

Getting rid of smokes outside; Māori viewpoints.

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Abstract

Aims

This paper discusses Māori attitudes to Smokefree Outdoor Policies (SFOP) with a focus on environments of interest specifically to Māori.

Methods

We carried out a small scale national online survey and a media review to canvas Māori views on smokefree outdoor environments.

Results

We show strong Māori support for SFOP having initially focused on auahi kore marae. The sites of influence now include sports and cultural events. Māori leadership is largely coming from the Māori health provider sector, with a strong call to strengthen iwi leadership. Messages clearly need to be positive, involve smokers and focused on protecting future generations.

Conclusions

Increasing SFOP is critical for denormalising smoking for Māori. While we have made significant headway towards this more work needs to be done if we are to achieve Smokefree Aotearoa by 2025 including broadening out the leadership, extending the range of smokefree outdoor environments, encouraging compliance and reframing messages so that they resonate for smokers and for Māori more generally.

Introduction

Extending smokefree outdoor environments is one key to the denormalisation of smoking. If the high smoking rate for Māori is to be reduced by 2025,¹ it is a critical component of the New Zealand tobacco control programme.²

Lowering smoking visibility, through smokefree outdoor environments, assists people to stay smokefree. New Zealand data, for the period 2004-2009, demonstrates that *moving* to a neighbourhood with a lower smoking prevalence decreases the chances of smoking or relapsing. This is after controlling for factors including ethnicity, income and neighbourhood deprivation. A move by one decile decrease in the neighbourhood smoking prevalence is associated with a four percent decreased odds of smoking.³ Most of this effect is likely to be from the greater ability to quit and stay smokefree.

There is also no safe level of secondhand smoke exposure outdoors.⁴ Significant tobacco smoke effects occur at over 10 metres from groups of smokers⁵ and at least nine metres from a burning cigarette in light winds.⁶

As a health intervention, smokefree outdoor policies (SFOP) are relatively new internationally,⁷ and in New Zealand,⁸ although there is a long history of outdoor smoking restrictions for fire safety.⁹ Outdoor smokefree areas have been increasing in number and geographic scope since the 1990s.

Māori have played a key role in many New Zealand SFOP initiatives, including the voluntary adoption of smokefree policies for iwi and hapū owned properties (marae),¹⁰ pushing the boundary of smokefree policies to create tobacco free events, extending smokefree environments to include the natural environment,¹¹ and culminating in a government recommendation to make New Zealand "essentially a smokefree nation by 2025".¹

This paper discusses Māori attitudes to SFOP in environments of interest specifically to Māori. Issues including leadership, policy approaches and key messages for future action are explored.

Methods

The paper reports results from a small scale national online survey and a media review. In the remainder of the paper the terms smokefree and auahi kore are used interchangeably to reflect the

voices of Māori in the study. Ethics permission was obtained from the Otago University Human Ethics Committee (D16/170.)

Media survey

A print and online media review was carried out to locate, review and summarise reports relating to the perspectives of Māori leaders, community members and health workers on SFOP of particular relevance to Māori. Two searchable media websites (Stuff.co.nz and Scoop.co.nz) were used to identify media reports published in New Zealand during the period January 2008 to May 2016, using the search words 'Māori', 'smokefree' or 'auahi kore' and 'outdoor'. From the 63 reports found by the Stuff website search and the 19 reports on the Scoop website, we isolated 35 unique items that included the views of Māori about SFOP.

Online survey

Using Survey Monkey, a brief online survey was designed and disseminated in mid-2016. The survey targeted Māori leaders, community members and health workers identified by the research team as advocates of auahi kore. An additional inclusion criterion aimed to ensure representation across all seven Māori electorates, providing a broad geographical spread. Respondents were asked to consider a number of issues in relation to SFOP within the rohe (iwi boundary) where they were currently resident. Survey questions related to leadership roles, auahi kore marae and priorities for SFOP. The survey was successfully sent to 64 recipients. Of these 64 recipients, 35 completed the survey, representing a response rate of 55%.

Analysis

Survey results and media results were drawn together and analysed to explore Māori attitudes to SFOP, and in particular to leadership and priorities for smokefree outdoor environments. The raw data was examined independently by research team members with themes then being brought together and critically reviewed collectively by the team. Interpretation was clarified and conclusions were drawn through an iterative process of article writing.

