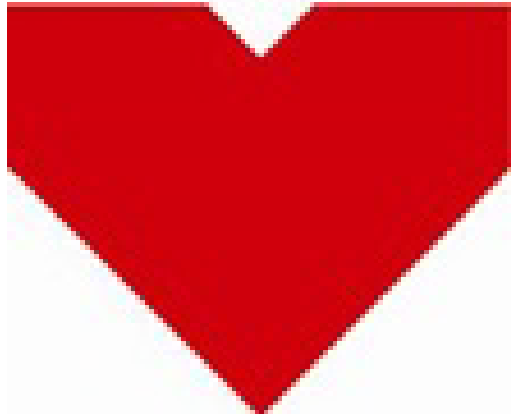


RSA



TE ARA TEATEA
WHARE HAUORA



ACUPUNCTURE NZ
The Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Professionals

“E hara taku toa
I te toa takitahi
`engari he toa taku
tini”

My strength is not from
myself alone, but from
the strength of the
group

A 'Community of Practice': weaving a responsive safety net for veterans in Aotearoa, New Zealand

A 'ground-up' veteran and allied health collaboration

To develop

- Community health/ wellness network
- Resourcing
- Access for veterans and whanau
- Research

'Veteran, Family, and Whanau Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy Framework' (July 2022)



Presentation by: Robin Kerr
President

Acupuncture New Zealand

www.acupuncture.org.nz

Health Inequities: veterans and whanau

- NZ veterans are identified as one of the vulnerable groups at risk for mental health and wellbeing issues as they enter civilian life.
- 17% of the NZ defense force are Māori, 5.6% Pacifica, and just under 3% Asian. Adverse social determinants of health are compounded by the challenges to accessing care for those with military service.
- Veterans have identified that there is a gap of appropriate understanding and care in primary health which leads to social isolation and poorer health outcomes
- This project model addresses key needs veterans expressed to accessing appropriate care.



Introduction

- **With support veterans transition well into civilian life approx. 25% have mental health issues**
 - including substance abuse, self harm, suicide
 - Impacting families, whanau and society.
- **Trauma, moral injury, loss of identity, chronic pain**
 - The military value of stoicism
 - Complex health care provision outside of the military
 - Result in difficulties accessing appropriate support and care.
 - Counselling, or pharmacological methods unsuitable
 - Preference for complimentary and alternate therapies



Pilot study funded by RNZRSA trialed acupuncture and mindfulness practices in a peer support group for six weeks.....

Outcomes included:

- Reduction in pain resulted in a reported increase in physical activity
- Increased activity improves mental health
- Veterans identified it was less confronting for their stoic military mindset
- A comfortable side-step entry into a treatment pathway
- Cost-effective: treatment within peer support context

Spouse feedback corroborated the veterans

- regarding their mental health, moods
- ability to relax and engage



Collaborative Developments

- **RNZRSA / Acupuncture NZ joint Veteran certification**

training: registered AcNZ practitioners undertake to develop a veteran friendly safe, identifiable, primary health workforce for veterans and whanau.

- **Acupuncture NZ partnership with Te Whare Hauora**

Rongoa Māori practitioners working with veterans and inter-generational trauma. Recognition of the impacts on whakapapa/whanau.

Partnering peer support network, and supporting traditional cultural knowledge- based practice and practitioners in Aotearoa



Research

- An Otago University, Acupuncture NZ, Te Whare Hauora collaboration:

“Alternative and Complimentary medicine as a pathway to care for NZ military veterans experiencing pain and distress.” Prof. D. McBride (August 2022).

- A second phase to the Wellington peer support acupuncture pilot (August 2022)



IT Developments

- Website extension of AcNZ 'Find a Practitioner' to search for Veteran specific practitioners and Veterans landing page.

www.acupuncture.org.nz

- On-line training resources for Acupuncturists



Policy and Practice Implications for Health Practitioners

AcNZ supports the *Veteran, Family, Whanau Policy Framework*.

Specifically in area of **professional and service development:**

The need to:

- reduce the gap in awareness and skill in the health workforce regarding veteran and whanau vulnerabilities and needs
- Training modules and resources for practitioners and organisations specific to developing a competent workforce
- Form an identifiable network of veteran aware, educated, and supportive organizations and practitioners: a community of practice.
- Inclusion of military service to assessment and provider records.
- Further opportunities for veteran peer group engagement with mental health and wellness providers and services



In conclusion

The joint 'Veteran Ready' Certification process between RNZRSA and AcNZ is believed to be the first of its kind in NZ.

Together, we are working to reduce stigma and other barriers to accessing care for a significant sub-population of NZ, and for who more traditional options are not appealing or cognisant of their unique culture.

We are also developing a model of cooperation to develop additional, more innovative combinations of inter- disciplinary care across the health sector that seeks a better integration of complimentary and alternate options with more traditional methods.



Contacts and Reference

- Acupuncture New Zealand. www.acupuncture.org.nz
- Royal New Zealand Returned Service Association
Contact: Mark Compain: markcompain@hotmail.com

[The-Veteran-Family-and-Whanau-Mental-Health-and-Wellbeing-Policy-Framework.PDF \(veteransaffairs.mil.nz\)](#) .





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