Ethnic disparities in New Zealand hospital care

We were pleased to see Juliet Rumball-Smith's review of ethnic disparities in New Zealand hospital care.¹

We wish to clarify one point in relation to her statement regarding our paper²:

“The results of statistical analyses were not quoted in the paper; as such it is not possible to draw conclusions regarding the statistical significance of the findings.”

Statistical significance is used to assess whether observed results could have occurred by chance due to sampling error, arising from taking a sample from a larger population. However, as we deliberately stated in the paper, we calculated the rates in the paper from complete censuses of both hospitalisations and the New Zealand population, “which means [they] are not subject to sampling error”.

Therefore the rates, and their differences, can be assessed for their substantive meaning and conclusions drawn without any need to deal with statistical significance issues.

We agree with the author that New Zealand researchers are fortunate in their access to a census of hospitalisations. It can serve as an invaluable source for studying health service issues, including differences and potential disparities in health care, especially for Māori.

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