Integrated Health Promotion is making a difference

A practical example:

Active Mums Active Kids

The ‘Active Mums Active Kids’ project is an initiative of Central Bayside Community Health Services in partnership with Kingston Council’s Maternal and Child Health Service. It focuses on mums with young children and attempts to address barriers to participating in physical activity (PA) for this population group.

Rationale for the project

Research indicates that parenthood is a major contributing factor to reduced PA levels in women with the greatest impact occurring when they become first time mothers. Supporting evidence also suggests there is a strong correlation between a parent’s level of PA and their children's activity levels with active parents being more likely to encourage their children to be physically active.

Goal:

To increase the levels of PA among women with young children in the Carrum/Chelsea area

Objectives of the project:

- By 2007 identify issues and barriers that influence participation in PA for mothers with young children
- By 2008 address a minimum of four barriers to PA identified by those participating in the project
- By 2008, increase the levels of participation in PA to meet the national guidelines in 80% of those participating in the project
- By 2006, to develop partnerships with relevant local agencies, to assist in increasing the PA participation levels of women in the population group

Stakeholders:

Mums with young children in the Carrum / Chelsea area
Central Bayside Community Health Services
Kingston Maternal and Child Health Service
City of Kingston Leisure and Planning
Victorian State Government
Local sporting clubs
Wider Carrum / Chelsea community

What has the integrated health promotion response been?

Central Bayside Community Health Services established a PA working group as part of its IHP plan. The first task was to identify a population group. This was done by researching existing literature and programs to identify good practice in health promotion. Research indicated that 50% of women are physically inactive and many women with young children are not meeting adequate levels of PA to maintain good health. One out of three children walk only five minutes per day (VicHealth 2005) and childhood obesity is on the rise. Parents are significant role models for their children in relation to partaking in PA (Steinbeck K, 2005). Once the target population of mothers with young children was decided on:

- A partnership was established with City of Kingston Maternal and Child Health Services and Leisure and Planning and community groups.
- A consultation strategy was developed with two focus groups established, a young mums group whose ages ranged from 17 -22yrs, who lived in the Chelsea area and received the supporting parents benefit (low income) and a number of new mothers attending the Carrum maternal and child health service. Carrum was identified as having pockets of low income families and a maternal and child health nurse who was keen to participate in the project.
- Surveys found that only 24% of these participants met the national guidelines for PA. 58% stated that they had discontinued PA since having children.
- Barriers to PA were also identified through the survey and focus groups.
- Barriers to participating in PA included: lack of motivation, childcare availability and affordability, cost, lack of knowledge (breastfeeding and PA, safe return to PA postnatally, PA guidelines for adults and children and local resources), environmental factors, body image and partner support.
- An information brochure was developed to address the barrier of lack of knowledge. This brochure is now given to every

mum attending Maternal and Child Health new mums groups in the City of Kingston

- ‘Come and Try’ PA sessions were provided to encourage mothers to participate in a range of physical activities that are available in their local area. These sessions, along with a regular newsletter helped to keep mums engaged. Central Bayside Community Health Service currently have over 60 mums on their mailing list, with many of the original mums still actively involved in the project 3 years on.
- 2 Pram Stroll events
- Successfully applied for a grant for adult outdoor gym equipment through the Victorian State Government’s Community Facility Funding Program. Combined with additional funding from the City of Kingston, the gym equipment has now been installed. This was an idea that came from the focus groups and was also supported by local sporting clubs. It is located within Roy Dore Reserve, adjacent to the existing children’s playground and the Carrum Maternal and Child Health Centre. The installation of the outdoor gym equipment will allow mums to be active without the cost of childcare or a gym membership, addressing the barriers to PA raised by the mums. They will also be role models for their children by being active whilst the children play in the adjacent playground. A launch of the gym equipment was held on May 3rd 2008 with over 100 community members attending. Central Bayside Community Health Services will provide a personal trainer who will run PA sessions utilising the equipment for mums who have been involved in the project and for every subsequent new mums group at Carrum Maternal and Child Health Centre.
- Kingston Maternal and Child Health is now actively promoting the importance and benefits of PA. Returning to PA is discussed at the 6 week visit, the Active Mums Active Kids brochure is distributed across the city of Kingston and new mums at Carrum and Chelsea will have access to a personal trainer during their 5th or 6th week visit to learn how to use the outdoor adult gym equipment correctly. Maternal and Child Health Nurses at Chelsea and Carrum centres will also be taught how to use the equipment for long term sustainability.

