

**Lancashire Gujarat Health Users Forum
Working towards a healthier community**

**Gujarat Hindu Society
South Meadow Lane
Preston
PR1 8JN
Tel: 01772 253901
Fax: 01772 882221**

**Chairperson - Professor R.C.
Gupta
Secretary - Arun Vithlani**

Health Mela 2002 Report

1. Report pgs 2-4

Appendix

2. Invitation
3. List of Invited
4. Health Mela Poster
5. Programme 16/03/02
6. Programme 17/03/02
7. Survey – Public
8. Survey – Participants
9. Accounts
1. Press Reports and Photographs

Lancashire Gujarat Health Users Forum

Report on Health Mela 2002

The health mela 2002 was organised by the Lancashire Gujarat Health Users Forum on 16th and 17th March 2002. It was held at Gujarat Hindu Centre, South Meadow Lane, Preston.

The aims and objects of the health mela was to improve health awareness and promote health amongst the local population of Lancashire and in particular the ethnic minorities living in Preston and surrounding areas. It was also an exercise to empower the health users and to develop a partnership with those who were responsible to commission and provide health. The aim was also to provide an informal opportunity for the residents of Lancashire to come and talk to the experts and specialists from different areas of medicine including complementary medicine such as massage therapy, reflexology and holistic living. This was the first time that such an event had been organised in Lancashire and possibly in the north west of England.

Background

The Lancashire Gujarat Health Users Forum was established in October 2001 with the following aims and objectives.

1. To improve the awareness of the range of Health Care Services within the South Asian Community.
2. To encourage a greater and appropriate use of Health Care Services.
3. To ensure that services are developed and organised in the user friendly manner for all South Asian groups.
4. To develop partnership between the Health Care Users, Health Care Providers and Social Services.
5. To assist the service providers in raising the general health of the South Asian communities by empowering them to adopt healthy living life styles.
6. To understand the importance of non medical environmental factors which affect health such as education, housing, pollution, employment and other health issues.
7. To advise the patient advocate group or bodies regarding the health needs and issues related to access etc of South Asian communities.
8. To provide comments on policy and strategies impacting the health of South Asian Communities.

Since its establishment the forum has been holding regular monthly workshops and meetings at the Gujarat Hindu Centre. The aim of these workshops and lectures has been to improve the awareness of the local population about the various health issues and in particular the illnesses which are more common in ethnic minorities.

The topics that have been covered so far including coronary heart disease, strokes, Hyperlipidaemia, Diabetes Mellitus, arthritis, asthma, menopausal syndrome, osteoporosis and mental health illness. Lectures were of an interactive nature involving small group workshops and open panel discussions.

We organised a survey to see the usefulness of these workshops and found that the general response was excellent and very positive. There was a strong desire to continue with these workshops further and it was partly due to the success of the health series and seminars which led to the idea of organising the health mela.

Details about the function

a) Planning

It was decided in November 2001 that a health mela should be held and at this time the dates and the formats were agreed. It was decided that the event would be held over two days and it would take the shape of several exhibitions/displays and workshops. A list of potential organisations that might be involved was drawn up including local health trusts, primary care trusts, social services, pharmaceutical companies, various voluntary organisations, complementary medicine organisations etc.

A mela sub group was formed to start co-ordinating the plans. Professor John Ashton, Regional Director of Public Health, North West Region, was contacted and asked to inaugurate the event. Over seventy organisations and groups were then contacted.

By January 2001 the forum had received a positive response from their correspondence and plans were taking shape about the format of the event eg workshops, blood pressure and blood glucose monitoring, catering, publicity, work delegation, application for funding. By the end of February 2001 final planning was taking place. The forum had received about fifty replies for attendance and some financial support from various organisations and individuals.

Publicity material had been distributed to health centres, mosques, dentists, opticians as well as the local press and radio. Planning arrangements were finalised for the stands, exhibitors, workshops, catering, PA system etc. The sub committee met on the 11th March to finalise and prepare the timetable for the event. All the members at the forum had been delegated their duties and the members and volunteers of the Gujarat Hindu Society had been informed of their involvement and role in the event.

b) The Event

Over the two days, about 40 organisations and individuals participated in the health mela. The mela was officially inaugurated by Professor John Ashton. Short speeches were made by the invited dignitaries including Mike Hendrick, MP for Preston and the Mayor of Chorley.

The participants included local health trusts, primary care trusts, social services, age concern, red cross, DISC and pharmaceutical companies such as Bayer, Roche, Airlink. Voluntary organisations such as alcohol and drug service, breast care, Preston HIV support group took part along with local health groups such as diabetes UK, multiple sclerosis and heart beat and incontinence advisory service. There were also complementary medicine groups demonstrating homeopathy and Bowen technique amongst other things.

The opportunity was available for the public to have their blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar checked. This was so popular that there were large queues forming and the participants were having problems in keep up with the demand! The complementary medicine and the Bowen Technique stands were also experiencing difficulties in keeping up with the interest from the public. All the stands were well attended with a lot of interest from the public. Throughout both days there were workshops conducted on important health issues such as coronary artery disease, diabetes, health eating, post menopausal syndrome and osteoporosis.

In excess of 800 people participated over the two days. The figure could be higher as the way in which the number attending took place was unfortunately not very diligent. The audience was a mixture of the indigenous and ethnic populations with age groups ranging from young children to the elderly. In fact children and their teachers from a local school were the first to attend the exhibition and took away some goodies including toothbrushes and toothpaste. Everybody seemed to have a good time and refreshments were available both days free of charge. Complementary lunch was also provided to all the exhibitors and participants.

A survey was conducted to get feedback from both the public and the participants regarding the usefulness of the event and to get ideas for any future events. A standardised questionnaire was given to all the exhibitors as well as to most of the people attending the health mela. The survey was very encouraging with a very positive response from both groups.

Assessment

A lot has been learnt from the organisation of this event and hopefully from the experience gained we would be able to organise the next event in a bigger and better way. Discussions have taken place at our monthly meetings regarding ways of improving on the next mela and some of the changes suggested would be to increase the representation from the wider community as the title and the venue may have suggested that the event was only for Asians. More diligent marketing about the numbers attending, making PA announcements before the workshops and events and registering for the workshops. Better displays for the events and workshops and possibly issuing a programme of events on entry. It is proposed to produce a booklet with relevant articles for the next event. It would also be necessary to gain financial support and sponsorships in view of the high costs

It was agreed that in view of the high costs involved in organising this event, the mela would have to be a one day event in future. However in view of the overall success of the mela and in response to the encouraging feedback from the surveys we are already at the advanced stages of planning for next years mela on 5th April 2003.

Costs

The cost for the two day event was over £9,000 where as the income obtained from the primary care trust as well as sponsors was about £2,000. The costs would have been much higher except for the time and effort of the volunteers from Gujarat Hindu Society as well as the Lancashire Gujarat

Health Users Forum. We are extremely grateful to the Gujarat Hindu Society for the use of their facilities, catering and constant support. A copy of the accounts is enclosed.

The forum is extremely grateful for the support given by the Gujarat Hindu Centre and to the primary care trust for the funding. As mentioned earlier, more funding would have to be obtained to make this event viable next year.

Conclusion

It was felt that the two day event more than fulfilled the aims that it had set out with. The feedback from everyone involved was very positive and everyone would like a similar event repeated next year.