



Rongoā Māori To Take Its Rightful Place Within Aotearoa's Health System

WHANGANUI, 1 June 2022: The critical role that Rongoā Māori can play in Aotearoa's health and disability sector will be addressed at a symposium this month, representing a pivotal collaboration between Māoridom and Crown health agencies to improve health equity.

Tū Mai Rongoā Symposium – Calling Forth the Mana of Rongoā brings together the Ministry of Health, ACC, the interim Māori Health Authority, the Rongoā community and Whakauae Research Services Ltd to shine a spotlight on the transformational health and wellbeing that Rongoā offers to patients alongside the current health and disability sector.

John Whaanga, Deputy Director-General, Māori Health will be addressing the virtual event on Wednesday June 29th on behalf of the Ministry of Health. He notes that working alongside Rongoā practitioners has been an important part of his role.

“It is humbling to be part of a kaupapa which has at its heart the revitalisation and uplifting of te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori.

“I first became involved closely with Rongoā Māori during my time in the Ministry of Health in the 1990s. I worked with Ngā Ringa Whakahaere o Te Iwi Māori and Rongoā practitioners to develop the first Rongoā standards. It was inspirational work,” says Whaanga.

The interim Māori Health Authority will also take a lead role at the symposium with CEO Riana Manuel providing the opening speech.

“I feel hugely privileged to be given the opportunity to speak on this kaupapa. I truly believe that our esoteric knowledge contained in Rongoā, will provide the ara toward well-being for our people.

“I look forward to partnering with all the agencies represented at the symposium to provide not only the services but the opportunity for all of our whānau throughout Aotearoa to access the benefits of Rongoā,” says Manuel.

Facilitated by broadcaster Stacey Morrison, the Tū Mai Rongoā Symposium seeks to dispel the myth that Rongoā is simply about plant medicine and mirimiri and acknowledge the importance of Rongoā as a holistic philosophy which integrates the physical, mental and spiritual elements of wellbeing, not just for people but for the planet as well.

Whakauae Research Centre Director Amohia Boulton says their most recent research project regarding Rongoā Māori - *Te Ao Rauropi: Mapping the Biosphere of Rongoā Māori* – will be presented at the symposium by Donna Kerridge.

“The project explores the full range of benefits that Rongoā Māori can bring to all New Zealanders and to the environment we live in. Rongoā philosophy is based on living in harmony with nature and provides a much-needed guide to protect and preserve our whenua in times of global environmental degradation,” says Boulton.

Recently awarded major funding from the Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) in recognition of the pioneering work they have undertaken to support health equity for Māori, Boulton says Whakauae Research is proud to contribute to improving health outcomes for whānau.

“Rongoā is a taonga tuku iho, a prized and integral part of te ao Māori. We are calling forth the mana and the mauri of Rongoā to resume its rightful place in the way Aotearoa cares for its people and exploring the potential of two worlds working together to forge a better future,” she says.

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Images attached for publication.

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