Evaluation

- 34 written surveys were completed and 24 mums with young children participated in focus groups to determine the mums'

pre project PA levels and identify their barriers to participating in PA.

- A further survey has been completed to determine the mums' PA levels prior to the installation of the gym equipment and sessions with a personal trainer. This will be followed up with a post survey to determine if PA levels have been increased.
- The mums' knowledge around breastfeeding and PA, safe return to PA postnatally and PA guidelines for adults and children were evaluated by using another survey. A control group and a new mums group who had been given the brochure as part of their 6 week visit were surveyed.
- Use of the gym equipment is currently being evaluated by documenting observation of its use over at least a month long period of time, 4 times per day including weekends. Weather is being noted as is the number of people using the equipment, their sex, estimated age range and if there are families.
- Partnerships have been evaluated using the VicHealth Partnerships Analysis Tool
- Anecdotal information indicates increased social connectedness for many of the mothers participating.

What are the impacts?

- A successful collaborative partnership has been developed
- Some barriers to PA for mums with young children have been identified and addressed
- Mothers who have read the Active Mums Active Kids brochure have a greater knowledge and understanding of the recommended levels of PA for adults and the recommendations for mothers returning to PA postnatally.
- Outdoor adult gym equipment offers mums with young children and the wider Carrum and Chelsea community a way of being physically active without cost. Being alongside a children’s playground, it enables mothers and fathers to be positive role models for their children
- Mums attending Chelsea and Carrum Maternal and Child Health Centres will have access to a personal trainer so they can learn how to use the equipment correctly and being active in a group setting helps motivation.
- Socialisation opportunities for new mothers have been increased
- PA is now being actively promoted at all Kingston Maternal and Child Health Centres and is part of core business.

What's next?

- Complete the comprehensive evaluation of the project
- Achieve our goal of increasing the PA levels of mums with young children in the Carrum / Chelsea area
- Continue partnerships
- Look at other groups such as older adults in the Carrum / Chelsea area who could benefit from using the adult outdoor gym equipment
- Write the project up formally as a pilot program so that it can be replicated elsewhere.

Further information

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References

- National Physical Activity Guidelines (Commonwealth of Australia 1999)
- Mortensen, K. Exercise and Breastfeeding. Lactation Resource Centre 2002; 9: 1-4
- Steinbeck, K. Childhood obesity. Treatment options. Best practice and research. Clinical endocrinology and metabolism. 2005; 19: 455 – 69
- City of Kingston, 2002, 'Women's Participation In Sport Study'
- City of Kingston identified women as a population group with low participation rates
- Moodie, R. Hulme, A. 'Hands on Health Promotion' 2004
- Physical inactivity is seen as the second most important public health problem in Australia
- VicHealth, 2005, 'A Growing Concern - Families and Activity' Issue No 24 "Mothers who were more active tended to have children who were more active."
- Bauman A, Bellew B, Vita P, Brown W, Owen N., 2002, 'Getting Australia active: towards better practice for the promotion of physical activity. National Public Health Partnership. Melbourne Australia
- International recommendations for best practice in interventions – suggest family involvement. Encourage parents and guardians to support their children's participation in physical activity and to be physically-active role models and to include physical activity in family events.

- Provide information to parents on strategies to involve children in more active recreation
- Department of Human Services, 2004, ‘Planning for Healthy Communities’ Melbourne Australia
- Who is most inactive in Australia? Women who have children under school age, married women and those over 30years of age.
- NSW Department of Health 2003 ‘ProActive Mums: Promoting Physical Activity through Child Care Centres: A Randomised Controlled Trial’ Summary Report’ Sydney Australia
    - To deal with inflexible demands of childcare access to local physical activity facilities should be provided
    - Strategies for the promotion of physical activity should occur within a social or community context
    - Aim to address the constraints to being physically active for mothers with young children, such as costs, childcare, time and transport.