

LANCASHIRE GUJARAT HEALTH USERS FORUM

Working towards a healthier community in partnership with
PRESTON Primary Care Trust

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Chairman :- Professor R.C. Gupta
Secretary :- Mr. John Freeman

Gujarat Health Users Forum

Health Mela Report 2006

The 5th Health Mela was organised by the Lancashire Gujarat Health Users Forum in partnerships with

- Preston Primary Care NHS Trust,
- Lancashire Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and
- Gujarat Hindu Cultural Society.

The Health Mela was held at the Gujarat Hindu Cultural Centre, South Meadow Lane, Preston Lancashire on 8th April 2006.

Since its establishment, the Forum has been advising local healthcare commissioners and providers on the health and social needs of the community in particular black and ethnic minority groups. This has enabled the commissioners and providers to make well-informed decisions regarding health care provision. The Forum has gained respect for its work and is officially recognised by Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Preston Primary Care Trust, Voluntary Services and other agencies as a means of partnership working with the black and ethnic minority community. This is the most cost effective way of promoting as well as improving the health and healthy lifestyle of ethnic minority groups. It also serves as a showcase for Asian lifestyle and culture to boost community links.

The ethnic community, particular those from Asian backgrounds are more likely to suffer from “killer”, yet preventable diseases such as coronary artery diseases, strokes, diabetes mellitus, hypertension and chronic renal failure. The access and uptake in preventative measure is poor from these groups.

There are several factors to explain this, including the lack of awareness of health services available to them as well as inappropriateness of the timings and locations of some of the clinics. The people of ethnic minority need to be educated in a non-threatening environment and in a sensitive manner by health care professionals to improve their awareness to health.

The primary vision of the Lancashire Gujarat Health Users Forum is to improve access to health and social services and reduce inequalities.

Health Mela

The Health Mela and seminars are a continuous form of education for the local community in improving their health and life styles. It strengthens the partnerships and alliances with community and professionals and allows a better understanding of the services offered by the health service. It generates a positive climate that influences how the community form relationships, make decisions and develop their 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.

50 organisations and individuals participated in this event. The organisations included:

Local Acute Trusts

Primary Care Trust

Local Mental Health Trust

Social Services

Age Concern

Lancashire Partnership for Road Safety

NHS Direct

Voluntary organisations such as

Alcohol And Drug Services,

Breast Care

Preston HIV Support Group.

Many local health groups such as

Diabetes U K

Multiple Sclerosis

Heart Beat

Incontinence Advisory Service.

There was also Complimentary Medicine ranging from Acupuncture, Homeopathy, Indian Head Massage and Yoga.

Publicity

Craig Noonan, Press Officer at the Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust was responsible for the press releases to the local and national media. We are thankful to the local Trusts and both the Lancashire Evening Post and Citizen for their publicity and coverage of the event. The event had further mention on BBC Radio Lancashire.

Official Opening and Messages by the Chief Guests

Professor Sir Graeme Catto (President of General Medical Council), who opened the event said,
" This is a unique experience. I have not experienced anything of its kind and on this scale in my life. I am pleasantly surprised and impressed to see people from various generations and backgrounds coming to the Mela and taking full advantage of the various health advice and health checks available. "

Professor Romesh Gupta (Chairman of Lancashire Gujarat Health Users Forum) said,
"The Health Mela provides an excellent opportunity to get your health MOT in a friendly and non threatening environment. Not only does it address the health issues but also promotes the social integration."

The Mela has attracted MPs and representatives from various health organisations.

Anna Walker (Chief executive of Healthcare Commission) said,
"I was delighted with this unique initiative and impressed by the partnership between the health professionals and the community... It is an excellent example of good practice and has already surpassed the expectations of recently published White Paper Review."

Following the official opening of the Mela, an open public meeting was organised with the chief guest and was attended by the public and professionals where the role of the General Medical Council was discussed. It was much appreciated by both public and patients and helped to develop an open culture. Sir Graeme appreciated the role of overseas doctors and their commitment to the NHS.

Attendance

A total of 1100 adults and 300 children attended the 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 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.

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 to promote health and prevent disease. Its aim is to provide an enhanced learning environment for the community.

Blood Tests

The blood sugar/cholesterol checks were again very popular. The public were seated in a queue and were happy to wait for their turn. The blood pressure sessions were on several stations, thus preventing large crowds building up in one area. This also allowed staff to discuss issues with individual members more efficiently.

Out of 300 screenings, we found two previously undiagnosed diabetics and 88 had abnormal cholesterol values. The visitors with abnormal cholesterol values were asked to go and see their GPs for further follow up; however, we did suggest altering their life style and diet.

Summary

The 5th Health Mela was certainly a great success. This success relies 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.

The Health Mela has proved community partnerships can work together to bring about enormous long term benefits to the community.

