want to participate can go to covid.aotearoa.com. Alternatively, they can call 0800 800 581 or email covid.aotearoa@vuw.ac.nz.

To request a media interview with Dr Lynne Russell or a member of the governance team, contact Dr Lynne Russell on 022 359 8212 or email lynne.russell@vuw.ac.nz.

Profiles of Māori research and governance team

Dr Lynne Russell—Ngāti Kahungunu, Rangitāne, Kāi Tahu, Ngāti Porou Kairangahau Matua—Hauora Māori (senior research fellow—Maori health)

Dr Russell has over 30 years' experience in Māori health service delivery, policy, teaching and research. She is passionate about promoting the importance of listening to, hearing and amplifying Indigenous voice. Much of her work has centred around Indigenous knowledge and healing practices used in recovery from trauma associated with mental distress, suicide loss and self-harm.

Witeria (Witi) Ashby—Ngāti Hine, Ngāti Kawa Pou Tikanga

Witi Ashby is the Kaumatua and cultural advisor for Te Rau Ora, an organisation that works across a range of Māori health and wellbeing issues, including suicide prevention and mental health. He has worked as a cultural supervisor and advisor on many Māori research projects. In 2009, Witi caught the H1N1 flu virus, also known as the bird flu, and continues to suffer respiratory effects from this virus.

Iris Pahau—Te Aupōuri, Te Rarawa, Ngāti Kuri, Ngāti Awa Director, AWE Consultants Limited

Iris is the director of AWE Consultants Limited and, along with my late husband Wereta Wairakau Pahau, developed a Te Tiriti relationship framework under which this study is operating. The model advocates for all to work within the spirit of Te Tiriti o Waitangi where our tupuna/ancestors, both Tangata Whenua and Tangata Tiriti sought to establish a true partnership where dreams and aspirations for people who choose to call Aotearoa home, can become a reality without prejudice or discrimination.

Additional comments from those involved in the study are also available [here](#).

Study Q&A

Q: What is this study about?

A: The “Impacts of COVID-19 in Aotearoa—Ngā Kawekawe o Mate Korona” study aims to understand the experiences of people who had COVID-19 or were a probable case. Researchers want to know about the impact COVID-19 has had on the health and well-being of these individuals and their whānau.

Note: a “probable case” is someone who probably had COVID, based on symptoms and contact with a known case, but this was not confirmed by testing (either because the person wasn't tested or had a false negative test result).

Q: Who can take part?

A: Anyone in Aotearoa New Zealand who is aged 16 and over, and had COVID-19—or were a probable case—before 1 December 2021 can take part. This includes people who had it at the beginning of the pandemic or more recently, as well as people who contracted COVID-19 overseas before returning to Aotearoa New Zealand.

Q: How do I participate?

A: Eligible people can take part by completing the surveys at covid.aotearoa.com. There are four surveys: participants can complete as many as they like or only those that are relevant to them. Those wanting to take part can also call 0800 800 581 or email covid.aotearoa@vuw.ac.nz.

Q: What will happen to participants' information?

A: Information collected from participants will be stored securely. Only members of the research team will have access to the data. No participants will be identifiable in any of the results, unless the person gives their permission to release this information.

Q: How will the results be used?

A: Results will be used to provide recommendations to the Ministry of Health on how to better support people with COVID-19.

Q: Who is funding the study?

A: The study is funded by the Ministry of Health. A total of \$1.2 million, over 12 months, has been provided to Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington for the study. Te Hikuwai Rangahau Hauora—Health Services Research Centre, at the University's Te Wāhanga Tātai Hauora—Faculty of Health, is leading the research.