



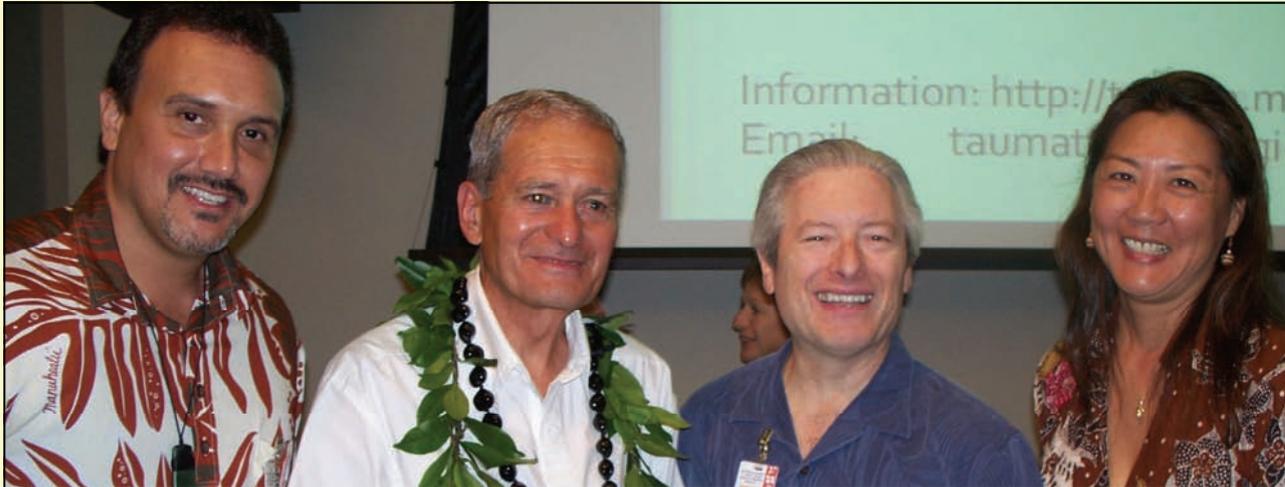
# JOHN A. BURNS SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

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## “ATTITUDINAL SHIFT” ELEVATES MĀORI HEALTH



**NEW PARTNERSHIP:** *Dr. J. Keawe Kaholokula, Dr. Mason Durie, Dean Hedges, Dr. Marjorie Mau*

**M**ĀORI EXPERT **DR. MASON DURIE** TOLD A gathering at the John A. Burns School of Medicine that health issues his people face in New Zealand are not all that different from the challenges Native Hawaiians confront here.

Durie, the Deputy Vice Chancellor and professor of Māori Research and Development at Massey University, New Zealand, spoke at the invitation of the **Department of Native Hawaiian Health** at Hawai‘i’s medical school.

Durie said health disparities -- including higher rates of diabetes and heart disease suffered by the Māori population -- are one trouble our native peoples share. But, in his view, there is a bigger, more powerful trait the two groups share: resilience.

“Resilience is a characteristic of indigenous peoples in modern times,” said Durie.

Dr. Durie said resilience can flourish when we become dedicated to seeking out success, rather than just studying failure. He said that involves an “attitudinal shift, from placing an emphasis on disadvantages, disease, and deficits to attainment, success and high hopes.”

“The potential has never been greater,” he said, noting increases in both the life expectancy and the numbers of young people in New Zealand. Durie said 1984 was a key year for the Māori, because it brought a “reawakening” of the needs and status of Māori people in New Zealand. New Zealand found that building the health care workforce with Māori people had a direct impact on improving Māori health.

Durie said professionals in the mental health services

were the first to begin to deliver consistent health care to the Māori, Durie said. They adopted a type of medicine that the people could relate to: one that was more like the people themselves. It included emphasizing a balance between mental health and spirituality and taking into consideration the environment and social relationships among the people.

“The Māori began to understand that their health was in their own hands,” said Dr. Durie.

**“Resilience is a characteristic of indigenous peoples in modern times,” said Durie.**



The progress has been measurable.

Now each tribe in New Zealand has its own health committee. Where there were five Māori medical students in 1984, there are 25 now. The workforce grew during that period from fewer than 50 Māori health workers to 250 today.

And most significant, infant deaths are down and life expectancy is up.

**Durie’s Massey University and the UH John A. Burns School of Medicine’s Department of Native Hawaiian Health signed a memorandum of understanding to promote the sharing of knowledge.**