The Lancashire Gujarat Health Users Forum is an excellent and proven model to use as an example of good practice as it allows health professionals to create positive relationships with the community. Other districts have also shown a great interest and have requested support on how similar schemes can be set up in their area. The Forum has already helped the Manchester Asian Community to set up a similar body and they hosted their inaugural Health Mela on the 24th September 2005.

The Lancashire Gujarat Health Users Forum would like other communities to benefit from such a model and would like to disseminate this good practice by helping other organisations and bodies nationally to develop similar initiatives locally. The Forum welcomes any enquiries via its secretary, Mr John Freeman, who can be contacted via email: john@jfutd.wanadoo.co.uk. Further contact details of the Health Forum can also be found on the website www.ghs-health-forum.org.uk

The commitment of the health professionals and the volunteers has allowed the Lancashire Gujarat Health Users Forum to continue successfully and look forward to many more initiatives and partnerships.

Patient and public partnership with the local health care commissioning team and health providers is the key to achieving success. Such empowerment of the public and patient will no doubt improve the relationship and strengthen the partnership between the different stakeholders.

The Lancashire Gujarat Health Forum is dedicated to make future events even more appealing in order to improve the health and well being of its local population.

The Forum would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the success of the Lancashire Gujarat Health Users Forum and the events hosted to date.

Feedback from visitors, workshops and display organisers.

The support from the volunteers and the steering group was much appreciated. Increasing 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.

We had visitors not only from Preston but also from Manchester, Blackburn, Telford and also from London.

Once again, not all evaluation forms were collected. Although the number of visitors attended including children was well over 1300 we had only 422 evaluation forms returned.

80 % Found Health Mela enjoyable

69 % Found Health Mela informative

66 % Found Health Mela well organised

100 % Found exhibitions informative

0 % Found exhibitions uninformative

25 % Found seminars informative

27 % Found cooking demonstration enjoyable

25 % Found exercise enjoyable and fun

65 % Had their blood tested for glucose & cholesterol

35% Did not

86 % Would attend similar events in future

13 % Would probably attend

1 % Would NOT attend

Exhibitors Evaluation.

83 % Found venue VERY satisfactory

17 % Found venue satisfactory

100 % Found display area satisfactory

0 % Found display area inadequate

100 % Visitors attended stands

96% Would come again

4% Probably come again.

Future Suggestions

The committee has discussed the 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 center during the summer vacation, as there is an increasing demand for the service.

Patients and the public have been involved from a very early stage and were asked their views about what information they would find the most useful. Several of the users of the Health Forum are also volunteers at the community centre, which again brought more unity and involvement in the community. The public completed the evaluation forms at each stage of setting up new initiatives and each health seminar and Health Mela. The benefits were explained to them and competitions were also run to encourage more feedback.

Partnership with Preston Primary Care Centre, Lancashire Teaching Hospitals, Lancashire County Council, Adult Learning, Police, Voluntary Services and the Health Mela partners can make an impact on health improvement - strengthening partnerships so that everybody feels they have made a difference. Patients and the public feel empowered and engaged and have increasing trust in health care professionals by having services explained to them in their own environment.

The professional organisations contributed their time, expertise and financial support. Over the past two years, both Preston Primary Care Trust and Lancashire Teaching Hospitals have provided financial support along with the pharmaceutical and volunteer organisations. The professional organisations have also submitted their evaluations of the health seminars and the Health Mela, making valuable suggestions and giving us a clear understanding of what is desired by the public for making the greatest impact towards improving their health.

The volunteers have been invaluable in the running of the Health Mela and assisting in the safety of the visitors from the time they arrive to the time they leave the centre. Their skills were used to control traffic, the car parks and the safe parking of the cars. Every visitor to the Mela was registered at the entrance to ensure their attendance and for fire safety purposes. The volunteers helped to organise refreshments for over a thousand visitors. They also ensured that the feedback evaluation forms were completed and collected from all to help improve the Mela next time. The joint working of the professionals, volunteers and the committee members allowed improvements to be made on the organisation of the Health Mela and the health seminars.

Accounts

Accounts for Lancashire Gujarat Health Users Forum and Health Mela – 2005/2006.

| Expenditure | £ | Income | £ |
|--|----------------|--|----------------|
| Cost of hire of hall, meetings, publicity, advertising and monthly health seminars | 4500.00 | Donation from Preston Primary Care Trust | 6,000.00 |
| Food and refreshments for 300 people @ £4/head | 1,200.00 | Donation from Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS | 5,000.00 |
| Administration support through Preston CVS | 1,249.00 | Foundation Trust Booklet income | 800 |
| Leaflets and poster design | 275.00 | | |
| Booklet | 1390 | | |
| Promotional bags and Health Mela banner | 2,158.00 | | |
| Visit by Health Care | | | |
| Commission – Mrs A Walker | 335.00 | | |
| Total | 11107.2 | Total | 11800 |
| | | Balance for 2005/2006 | £692.80 |