



Case Study

Community Outreach
and Public Health
Improvements

Lancashire Gujarat Health Users Forum &
Royal Preston Hospital Pathology
Department

Preston Health Mela: a successful and replicable model for community health and wellbeing

Mela is a Sanskrit word meaning gathering or fair. In 2002 the Lancashire Gujarat Society, working with health professionals from Royal Preston Hospital, held their first Health Mela. They wanted a fun community event that would allow them to meet with members of the south Asian community to explore health issues and encourage greater and appropriate use of health care services. The Preston Health Mela has grown in size each year and is now an established annual event. 2013 saw the twelfth Mela in Preston and the model is being replicated in Bradford, Bolton, Chorley, Leyland and Blackpool.

What was the issue being addressed?

Initially, Professor Romesh Gupta, (Chair of the Lancashire Gujarat Health Users Forum), wanted a model to involve members of the south Asian community to explore health issues with health professionals. It was thought due to cultural and language barriers members of the community were not accessing the most appropriate health care for their needs. In particular that a traditional diet high in sugars and fat could be leaving the community with an increased risk with little professional support to offer advice and how to improve health.

What action was taken to overcome the issue?

The first Health Mela took place in 2002 in the Gujarat Hindu Temple in Preston's city centre. Residents could have their blood glucose and

cholesterol levels tested and received their results on the day, with advice to see their General Practitioner if the results were outside normal ranges.



Blood glucose and cholesterol checks

What was the impact?

Each year the event has grown in terms of the number of people attending and the number of people receiving health checks and advice. The quality of the service of the health checks has also developed. In 2013 1,781 visitors took time to



register their entry and 247 took advantage of having a free health check.

Lessons learned

An event of this size, relying on volunteers and a partnership approach requires a single point of contact to organise the event. Ravindra Shah is the event Co-ordinator. The partners include the Gujarat Hindu Society, 'Blood Drop Team' from Lancashire Teaching Hospitals, Doctors and medical students from the University of Manchester Health Olympics Team, Local councils, third sector organisations such as the Rotary club and private sector such as Roche.

"The energy and commitment of everyone involved in the Mela was plain to see. Raising awareness about how we can take control of our health and wellbeing is a really important issue in the UK today - the Mela manages to do this, while being fun and relaxed too".

Paul Buckley, Director of Education and Standards, General Medical Council

Success factors

Dr Martin Myers and Biomedical Scientists from Royal Preston's Pathology Department volunteer their time to help organise and attend the Mela. They are known as the 'Blood Drop Team'. Their involvement is essential to allow visitors to get their blood test results on the day; within five minutes from having their finger pricked they receive their blood glucose and

cholesterol levels. To produce this standard of service Martin employs the 'Laboratory anywhere model'.



A member of the 'Blood Drop Team'



Trying out a new activity at one of the stalls

The Health Olympics team collates measures of height, weight, blood pressure, health survey answers and blood test results collected on the day to offer visitors life style coaching. Any visitor identified as being an 'at risk' patient receives specific advice, new diabetics get immediate medical consultations and all results get copied to the patient's GP.

The Preston Blood Drop Team acts as a 'buddy' for neighbouring pathology departments; this involves travelling to and coaching them through their first event. This approach has been successful in Bradford, Bolton and Blackpool.

Professor Romesh Gupta is developing the Lancashire Gujarat Health Users Forum into the National Forum for Health and Wellbeing in order to further develop cross sector working. Further information is available on their [website](#)

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