Dying well in Aotearoa New Zealand for ethnic minority communities: a time for reclamation?

Summary

Despite technological advances and a disproportionate increase in health expenditure at the end-of-life, most New Zealanders die in hospital or in aged residential care. This counters the aspirations espoused by Te Whatu Ora (Health New Zealand) for all New Zealanders "to live well, age well and die well in their homes and communities." Furthermore, despite reported inequities in end-of-life care experienced by ethnic minority communities (EMCs) overseas, and increasing proportions of people identifying with Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American and African ethnicities in Aotearoa New Zealand, local data, research and policies addressing healthcare needs of EMCs at end-of-life are scant. Acknowledging this invisibility, we reflect on and discuss the current discourses on death and dying, the complex experiences at end-of-life for EMCs, including concepts of a "good death", the impact of recent existential crises (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic, climate change) on death awareness, and the global rise to reclaim dying as an important part of living. We argue for the need: a) to partner with ethnic communities to co-design culturally safe end-of-life health services, and b) to adopt a "compassionate communities" public health approach that can support people of EMCs at the end-of-life to die well.