Results

The results are discussed under five key areas identified as critical for advancing SFOP for Māori; evidence of support for and attitudes about SFOP particularly as they relate to cultural institutions such as marae, Māori leadership and key sites of change for SFOP and finally preferred policy approaches.

Māori support for auahi kore outdoor environments

Survey respondents were asked to rate the perceived level of support in their rohe for local smokefree outdoor environments of particular relevance to Māori. Almost two thirds (n=21) considered support to be high, with one respondent commenting “sports smokefree events are much more common now and normalised...[it is] rare to see an event that doesn’t have this focus”. A significantly smaller number of respondents (n=9) rated support as moderate only. A few claimed a decline in support with one citing “a lack of dedicated and paid resources on the ground to promote and maintain the importance of smokefree” as the reason for that decline.

In common with the survey results, the media review identified a theme of well embedded support for smokefree outdoor environments, such as for kapa haka competitions. For example, Maui Tangohau, Chair of the Tairāwhiti Cultural Development Trust, is quoted as saying that his Trust wants young people involved with kapa haka to have the skills necessary to refuse tobacco, adding that the forthcoming kapa haka competition to be hosted by the Trust “is a smokefree event. We want to be able to contribute towards creating a youth culture that does not support smoking.”¹² In the sports arena, *E Tū Whānau*¹³ describes the annual Aotearoa Māori netball tournament as an “action packed showcase of Māori netball talent within a smokefree...kaupapa”. The emphasis on being auahi kore was well understood by those present with a tournament supporter observing “very few – perhaps one or two – smoked outside the tournament venue”.

Marae

Marae are one of the most visible of Māori institutions. Prior to colonisation all marae were of course auahi kore, with tobacco being unavailable in New Zealand. From the early 1990s onwards, there is evidence of marae opting to revert to auahi kore status despite the high smoking prevalence among Māori.¹⁴ Auahi kore marae generally implies buildings on the marae are smokefree and designated outdoor environments are smokefree. Approximately half of survey respondents estimated that all, or most marae, in their rohe were now auahi kore (n=18/35). Another quarter (n=8) however, estimated that there were still only a few local marae which were auahi kore. A number of respondents identified a gap between marae being auahi kore ‘on paper’ and in practice. Having an auahi kore policy did not necessarily mean that whānau adhered to the marae auahi kore kaupapa. As one respondent noted, “not all smokefree marae are actually smokefree. In principle they are but in practice there is still smoking”.

The survey results highlight that there are commonly varying ‘degrees’ of ‘being’ an auahi kore marae. In some instances, marae that respondents were involved in were totally auahi kore both indoors and

out. In others, designated outdoor smoking areas are retained within the marae boundaries or on the periphery. The survey identified robust support (n=32/35) however, for all outdoor areas around marae being auahi kore, including at the back of the wharekai and in carparks. As one respondent asserted: “if we can have the entire marae grounds smokefree that would be great, as we don't want our mokopuna to take up the habit of smoking”.

Iwi leaders and health workers were frequently cited in the media in support of the marae auahi kore kaupapa, providing some indicator of broader Māori community attitudes towards auahi kore outdoor environments. Examples include a Māori health worker describing successfully working to support marae in his region to become auahi kore.¹⁵ In the health worker's view, if one marae in an area goes auahi kore it is likely that others will follow suit. Other examples relate to marae auahi kore in a range of locations around the country.^{16, 17, 18, 19}

Māori Leadership

Asked to rate the level of Māori leadership for SFOP, within the rohe in which they resided, approximately one third of online survey respondents (n=11) indicated that that leadership was strong. Slightly more than one third (n=13) rated it as average only. Others considered that SFOP leadership was either weak (n=5) or very weak (n=1) or elected not to answer the survey question (n=5).

We went on to explore *where* Māori leadership for SFOP was considered to be the most evident. More than two thirds of the survey respondents (n=25) indicated that Māori health providers were most commonly assuming a SFOP leadership role, with iwi leaders and Māori politicians being less visible. Our media search identified that Māori health providers were commonly and publically advocating for SFOP along with iwi leaders and politicians in some regions.

