

Cultural safety

For providers of healthcare to Māori and Pacific peoples, and indeed to many other groups of patients (not necessarily ethnically defined), being culturally competent is not enough.²⁴ For the last 30 years, the emphasis with “cultural competence” has been to learn about “other” cultures. This knowledge can be helpful, but it does not address key issues and has not allowed for equitable access to healthcare. Health professionals are required to meet cultural safety standards set out by their professional bodies. Cultural safety asks the practitioner to look at themselves, their assumptions and beliefs, the power imbalance that exists in interactions with patients, and any unconscious bias on the part of the practitioner.^{24,25} Culturally safe practice engages patients, empowering them to be involved in decision-making and contribute to achieving positive, equitable health outcomes.²⁶ It focuses on the patient experience to define and improve the quality of care, acknowledging that generalised information may not apply to individual people.²⁵

“Cultural safety benefits all patients and communities. This may include communities based on Indigenous status, age or generation, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religious or spiritual belief and disability” – Medical Council of New Zealand²⁵

Understanding your unconscious bias is an important part of cultural safety. Many unconscious biases are a part of a person’s upbringing, and they act like shortcuts and affect your thinking and actions, especially in situations where there:²⁷

- are time pressures
- are not enough resources
- is not enough information
- is a need for high levels of critical thinking.

Resources

- Medical Council of New Zealand Te Kaunihera Rata o Aotearoa. Statement on cultural safety, October 2019. www.mcnz.org.nz/assets/standards/b71d139dca/Statement-on-cultural-safety.pdf
- New Zealand Pharmacy Council Te Pou Whakamana Kaimatū o Aotearoa. Cultural safety guidance, 2021. <https://pharmacycouncil.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Cultural-safety-guidance.pdf>
- New Zealand Pharmacy Council Te Pou Whakamana Kaimatū o Aotearoa. Resources to support progress towards cultural safety. <https://pharmacycouncil.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Cultural-safety-resources.pdf>

References are available with the online article

- Nursing Council of New Zealand Te Kaunihera Tapuhi o Aotearoa. Guidelines for cultural safety, the Treaty of Waitangi and Māori Health in Nursing Education and Practice, 2011.
www.nursingcouncil.org.nz/Public/Nursing/Standards_and_guidelines/NCNZ/nursing-section/Standards_and_guidelines_for_nurses.aspx
- The Self-Management Support (SMS) Toolkit has brought together a number of instructive and enlightening videos on the subject by, among others, the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners and the Health Quality & Safety Commission.
www.smstoolkit.nz/cultural-safety

Module 5 : Activity 1	Learning notes	Reflections on practice
<p>Select relevant resources from the list above, according to your professional area of practice, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure you understand cultural safety standards as they apply to you and your practice. 	<p>Write your notes here (editable text box)</p>	<p>Write your notes here (editable text box)</p>

Module 5 : Activity 2	Learning notes	Reflections on practice
<p>Watch a selection of videos from those contained in the SMS Toolkit and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• identify any areas where you think unconscious bias may currently sneak into your practice, and strategies that might help you to counter bias or create a more culturally safe environment.	<p>Write your notes here (editable text box)</p>	<p>Write your notes here (editable text box)</p>