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Did the successes of ‘quack’ medicine marketing in New Zealand influence the fate of Māori tohunga at the turn of the 20th century?

In the first decade of the 20th century, the New Zealand government addressed two issues causing vexation to those in power wishing to embed a more central formalised public health system in keeping with the increasing dominance of scientific/evidence-based medicine. The first issue was the impact quackery marketing (particularly its advertising and promotion) was having on consumer demand and consumption. With an efficient postal delivery system, increasingly sophisticated advertising strategies and media, and a shortage of ‘trained’ doctors in many areas, ‘quack’ medicine was an attractive remedy for ailments. These would be prescribed by alternative health providers deemed to be ‘quacks’ or sourced and purchased by the consumer directly. The second issue was the presence and activities of Māori tohunga, (in this case a traditional Māori healer), who held a place of respect and trust, offering wisdom and guidance within their specialist dimension to Māori communities. These issues, both of separate origin, but separately and collectively deemed a threat to the health and safety of public health and the ‘official’ regime, were addressed by two separate Acts: Tohunga Suppression Act (1907) and Quackery Prevention Act (1908). This work asks whether attitudes against ‘Western’ quackery advertising and promotion had wide effects than just addressing quackery and if there is evidence to support that thinking around quackery had an influence in the narrative against tohunga delivered treatment. The main research question is: How did attitudes and sentiments regarding medical quackery and its marketing within New Zealand at the turn of the 20th century directly

or indirectly impact to hunga methods of treatment? A qualitative historical research method is used that casts a wider net than is usually the case for study of the history of quackery advertising and promotion, by examining how efforts to contain quackery may or may not have impacted on ways of healing among indigenous populations undergoing colonization. It finds evidence that attitudes toward quackery may well have cross-fertilized the narrative against to hunga-delivered treatments.