Key sites of change

When survey respondents were asked where SFOPs were most commonly promoted, kapa haka and Māori New Year events were identified as being the flagships, with more than two thirds (n=25) indicating that these events were leading auahi kore outdoor environments in their regions. More than half (n=19) also indicated that Māori outdoor sports events were a key site for auahi kore environments. Far fewer (n=6) believed that sites of cultural significance such as awa, maunga and moana, were currently the principal sites of auahi kore promotion.

When respondents were asked to select the *priority* auahi kore outdoor environment for their region, from a brief list of four, the results were mixed. Cultural events (n=9) and marae (n=9) were the most commonly selected priority environments, with sites such as awa (river), maunga (mountain) and moana (sea) (n=8) following closely behind and sports events (n=5) in third place. The remaining respondents selected the “unsure” response option, with several commenting that they had done so because they did not want to be confined to choosing a single priority environment. The following example illustrates that position:

All of the above [sites are priorities] Considering some of our iwi/Māori cultural events are held on maunga, awa, moana and marae. Although, if I'm honest, we are doing a great job as a people by refraining from smoking at all those environments.

Another respondent qualified her “unsure” response explaining:

I'm in two minds about making our awa/maunga/moana smokefree. Many of them are already regarded as sacred places, and restrictions already apply under tikanga, the question I think is about the knowledge, understanding and application of that tikanga.

Policy approaches for auahi kore outdoor environments

In terms of future action, a key message from the survey results was that strong leadership is essential for extending auahi kore outdoor environments in marae, cultural events, sporting events and other relevant settings. Alongside effective leadership, finding ways to include, rather than alienate, whānau who smoke is critical as the social transition to auahi kore outdoor environments takes place. The resources, and in particular the human resources, to support change remains vital. In the words of a survey respondent:

As with all initiatives, the 'strength' of them comes from the people driving and maintaining them. If smokers are in decision making positions, then [it is] less likely that smokefree will have a high priority, as people don't want to look and be challenged by their own behaviour. The message needs to be framed so that smokers can see themselves as part of the solution. However, that is dependent on who and how that message is taken into the community by a paid, skilled kaimahi.

Discussion

Our research shows strong Māori support for SFOP. This echoes the findings from other recent qualitative research that included large proportions of Māori,²⁰ and surveys of smokers that contained over 40% Māori.²¹

This support has been built up over the last twenty years or more and was initially focused on auahi kore marae. However, Māori have not yet fully embedded this approach. If we are to protect the future generation, more work needs to be done to ensure all marae (including all outside areas) are smokefree and policy is applied consistently. The sites of SFOP influence have expanded to now include, among other things, sports and cultural events. Kapa Haka and Matariki or Māori New Year have been identified as the key flagships for SFOP, with strong participant support evidenced. Some iwi are also considering and developing SFOP for sites of cultural significance (such as rivers and mountains). However our research showed some ambivalence about taking a policy approach to increasing smokefree outdoors in these areas, suggesting other approaches such as invoking tikanga as a more appropriate way to manage SFOP in these contexts.

Māori leadership for SFOP was identified as largely coming from the Māori health provider sector, with a strong call to broaden out the base of leadership to encourage iwi leaders to champion SFOP. The Ministry of Health realignment of tobacco control services in 2016²² will need to ensure that Māori health providers can continue to act as advocates and leaders of SFOP.

Our research confirmed previous research²³ indicating messages promoting SFOP change clearly need to be framed in a positive manner, involve smokers as those most implicated by the changes, and be focused on protecting future generations. Reframing the message away from health warnings and towards environmental protection messages may also resonate for Māori.

Increasing SFOP in areas where Māori gather is critical in our efforts to denormalise smoking for Māori. While we have made significant headway towards this over the last twenty years more work needs to be done if we are to achieve Smokefree Aotearoa by 2025. We need to broaden out the leadership, extend the range of smokefree outdoor environments, encourage compliance and reframe messages so that they resonate for smokers and for Māori more generally.

Limitations and future research

The results reported here are from small qualitative studies and all survey participants were involved in tobacco control advocacy. Additional research is required in two key areas; identification of appropriate policy pathways for Māori with regard to extending SFO environments in settings of cultural significance to Māori and further exploration of the role of Māori leadership in achieving a Smokefree Aotearoa.

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