



OPEN ACCESS

Valuing indigenous wisdom: invited comment

Papaarangi Reid

Te Kupenga Hauora Māori,
Waipapa Taumata Rau - The
University of Auckland,
Auckland, New Zealand

Correspondence to

Professor Papaarangi Reid,
The University of Auckland,
Auckland, 1142, New Zealand;
p.reid@auckland.ac.nz

Research is, or should be, guided by ethics. The public expect this of us. Ethics in turn, are guided by principles, codes and conventions that ideally echo societal values and become codified into accepted practices: ways of being and doing. Researchers, and the institutions that educate, support, finance and publish research, universally expect that research ethics are part of standard practice.

Ethics are commonly incorporated into the training of researchers within universities and research training institutions. Research providers usually insist that appropriate ethical standards are met by seeking ethics approval from accredited bodies as an integral part of the research development process. These accredited ethics committees assess whether or not proposed research projects have identified ethical risks, real and potential, and have processes in place to avoid, mitigate or manage these risks appropriately. Likewise, research funders usually require approval by an accredited ethics committee before project funding is awarded.

Research publishers are also bound by ethics. A number of organisations have been formed to consider publication ethics and deal with potential breaches. Examples include the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME),¹ established in 1995, and the Committee on Publication Ethics,² established in 1997, mainly to address breaches in the code of conduct for research and publication in biomedical journals. The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors³ also provides recommendations for journals that cover a broad range of issues, but many revolve around ethical challenges.

WAME has produced guidelines on publication ethics for medical journals. They identify key issues including redundant or duplicate publications, disputes due to inappropriate inclusion or exclusion of authors, concerns for the welfare of human and/or animal subjects, data fabrication, plagiarism, and ensuring appropriate disclosure of financial and personal relationships that could be viewed as influencing the work.

In addition to these organisations, some publishing houses have established their own policies. They note that publishing is not just about the dissemination of research but also integral to the 'scientific method' as peer-reviewed and published research are the 'building blocks in the development of a coherent and respected network of knowledge'.⁴

At its heart, research is about knowledge, knowledge creation, and knowledge transmission and transfer. Implicit within the conversations that we have about ethics in research is the often 'taken-for-granted' understanding of what constitutes knowledge, knowledge creation and transmission. However, this is a contested space. Different

communities and peoples may have different understandings, traditions and practices about research that echo with their own ontological and epistemological traditions. Knowing, knowledge creation and transmission are culturally bound, and as ethics reflect the world views and values inherent within their respective societies, it should be unsurprising that different groups may have alternative views when asked: is this proposed research ethical?

Indigenous peoples often point to the limitations and bias of Euro-Western knowledge traditions because research was an integral part of the colonial project.⁵ For example, colonisers like Captain James Cook had expeditions jointly funded by the British Admiralty and the Royal Society.⁶ Cook included botanist Joseph Banks as part of his crew in his first voyage. Peoples, territories, geographies, galaxies, flora and fauna were observed, claimed and (re)named as if they were seen for the first time. In the West, these expeditions became euphemistically known as voyages of discovery, all the while ignoring long-standing Indigenous knowledge.

Indigenous scholars have noted that colonisation is marked by four 'cides': genocide, the systematic eradication of peoples; ethnocide, the systematic eradication of languages, traditional practices and social structures necessary for their transmission; ecocide, the systematic destruction of natural environments; and epistemicide, the systematic eradication of traditional ways of knowing and knowledge creation.⁷ This violent disruption and destruction of Indigenous territories, resources, knowledge, bodies and souls simultaneously created the space for the imposition of Euro-Western ways. This was not just about replacement but the assumption of Western superiority in all things, including knowledge and knowledge creation.

A special communication by Raglan Maddox *et al*, in this edition of the journal, raises these very issues in the field of tobacco control research and evaluation. They propose that the current accepted practice of viewing tobacco control through a Euro-Western lens is limited at best and at worst and undermines and denies Indigenous knowledge. The authors challenge *Tobacco Control* to revise its publication ethics policies to incorporate opportunities to acknowledge and value Indigenous ways of knowledge creation and support Indigenous researchers to use Indigenous methodologies.

