

Health Mela Report 2004

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1: The 2004 Health Mela:

The 2004 Health Mela was organised by the “ Lancashire Gujarat Health Users Forum” on Saturday 27th March 2004. It was held at the Gujarat Hindu Cultural Centre, South Meadow Lane, Preston.

The first Health Mela was held on 16th and 17th March 2002, and the second Health Mela was held on Saturday 5th April 2003. The success of these events and the demand from the general public led the committee to host this year’s 3rd annual Health Mela.

The Lancashire Health users Forum recognises The Health Mela as a resource for the continual improvement in health awareness and sustainability of its local community. It has strengthened partnerships and alliances with community professionals, and has allowed more integration of a positive approach towards health education, and an improved understanding of services offered by the health service.

This generates a positive climate that influences how the community forms relationships, makes decisions and develops its values and attitudes. Healthy, well-educated people can help to reduce inequalities in society, thus contributing to the health and wealth of the population at large. It also allows the community to get active in improving the quality of life style.

Objectives:

The aims and objectives of the Health Mela are to improve health awareness and promote various health related issues amongst the local population of Lancashire and in particular the ethnic minorities living in Preston and surrounding areas.

2: Health Seminars:

The Health Seminars are seen as the way forward in improving the health of the community. The programme of events changes behaviours and attitudes and is a cost effective way of promoting health and preventing disease. Its aim is to provide an enhanced learning environment for the community.

It will apply the best possible evidence-based learning, while taking into account the prevailing context and values, in the making of health policy and in the implementation of health programs at the national, regional, district and local levels. The Centre will promote interdisciplinary collaboration within and between professionals through conferences and workshops and through electronic networking.

It was also an exercise to empower the health users and to develop a partnership with those authorities that are responsible to commission and provide health services such as Hospital Trusts, Primary Care Trust and Medical Professionals. The aim was also to provide an informal opportunity for the residents of Lancashire to come and get advice from the experts and specialists from different areas of medicine and other voluntary organisations.

3: The Lancashire Gujarat Health Users Forum:

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 South Asian Communities by empowering them to adopt Healthy Living Life Styles.
6. To understand the importance of non-medical environment factors that 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 Policies and Strategies impacting the Health of South Asian Communities.

4: Health Forum Workshops:

Since its establishment, the forum has been very active in organising regular monthly meetings and workshops at the Gujarat Hindu Cultural Centre. The aim of these workshops and lectures is to improve the awareness of the local population about the various Health Issues and, in particular, the illnesses that are more common in ethnic minorities.

The topics covered during past two years include Coronary Heart Disease, Stroke, Hyperlipidaemia, Diabetes Mellitus, Arthritis, Asthma, Menopause, Osteoporosis and Mental Health Illness.

Lectures were of an interactive nature involving small group workshops and open panel discussions. During this year several other important such as Eye Care, Oral Health Hygiene, Eating Disorders, Incontinence and Complementary Medicine such as Homeopathy, Reiki etc. have been delivered and very well received by the attendees.

The feedback received from the participants at the seminars and workshops has been very positive and there is a strong indication for those to be continued in the future.

5: Planning:

Planning for the Health Mela 2004 started April 2003. It was agreed that the Health Mela 2004 would continue to be a one day event.

The Health Users Forum would once again invite exhibitors, diagnostic companies and public participation, as well as organising seminars and workshops. A list of potential organisations that would be involved was drawn up, which also included local Health Trusts, Primary Care Trusts, Social Services, pharmaceutical companies, voluntary organisations and complementary medicines for their support.

A list was agreed by the forum to invite local dignitaries such as local MPs, councillors, mayors, members of Health Trusts and other political dignitaries.

The forum agreed to invite Professor Sir Netar Mallick as the chief guest and the invitation was kindly accepted. Sir Netar Mallick is Professor Emeritus of Renal Medicine at Manchester. Professor Sir Mallick is a Medical Director of the National Clinical Excellence awards, he is also the High Sheriff of Greater Manchester and is one of Her Majesty's Deputy Lord Lieutenants of Greater Manchester. Professor Sir Mallick was knighted in 1998 and was recently honoured with a lifetime achievement award by Asian Jewel Awards.

