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Psychologists in Aotearoa are increasingly encountering rongoā Māori, including mirimiri, in therapeutic contexts, yet little is known about how they engage with these practices in ways that are culturally safe, ethically sound, and clinically responsive. This study explores how Māori and non-Māori psychologists in Aotearoa navigate the integration of mirimiri, a spiritually grounded form of rongoā Māori, into ACC-funded and broader psychological practice. It examines how practitioners engage with cultural, clinical, and ethical tensions that arise when client-led or collaborative encounters with mirimiri occur. Rather than seeking to clinically validate mirimiri, the research affirms its ontological reality and cultural integrity, approaching healing as real, if only partially knowable, shaped by whakapapa, wairua, and relationship.

The study is underpinned by a critical realist ontology and a constructionist epistemology, informed by post-structuralist insight. It recognises the partiality of knowledge and the discursive forces that shape therapeutic possibility. Guided by Interpretive Description, informed by kaupapa Māori values and the metaphor of he awa whiria, the study draws on semi-structured interviews with 6–8 registered psychologists who have encountered mirimiri in mental health contexts. Data will be analysed through Reflexive Thematic Analysis, supported by cultural supervision, wānanga, and reflexivity to ensure relational rigour and cultural accountability.

In this presentation, I will present interpretive insights developed through analysis of interviews with psychologists who have referred clients to mirimiri, focusing on how they navigate cultural and clinical boundaries, ethical tensions, and spiritual dimensions of healing.

This research contributes to culturally responsive practice by illuminating how power, positionality, and ethics shape engagements across Indigenous and Western therapeutic paradigms in Aotearoa.

Keywords

Mirimiri. Rongoā Māori. Culturally responsive practice. Indigenous healing. Psychologists in Aotearoa. ACC-funded therapy. Interpretive Description. Reflexive Thematic Analysis. Kaupapa Māori research. He awa whiria.