

Nurse Practitioner Profiles (as at 06/11/2015)
Te Tai Tokerau, Northland



Helen Topia

Iwi: Ngāti Whatua

Iwi connections: Te Rarawa and Whakatohea

NP area of practice: High dependency nursing primary health care – Adult and chronic disease management (2006)

Employed by: Coast to Coast Health, AUT

Based: Northland / North Shore

Helen Topia is a Nurse Practitioner who lives in Kaipara. Her Whānau and Tūpuna have lived on the same property since they settled there in 1897. Although spending a number of years overseas, Helen has returned and is using her skills to serve the local people of her region.

Helen's nursing training includes midwifery, cardiothoracic intensive care nursing, a Bachelor of Nursing (Sydney University), a Masters of Advanced Practice nursing and a Post graduate certificate in pharmacology and prescribing practicum (Massey University). Helen registered as a Nurse Practitioner (Sydney) in 2003 where her area of practice was High Dependency Nursing.

In 2007, she returned to New Zealand and extended her scope of practice to Adult and Chronic disease management in Primary Health Care. Helen's work includes five years within Maori Health in Kaipara where she coordinated service provision for Te Ha Oranga nursing service. Within that role she managed her own clinics and consulted with patients on a daily basis, many of whom found access to mainstream services a challenge. Under this contract she was able to provide low cost health access to the people of Ngati Whatua.

Helen's vision and commitment to her role extends across the wider health boundaries. She says "Nurse Practitioners can operate as *change agents* making it possible to change the health environment to improve clinical service delivery to a wider group".

In this respect the focus of the Nurse Practitioner is elevated to one that includes population health. Nurse Practitioners across New Zealand are instrumental in lobbying at political levels, leading population health initiatives, advocating for patients and families, and assessing issues of health literacy and the identification of the negative impact of social determinants on the health of families and individuals. The impact that nurses and nursing can have in health care delivery is underestimated.

Helen is a part-time lecturer at AUT University, teaching postgraduate nurses on the pathways to becoming Nurse Practitioners. She also contributes to Diagnostic Reasoning and Long Term Conditions papers. To support this teaching role, Helen works as a Nurse Practitioner in rural general Practice where she diagnoses, manages and treats acute and chronic patients who present from the local community.

Helen is part of the executive team for Nurse Practitioner New Zealand (NPNZ) and has been the Conference Convener for the last 6 years. This year's biannual conference included a workshop devoted to prescribing medications; this was the first conference of this nature and was well received.