

**Insights from New Zealand Doctors: Can patient portal improve intercultural
communication in the delivery of healthcare?**

Phoebe Elers

School of Communication Studies

Auckland University of Technology

New Zealand

phoebe.ellers@gmail.com

Insights from New Zealand Doctors: Can patient portal improve intercultural communication in the delivery of healthcare?

In the modern age, information and communication technologies are progressively being used to support the delivery of healthcare. Research has established that giving patients the ability to communicate electronically with their healthcare providers can improve communication, enhance patient-physician relationships and increase patient satisfaction. However, to date, few studies have qualitatively analysed how it may impact physicians' communication with patients from different ethnocultural backgrounds. This subject is important for deciphering whether these technologies are effective with patients from diverse backgrounds, and further, whether it is likely to improve or worsen health inequalities and inequities. The present study explores this subject through an examination of the patient portal service in New Zealand. This is an online platform that facilitates the exchange of information between patients and their health providers. From an analysis of interviews conducted among primary care physicians from ten practices, the findings indicate that patient portals could, and in some cases have, improved intercultural communication with patients. However, at the time of the interviews, the patient portals were generally underutilized in their practices and this was largely a result of the insufficient promotion of the services. The significance of the findings are discussed.