

News Release



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New study investigates the influence of language on childhood social development

Understanding how parent and whanau language can influence a child's social development is the focus of a new Pacific Postdoctoral Fellowship awarded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC).

Poor emotional understanding in young children has been related to later levels of internalising and externalising behaviours and recent research suggests that parental language strongly influences children's developing cognition.

Fellowship recipient Dr Mele Taumoepeau from the University of Otago has received \$325,500 to conduct the research, which will involve a longitudinal analysis of 100 Pacific Island children and their families examining the relationship between parental input and extended family networks on pre-school children's social understanding.

This research will add to the limited pool of research into psycho-social wellbeing in Pacific Island children, particularly in the areas of emotional and social cognition.

This Fellowship has been awarded as part of the HRC's Pacific Career Development Awards programme which is aimed at developing and supporting the Pacific workforce capacity in health research in New Zealand. Nearly \$650,000 was awarded for the 2007 year for three Masters Scholarships, three PhDs Scholarships and one Postdoctoral Fellowship.

“The HRC is please to see an increasing number of high quality applicants, which bodes well for the future Pacific health research workforce,” HRC Chief Executive Dr Robin Olds says.

A full list of 2007 HRC Pacific Career Development Award recipients follows:

Name	Award	Title	Host	Amount
Sera Tapu-Ta'ala	Masters	Acceptance or resistance? How do Pacific people with Type 2 diabetes, who need insulin for good glycaemic control, come to terms with their therapy?	Victoria University of Wellington	\$16,000
Analosa Ulugia-Veukiso	Masters	An investigation of spirituality and selected health risk behaviours amongst Samoan youth in NZ	Massey University	\$16,000
Tokilupe Taumoepau	Masters	The role of myostatin in cancer cachexia	University of Auckland	\$16,000
Amanda Dunlop	PhD	Social marketing and Pacific peoples in NZ	University of Auckland	\$66,950
Neti Herman	PhD	Promoting young people's health through school and community empowerment and partnership	University of Auckland	\$100,950
Seini Taufa	PhD	Tongan teenage pregnancy in NZ	University of Auckland	\$106,550
Mele Taumoepau	Post Doctoral Fellowship	The development of social cognition in Pacific Island families	University of Otago	\$324,500

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About the Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC)

The HRC is the Crown agency responsible for the management of the Government's investment in public good health research. Ownership of the HRC resides with the Minister of Health, with funding being primarily provided from Vote Research, Science and Technology. A Memorandum of Understanding between the two Ministers sets out this relationship.

Established under the Health Research Council Act 1990, the HRC's statutory functions include:

- advising the Minister and administering funds in relation to national health research policy
- fostering the recruitment, education, training, and retention of those engaged in health research in New Zealand
- initiating and supporting health research
- undertaking consultation to establish priorities in health research
- promoting and disseminating the results of health research to encourage their contribution to health science, policy and delivery
- ensuring the development and application of appropriate assessment standards by committees or subcommittees that assess health research proposals.