Ravin Shah very successfully liaised with the pharmaceutical and diagnostic companies to arrange the testing of Blood Sugar and Blood Cholesterol. The steering group arranged representatives from the hospital and community sector to exhibit displays and workshops. This also included a range of alternative therapies and blood pressure sessions

The majority of the planning had been completed by January 2004. Specific tasks were allocated to members of the steering group to ensure the smooth running and success of the Health Mela. Improvements were made on car parking, seminar workshops and the layout of the displays to ensure the safety standards and maximum visibility of the exhibitors.

Finance:

The 2004 Health Mela received support from Preston PCT. The final sum received from Preston PCT was £9800 The Community Chest Fund, Sure Start , Pharmaceutical and Diagnostic companies were also approached for their financial support.

Publicity:

Pre-event publicity had been distributed by the secretary to various Health Centres, hospitals, various community centres, mosques, doctors, dentists, opticians and local press.

Publicity Officer Arun Vithlani had also sent press releases to local and national media. We had a good coverage from the local papers – Lancashire Evening Post and Citizen. We also had coverage from the local BBC Radio Lancashire

6: The Event:

The Health Mela was held for one day the 27th March 2004. Approximately 50 organisations and individuals participated in this event. The organisations ranged from Local Acute Trusts, Primary Care Trust, Local Mental Health Trust, Social Services, Age Concern, Lancashire Partnership for Road Safety, and NHS Direct.

Voluntary organisations also attended, such as alcohol and drug services, breast care and Preston HIV support group. Many local health groups were also present, such as Diabetes UK, Multiple Sclerosis, Heart Beat and Incontinence Advisory Service. There was also Complimentary Medicine ranging from acupuncture to homeopathy, Indian head massage and yoga.

Programme:

A spectacular Indian Dance from the young girls of the Gujarat Hindu Society was enjoyed and complimented by all.

Mr. Ashok Khandelwal then started the proceedings by welcoming everyone to this event.

Professor Sir Netar Mallick officially inaugurated the Mela. A welcoming of the dignitaries by garlanding then followed the opening ceremony. This was followed by short speeches from Professor Romesh Gupta, Mr. Brian Booth, Chairman of Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, and the Chairman of Primary Care Trust, Wendy Hogg.

Mr. Ishwer Tailor, President of the Gujarat Hindu Society gave Professor Romesh Gupta a vote of thanks.

The Exhibitions and workshops were very popular. In the morning over 200 children attended a seminar on accident prevention/ road safety and oral hygiene/healthy eating. The seminars were given by Sarifa Kabir, Cheryl Brown and a dental nurse.

The workshops were very popular and well attended. Carol Kubicki introduced the Men's Health Workshop as Preston PCT has also funded Men's Health at the Gujarat Hindu Centre. There was great interest in Men's Health and the future men's health sessions were explained.

The workshops included sessions on diabetes, body hydration, yoga, Reiki, acupuncture, Indian head massage and homeopathy.

Previous experience from the past 2 years allowed the steering group to make adjustments. These changes were implemented to make the Health Mela more successful and to obtain an accurate number of attendances and evaluation.

The Blood sugar/cholesterol checks were again very popular. The Blood pressure sessions were on several stations, which prevented large crowds building up in one area. This also allowed staff to discuss issues on blood pressure with individual members more efficiently.

A total of 600 adults and 200 children attended the 2004 Health Mela. Efficient handling at the entrance allowed an accurate record to be kept and the collection of the evaluation forms was more effective. The participants were from a wide range of communities in all age groups. Although their numbers were small, it was very pleasing to see members from the Muslim and Sikh community. More work needs to be done in this area to encourage other communities to attend.

