

Factsheet: Dementia and the Māori people

In 2011, of the estimated 48,182 New Zealanders with dementia, 1970 (4 percent) were Māori, and by 2026, the number of Māori with dementia is expected to have increased to 4493 (5 percent of the estimated 78,267 people with dementia) (Alzheimers New Zealand 2012).

Māori also have a higher rate of risk factors for dementia when conditions such as depression, head trauma, and substance abuse disorders are considered (Ministry of Health 2011b).

The health and social support sectors need to work in partnership with Māori to develop health and social supports that appropriately reflect the cultural needs of Māori with dementia.

Important points to remember

There is a perception that Māori do not develop dementia as much as Pākehā, however this may be an illusion because Māori life expectancy is shorter than Pākehā (New Zealand Framework for Dementia Care 2013).

In 2013, there were 5.4% kaumātua over the age of 65 years and in the last decade the number of Māori living beyond the age of 80 years has more than doubled to approximately 5,000 (Statistics New Zealand 2012). As kaumātua experience increasing life expectancy, the prevalence of dementia for Māori is also predicted to increase.

Actual prevalence rates are likely to differ from current statistics, however, because older Māori are less likely to access primary care services, less likely to utilise mental health services, and more likely to be cared for within the whānau rather than reside in long term care facilities where they are more visible (Baxter, Kingi, Tapsell, Durie, & McGee, 2006.)

Source: New Zealand Framework for Dementia Care, MoH (2013)

