What health changes occur in Māori males after retirement from playing rugby league?

Trevor N Clark, MSc, BA (Hons)

Abstract

Māori male participation in rugby league is prolific at all levels in New Zealand however rugby league has a high incidence of injury. The demands of the sport require players to be athletically fit, strong, and healthy during their playing careers. But does any health advantage remain once retired from participation? This is the first exploratory health study of Māori men who have retired from playing competitive rugby league in New Zealand. It uses Māori methodology research by Māori, involves Māori, for the benefit of Māori (Fig. 1). A mixed method approach both quantitative and qualitative also contributes substantial evidence.

This study researched four groups of ex-players at increasing levels of engagement with 154 involved in the initial survey assessment. This was followed by a detailed analysis of 25 players who were assessed on multiple measures of health. This process was repeated 18 months later with 15 returning respondents and elaborated on (A) Physical well-being post-play; (B) Injuries experienced during play (through a retrospective analysis); (C) Self-assessed well-being; and (D) Change over time for a small group. Lastly 10 players took part in kanohi ki te kanohi interviews so the players could tell their own stories in more detail.

There was evidence of a positive reduction in body weight, improved cardiovascular fitness and increased motivation in some players simply through their participation in this research (Hawthorne or observer effect). Whānau (family) was a strong feature in the stories from these men. This research explored a previously under-researched area and provided insight into Māori male health. Most importantly it confirms there is strong potential for intervention to improve and maintain health status for retiring and retired Māori rugby league players.

Image

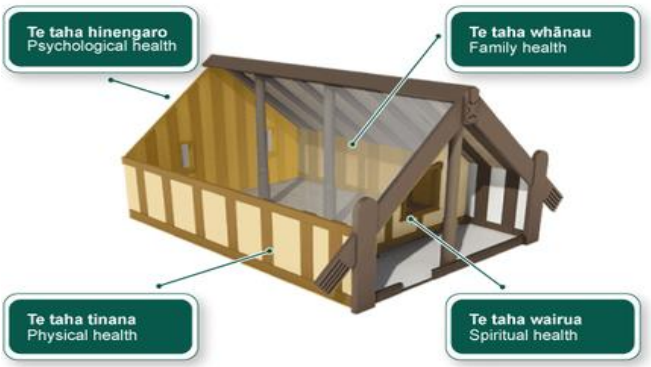


Figure 1: Te Whare Tapa Whā Māori Health Model (Durie, 1985)
Source: http://qualifiedsocialworkernewzealand.weebly.com/maori.html

Recent Publications

1. King, D., Hume, P., Gissane, C. & Clark, TN. (2017). Semi-Professional Rugby League Players have Higher Concussion Risk than Professional or Amateur Participants: A Pooled Analysis. *Sports Medicine* 47: 197. doi:10.1007/s40279-016-0576-z
2. King, DA., Gissane, C., Clark, TN. & Marshall, S.W. (2014). The incidence of match and training injuries in rugby league: A pooled data analysis of published studies International Journal Sports Science Coach 9(2): 417-431.
3. King, D., Hume, P. & Clark, TN. (2010). Player perspectives on return to play after match or training injury in amateur rugby league. *New Zealand. Journal Sports Medicine* 37(2): 48-55.



Biography

Trevor Clark's main area of interest is focussed on improving sport performance, reducing sporting injuries and the maintenance of health and well-being post retirement from sport. Most of his recent focus has been geared toward sport concussion. Technology is transforming the way coaches, teams and individual athletes track, monitor and identify injury. By analysing factors – such as movement speed, force, distance and possession, it is possible to track and measure potential mechanisms of injury. Coaches and athletes can develop a better understanding of the mechanisms of injury through the use of specialised linear and rotational force transducers applied directly on to athletes. We are also striving to develop better methods of managing injuries once identified and diagnosed. Guided by evidence and best practice we are aiming to develop protocols for the long-term management of health as a result of injuries sustained in sport.

Email: trev.waves@yahoo.com.au

Notes/Comments: