



Using Traditional Healing Concepts as a Tool to Combat Low Health Literacy



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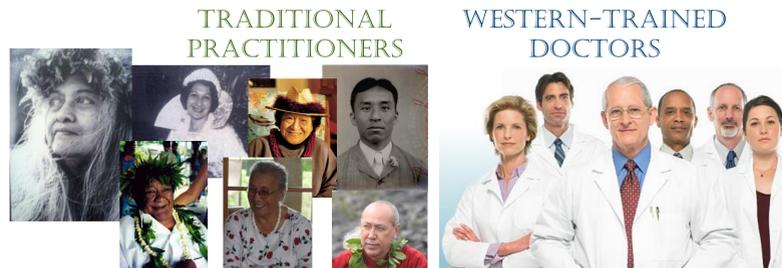
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Concepts

There has been much focus on addressing the cultural and linguistic aspects of health to improve low health literacy in culturally based communities; however, very few practitioners who were schooled in the Euro-Western traditions of healthcare fully comprehend the foundation of the cultures they wish to serve. By looking at traditional healing practices to provide insight to cultural protocols with regard to health, much understanding can be found.

As Native Hawaiian traditional practitioners who are also trained in Euro-Western medical concepts, to better serve our community, it became crucial for us to explore the answer to the question:

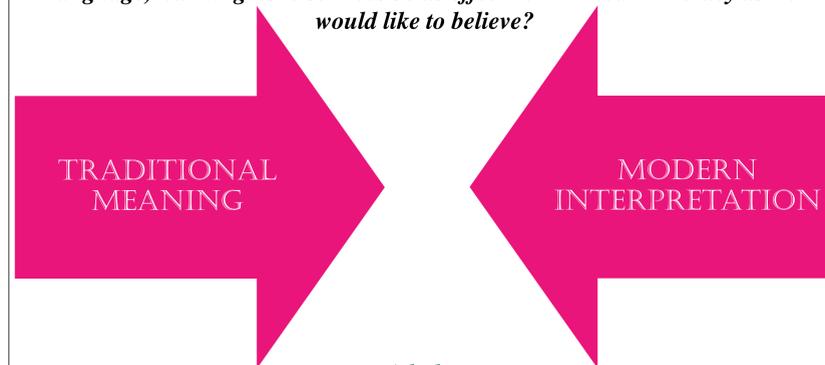
Why does Tutu distrust Western-trained doctors?



Introduction: My name is: My family name is: My teachers are:	My name is: (My credentials are framed on the wall)
Diagnosis: Where did you go? What did you do? Who did you speak to? What did you say?	Why are you here? How do you feel? Where does it hurt? Let's run some tests.
Treatment: I am going to teach you how to make this medicine /make these changes to your diet/lifestyle. Let me know if there are any changes to your condition (good or bad) in the next few days.	I am going to prescribe this medicine. See the pharmacist if you have additional questions. Make another appointment if you do not get better.
Time: As long as it takes.	15 minutes.
Payment: Whatever you can give is fine.	Here is your receipt.



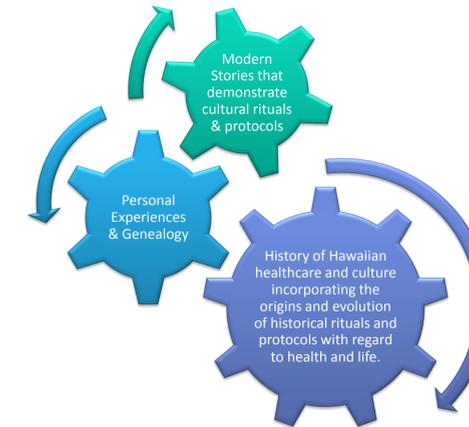
The following examples illustrate common linguistic misconceptions within Hawaiian culture today. With vast differences such as these within the language, can linguistic services be as effective with health literacy as we would like to believe?