The children were interested in all the displays. The morning accident prevention and oral hygiene sessions allowed the children to discuss and debate health issues. The balloon man had proved to be very popular amongst the young children and nearly all the children had entered the competition to name the Road Safety Busy Bee. The Lancashire Partnership for Road Safety commented that the children were very well behaved and had shown great interest in naming the Road Safety Busy Bee. Many questions were raised on the wearing of seat belts. The children have all promised to wear their seatbelts at all times when travelling in a vehicle.

7: Acknowledgements:

The Health Forum is extremely grateful and wishes to thank the management team at the Gujarat Hindu Centre for hosting the 2004 Health Mela.

The Health Forum wishes to thank the volunteers and the catering staff for providing their services and for the smooth running of the 2004 Health Mela.

Professor Romesh Gupta, Chairman of Lancashire Gujarat Health Users Forum said, "I am delighted that we are building a strong partnership between the public and the health care organisations towards improving the health of the people of Lancashire. The last two Health Melas have been a great success and following a great demand from the public and the service providers, we are pleased to organise this event once again. I am sure that the third Health Mela will be even a greater success and we would encourage everyone to attend'.

The third Health Mela 2004 was certainly a great success. The success lies upon the planning and management of the Steering Group and co-operation from the Gujarat Hindu Centre. The Health Mela has proved community partnerships can work by involving the public, professionals and volunteer groups.

8: Benefits to the Community:

- The community learns how to improve health and prevent disease by developing skills and knowledge that can help people to stay healthy.
- The community learns the skills that can help people to remain physically fit throughout their lives.
- Attendees can discuss health concerns, identify health problems and, if necessary, community services that can help.
- The community and families can obtain advice on healthy, appealing foods and information on nutrition and diet.
- The community and families can be given information on how to access support and services that can help them develop healthy attitudes and behaviours and prevent or address problems that affect their mental and emotional health.
- The Health Mela will encourage a greater and appropriate use of Health Care Services.
- The Health Mela will develop partnerships between Health Care Users and Health Care Providers.

Special emphasis is being given to:

- Cardiovascular disease
- Hypertension
- Strokes
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- Falls prevention
- Healthy exercise.

Mr. Brian booth, Chairman of Lancashire Teaching hospitals NHS Trust said ‘The many different Health care organisations involved in the Mela will help people to learn more about healthy living. The healthier our life style, the less likely will we need hospital services, which in the long run will help to reduce the ever increasing pressures on the local hospitals’.

9: Conclusions:

It was very pleasing to see a high number of the attendances from the elderly population. The Health Mela addressed issues such as promoting healthy life styles, reducing health risks and increasing quality of life. An aging population often puts a demand on the economic and health service. It is important to expand the participation of older people in all aspects of society. The Health Mela has succeeded in addressing issues, which focus on health promotion, disease prevention and equitable access to quality primary health care, secondary and long term care.

The Health Mela has successfully seen the way forward for the local community. It changes behaviours and attitudes and is a cost effective way of promoting health and preventing disease. Its aim is to provide an enhanced learning environment for the community. With the ongoing success of the Health Mela and the monthly Health Seminars, it may be possible to have a web site with information on health related topics, thereby providing a greater potential for widening health education, and community participation.

Evaluation from attendees, workshops and presentation stands:

From the 2003 Health Mela it was pleasing to see the improvements that were made for the Health Mela 2004 were successful, and contributed to the smooth running of the Mela. The support from the volunteers and the steering group was much appreciated. Increasing on the number of volunteers allowed an accurate record to be kept of the number of attendees and the successful collection of the evaluation forms.

The evaluation forms were informative and showed great enthusiasm from both attendees and exhibitors. The majority had found it enjoyable and informative. Over half the attendees took the opportunity to have a test carried out. The committee has agreed that there is a need to have more stations for blood sugar and cholesterol checks. It may also be advantageous to have blood sugar, blood pressure and blood cholesterol checks at the centre during the summer vacation as there is an increasing demand for the service.

The Health Mela has proved to be a great success, the community has benefited immensely and its success can only mean the Health Mela should continue to be an annual event. The committee will do its utmost to make improvements and provide facilities and the expertise to improve the health and well being of its local population.