The authors do not seek decorative or performative cultural tokenism. They do not ask that aspects of Indigenous processes be incorporated into the status quo. Rather they seek to have the journal acknowledge that current practice is inextricably linked through Euro-Western ideologies to coloniality and therefore risks reinscribing inequitable, racist and white supremacist outcomes. They



► <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/tc-2022-057702>



© Author(s) (or their employer(s)) 2023. Re-use permitted under CC BY-NC. No commercial re-use. See rights and permissions. Published by BMJ.

To cite: Reid P. *Tob Control* Epub ahead of print: [please include Day Month Year]. doi:10.1136/tc-2022-057919

invite the journal to reflect whose knowledge is being excluded and whose voices are missing. From this reflection, the journal should ask itself: are we doing harm? and if so, how do we rectify this situation?

Moana Jackson noted that knowledge and knowledge creation does not belong to modernity nor Euro-Western tradition. Rather, all human survival throughout the centuries in various environments has depended on developing and transmitting ways of being, doing and knowing.⁸ He proposed 10 ethical principles for Indigenous researchers,⁹ noting that it was not to say that the accepted Western traditions were not ‘ethical’ by their own standards, but the underpinning philosophy did not support the survival and flourishing of Indigenous ways. He promoted ethical ideals including doing what is ‘tika’—correct and transformative.

Beyond issues of tobacco control, we are confronted by numerous ‘wicked problems’. We are in the midst of a planetary crisis that is already exacting a significant toll on all species and the planet herself. Current political, economic and social systems continue to drive inequitable outcomes within and between nations. These were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic that has, in turn, amplified a food and cost-of-living crisis. Further, for many people in many nations, peace is not guaranteed.

These wicked problems will require all our efforts and knowledge and a commitment to transformation. In a recent comment in the *Lancet*, the editor noted that while epidemiology has contributed knowledge that has advanced health, ‘Epidemiology as it is taught and practiced in western universities has become a commoditised accomplice of a system of exploitative power’.¹⁰ He promotes the writings of Breilh¹¹ who challenge scientists and researchers to become activists for health rather than passive bystanders and monitors. He maintains that epistemicide, the silencing of the knowledge of other people, needs to be reversed

and that intercultural practices need to be embraced. *Tobacco Control* and its readers should respond to this challenge.

Funding The authors have not declared a specific grant for this research from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Competing interests None declared.

Patient consent for publication Not applicable.

Ethics approval Not applicable.

Provenance and peer review Not commissioned; internally peer reviewed.

Open access This is an open access article distributed in accordance with the Creative Commons Attribution Non Commercial (CC BY-NC 4.0) license, which permits others to distribute, remix, adapt, build upon this work non-commercially, and license their derivative works on different terms, provided the original work is properly cited, appropriate credit is given, any changes made indicated, and the use is non-commercial. See: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

REFERENCES

- 1 Available: <http://www.wame.org>
- 2 Available: <http://www.publicationethics.org.uk>
- 3 Available: <http://icmje.org>
- 4 Available: <http://elsevier.com/about/policies/publishing-ethics>
- 5 Smith LT. *Decolonising methodologies: research and indigenous peoples*. 2nd ed. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012.
- 6 Frame W. The first voyage of james cook. article published on website of british library. Available: <https://www.bl.uk/the-voyages-of-captain-james-cook/articles/the-first-voyage-of-james-cook> [Accessed 18 Jun 2023].
- 7 Reid P, Cormack D, Paine S-J. Colonial histories, racism and health—the experience of Māori and indigenous peoples. *Public Health* 2019;172:119–24.
- 8 Jackson M. He manawa whenua. Pihama L, Skipper H, Tipene J, eds. He Manawa Whenua conference proceedings: Inaugural issue 2013; Te Kotahi Research Institute, 2015:59–63
- 9 Burgess H, Cormack D, et al, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand. Calling forth our pasts, citing our futures: an envisioning of a kaupapa Māori citational practice. *MAI Journal* 2021;10:57–67.
- 10 Horton R. Offline: health’s intercultural turn. *Lancet* 2023;401.
- 11 Breilh J. *Critical epidemiology and the people’s health*. January 2021.