

The Lives of Native Hawaiian Elders and Their Experiences With Healthcare: A Qualitative Analysis

Hawaii Pacific Gerontological Society Conference

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Objective

The objective of this qualitative study was to analyze the **experiences of healthcare and social services** among Native Hawaiian elders to gain advice for providers to improve health outcomes.

Introduction

Current health statistics indicate a **high prevalence of chronic disease** and a **lower life expectancy** among Native Hawaiians, especially those living in rural communities. In this study, kūpuna were interviewed about their positive and negative experiences with healthcare. Researchers also wanted to understand the **cultural traditions and non-Western healthcare practices** that Native Hawaiian communities continue today and how they can be used alongside Western medicine.



References

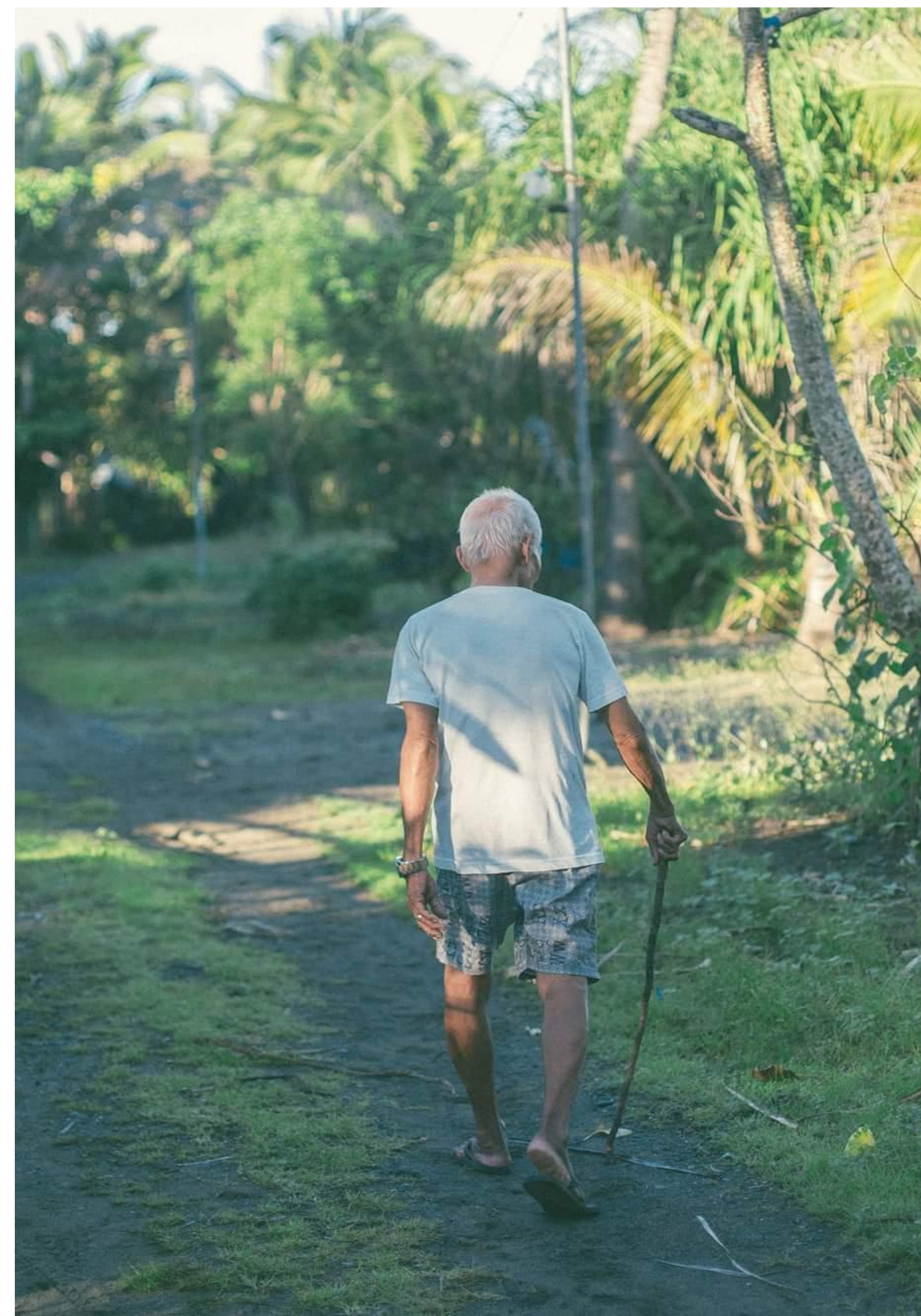
Kawakami KL, Muneoka S, Burrage RL, Tanoue L, Haitzuka K, & Braun KL (2022) The Lives of Native Hawaiian Elders and Their Experiences With Healthcare: A Qualitative Analysis. Front. Public Health 10:787215. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2022.787215

Methods

30 kūpuna associated with the ALU LIKE each participated in 3 talk-story interviews (via Zoom):

- Interview 1: Establishing rapport
- Interview 2: Learning about kūpuna strengths, resiliencies, and what they would like to pass to the next generation
- Interview 3: Listening to experiences with healthcare, health and social service providers, and seeking advice for providers

Thematic analysis identified recurring themes participants



Results

Kūpuna currently used both Western medicine and Hawaiian wellness practices.

"You got to take [Western] medicine that you swallow and then it works inside out... That's why [Hawaiians] drink a lot of different kinds of tea, it works from the inside out."

Kūpuna took a proactive role in their personal health

"I ask a lot of questions. And they answer me on the spot. So that makes me feel good.."

Kūpuna shared a positive experience due to direct communication from their provider

"I liked him because he told me the straight facts to me, to my face, what was wrong with me... which made me turn vegan. That improved everything."

Negative experiences were attributed to providers with poor communication

"...be understanding to us, just give us a chance and let us say things -- but sometime they just cut us short, you know? Let us finish our sentence, even if it take long. Sometimes, we get hard time talk. We share, but once you cut, 'oki us, all pau. We no like say nothing, we pa'a ka waha [shut our mouth]."

Kūpuna shared stories about the high turnover of providers on their islands

"You get comfortable with the doctor and then he's gone. Poof, gone."

Many kūpuna traveled to Honolulu for specialty care not available on neighbor islands

"Why do we have to go to Honolulu to see specialists? Why don't the specialists come here [Moloka'i]? Huh? We got plenty cancer people here, what happened to our treatment?!"

Conclusions: Advice to Providers

Take the time to talk-story and get to know the kūpuna as people and community members.

"It's not just about the medicine, it's just not about why am I sick... Gee, I stay with [the doctor] half an hour to an hour, we just wala'au and we kūkākūkā [talk story]. That sometimes is good, it's healthy!"

Learn about and acknowledge Hawaiians' experiences with colonization; respectfully approach the traditional health practices of your patients.

"You learn and treat the whole person, not just a symptom. And you got to understand where the genesis of that system comes from and treat that instead of just giving a drug to numb... you got to treat the root of it. And they don't ... teach that much in medical schools."

Communicate directly, clearly, and patiently.

"What made it positive is that the communication was clear on both sides. And if I didn't quite understand, they would show me pictures or diagrams. And ... they would tell me what they're going to do through the whole process, what's gonna happen after I'm done, and then from there, the follow up with more literature or whatever needs to be done."

Love what you do and show your passion in your work.

"Be patient, be respectful, have a sense of humor, don't show disdain, do your best, or else don't go into that kind of work unless you can be supportive and respectful of the patient. Don't go into it if you're just doing it for the money. Because it's more than that."

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