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## The Role of Indigenous Knowledge in Improving Wellness: Integrating Mātauranga Māori and Medicine

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The basis of modern medicine is to focus on treating a disease, or repairing broken and faulty bodies or organs. This approach is underpinned by robust, empirically derived data and based epidemiological proof. The disease is treated, a broken bone 'set', operations remove or repair faulty organs - the 'person' is not recognised. Such an approach to medicine has many benefits. The epidemiological proof ensures that medicine practitioners are confident that the causes of many health issues have unequivocal causes. A reliance on epidemiological evidence similarly has many benefits. However, this approach has some drawbacks. First, the delay between suspicion that a substance may cause disease and the epidemiological evidence that it does can take years and even decades. The casualty list may be of considerable length before data are produced confirming the suspicion that the substance was harmful. The delay impacts in two key ways – if the substance continued to be used until proof that it was harmful was available, then an opportunity to cease its use was lost. Also, treatment might be delayed, or the most appropriate treatment not employed. Another drawback is the emphasis on universal solutions. Such an approach has the potential to forget that it is an individual that is being healed. We believe an alternative approach to health and wellness that draws upon Māori approaches and understandings, integrated where appropriate with modern medicine is needed. Central to this is the use of mauri as an indicator of wellness and a focus upon the individual.