

## **Integrated health promotion is making a difference.....**

A practical example:

### **Portland District Health & Southern Grampians Glenelg PCP: Towards a Healthy Heart**

'Towards a Healthy Heart' is a structured primary prevention program to address the risk factors for heart disease in 'hard to reach men', with the aim of reducing the total risk factors for heart disease for men within the high-risk age group of 30-60 years blue collar / industrial organisations in Portland, Victoria.

Portland District Health and Southern Grampians Glenelg Primary Care Partnership initiated the program idea. Funding and advice for the initial pilot was provided through the Southern Grampians Glenelg Primary Care Partnership which was run by Portland District Health and involved 16 participants.

Stakeholders of the program include:

- Southern Grampians Glenelg Primary Care Partnership
- Portland YMCA
- Portland Physiotherapy Centre
- Portland District Health
- Portland Leisure and Aquatic Centre
- St John of God Pathology
- Portland RSL Memorial Bowling Club
- Portland Squash and Racquetball Club
- Portland Hockey Club
- Portland Indoor Cricket Centre
- Local Portland GPs
- Monash University
- William Buckland Foundation
- Glenelg Shire Council
- Portland Aluminium
- Port of Portland
- Incitec Pivot
- Graincorp
- Fechner Engineering

### **What has been the integrated health promotion response?**

Strategies and Interventions Used:

1. Promote risk factor reduction for heart disease in men aged 30 to 60 through the provision of a structured heart health program
2. Link health, industry and sport together (stakeholders listed above) when working to improve the health of men aged 30 to 60 living and working within Portland Victoria and the surrounding Districts.
3. Develop and promote a model for working with rural men around reducing the risk of heart disease, particularly hard to reach men working in blue collar / industrial organisations.

Towards a Healthy Heart builds on the lessons learned from similar programs like Gut Busters , Waistaway , Quit Fresh Start and Food for Thought . Tackling the major risk factors for heart disease as outlined by the National Heart Foundation's, Towards a Healthy Heart is unique in that it links partners in health, sport, industry and local government to bring about sustained change in this hard to reach group. The program consists of four risk factor assessments (pre, post, 6 months and 12 months), twelve weeks of group education, weekly physical activity sessions at local sporting facilities and fitness centres, and individualised health coaching (where necessary) to promote behaviour change.

### **Collaboration, and an inter-sectoral approach**

It was important from the projects conception that a key stakeholder committee be developed to drive the program's development, pilot and evaluation. This committee involved representatives from health, sport, local government, industry and consumers. Due to the large nature of the physical activity component, the actual running of the physical activity was shared between 8 local sporting facilities. This process has developed further partnerships between health and sport and enabled connections to be made to promote sustainability for participants to become regularly active.

One key success component of the program has been the consultation with the implementing industry organisations. Each organisation supported the program not only through access to employees, but through enabling the program to occur in work time with no penalties to employees.

### **Consumer and community participation**

Consumer participation occurred in two important ways. The first was through involvement in the stakeholder committee, the second was through the program itself. It was important to establish joint ownership of the program from its conception. This occurred through Portland District Health's drive and development of the program, the industries support of the program through access to employees but most importantly each participant had to commit to a significant amount of time outside of work to take part in the program. The split was equal between employer and employee time.

### **What are the impacts?**

Ninety men working in five different industries took part in the program; seventy three remained after three months. The results to date indicate (pre compared to post program results) that twelve weeks of education coupled with planned weekly physical, support and health coaching can bring about a reduction in blood cholesterol (8% reduction), blood glucose (3% reduction), blood pressure (10% reduction), weight (4% reduction), BMI, waist measurements (between 0.1 and 4.2cm reduction), lessen the effects of depression and anxiety and improve healthy eating (27% improvement in nutrition scores). Alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking can also be reduced and/or ceased. Education coupled with 10 weeks of physical activity in some participant doubles physical activity rates (200-400 minutes per week pre program to 500 – 800 minutes per week post program). Sustainability is currently being measure with 6 month and 12 month post program data being collected and analysed, and available in late 2007.

What is further important to note is that 27% of the participants when entering the program did not have a registered general practitioner and approximately 30% had not visited their general practitioner in the last 2 years.

Self report and anecdotal evidence further indicates that the program connects employees, provides social supports, reduces work place stress and promotes organisational change around health and health promotion.

## What's next?

- 6 and 12 month program evaluation
- Sharing lessons learned and ongoing collaboration:
  - Engaging men in the workplace facilitates ongoing connections
  - Men are more competitive than women so group programs that help to facilitate positive competition are effective
  - Workplace programs assist to build teams and provide mateship
  - Workplaces with closer connections showed greater individual differences
  - Once engaged, workplaces requested further health promotion programs to improve health (Quit program, alcohol, stress)
  - Employee and employer contributions help to share responsibility for the health of individuals

## Further information

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