Aloha Love, affection, compassion, mercy, sympathy, pity, kindness, sentiment, grace, charity; greeting; sweetheart, loved one. Aloha is given without expectation of return and is nurtured when other people similarly share their aloha without expectation of return.	Modern Interpretation: Hello Goodbye Love
'Ōhana Ke Akua: God(s) 'aumākua: ancestors, sometimes deified kūpuna: grandparents or grandparent generation mākua: parents or parent generation 'ōpio: youth keiki/kamali'i: children nā pua i ka wā hope: future descendants	Modern Interpretation: Nuclear family comprised of parents and children. May also include the extended family which encompasses grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, etc.
'Āina That which feeds or provides sustenance: • The Physical 'Āina or environment • The Psychological 'Āina or mana'o (thoughts and feelings) • The Spiritual 'Āina or connection and relationship with God, 'aumākua, 'ōhana and friends.	Modern Interpretation: Land or earth
Pono That what is right by God and nature as dictated by the natural order.	Modern Interpretation: That what is right by an individual's moral code.

Curriculum

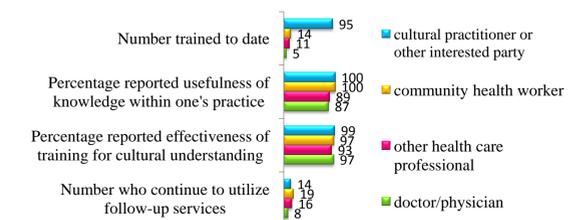
Our 150 hour live seminar program integrates the study of health practices through a language arts curriculum based on traditional stories that addresses the intellectual, social, emotional, physical, spiritual, and cultural practices of health.



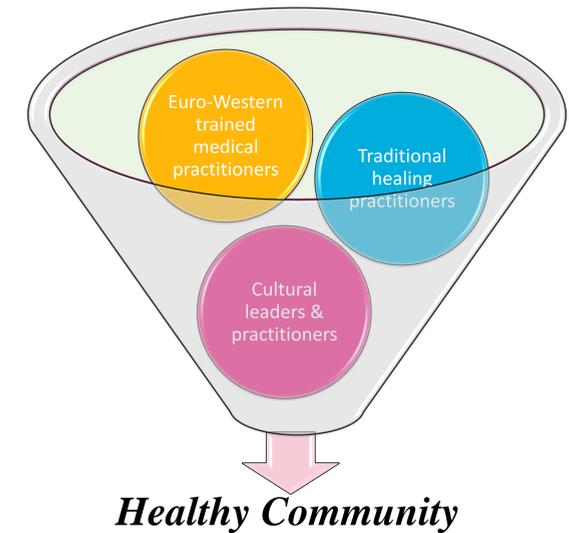
Results

Eight months after completing our course, we asked participants to poll their constituency. 189 forms were returned:
 >118 reported better communications on the part of the practitioner
 >95 reported the practitioner took their time with them and explained procedures better
 >56 reported no changes

Feedback Received:
 "I have been a patient of Dr.XXX for 12 years. He is finally asking my opinion and allowing me to have a voice in my treatment plan."
 "My doctor offered meet me at my Chinese herbalist's to conference with him. In the five years he has been my primary, this has never happened before! Thank you!"
 "My doctor brought an acupuncturist in as part of her practice. I love this new option."
 "My doctor actually talked to me and not my interpreter. What a difference!"
 "I was asked if there was a cultural option I was more comfortable with for my treatment. I love Dr. XXXXX ! He really gets me!"



Conclusions



Our work is based on the concept that community health literacy is the responsibility of the Western trained healthcare practitioner, the cultural leader and the traditional healer. When all parties exercise ha'aha'a (humility) and kōkua (assist) one another, all members of the community ultimately benefit. It is critically important for traditional practitioners to know when it is necessary to call in the Western-trained practitioner and have the wherewithal to advocate for both the patient and the Western physician. Likewise, it is equally important for the Western-trained medical practitioner to know when it is the best interest of the patient to call in traditional healer, and to utilize the traditional healer as a part of the overall healthcare treatment plan of the patient; not as a last resort when Euro-Western methods fail to be effective. Our curricula has shown that when the Euro-Western trained practitioner develops a deep understanding of the culture s/he wishes to serve, bridges can be built and mutual understanding and respect flourishes. Although this program is both new and based on the Native Hawaiian culture, the possibility for replication within other cultures is feasible. Like any program, it depends on relevant cultural information from community leaders and cultural healing practitioners willing to assist in the process.