

Empowering Pasifika youth to be health advocacy leaders

Developing effective community-centred interventions for preventing type 2 diabetes

This project developed a collaborative partnership between researchers and two Pasifika communities to empower youth to co-design, deliver and evaluate an 8-week health intervention.

The study's focus on the potential of youth advocacy, and using a community-centred approach, successfully improved factors that predispose people to developing type 2 diabetes.

Why was the study needed?

There is a high prevalence of prediabetes and type 2 diabetes among working age-groups of Pasifika (18 – 45 years), with more than 15% of Pacific Peoples living in Aotearoa New Zealand reported to have type 2 diabetes in 2018.

Effective interventions can prevent progression of prediabetes to type 2 diabetes, and research has shown that culturally-centred health interventions, led by the community, are more likely to be effective.

The research team had previously developed a pilot programme for building the capacity of the Pasifika community to enact change, and the study put this knowledge into practice.

Type 2 diabetes is a progressive condition resulting in serious complications including heart disease, stroke, blindness and limb amputations.

Prediabetes is an intermediate phase in the development of type 2 diabetes and a period in which interventions could be targeted for preventing progression to type 2 diabetes.

What did we achieve?

- Pacific youth were trained to become leaders for health advocacy in their communities by undertaking a youth empowerment programme.
- Youth used the new knowledge and skills acquired through this programme to co-design, deliver and evaluate a health intervention alongside university and community-based researchers.
- Pacific youth mobilised their community, resulting in high retention of participants in the health intervention.
- Participants showed statistically significant improvements in several key health parameters, even though the intervention only ran for a short period.
- After the study, some youth went on to independently design and implement new health interventions in their community.

PROJECT TIMELINE

October 2017 – September 2020

LEAD RESEARCHER

Dr Ridvan Tupai-Firestone
Massey University

PARTNERS

South Waikato Pacific Islands Community Services (SWPICS)
The Fono Health and Social Services



What did we do?

University researchers developed relationships with two Pacific community-based health service providers: SWPICS in Tokoroa, and The Fono in Henderson, West Auckland.

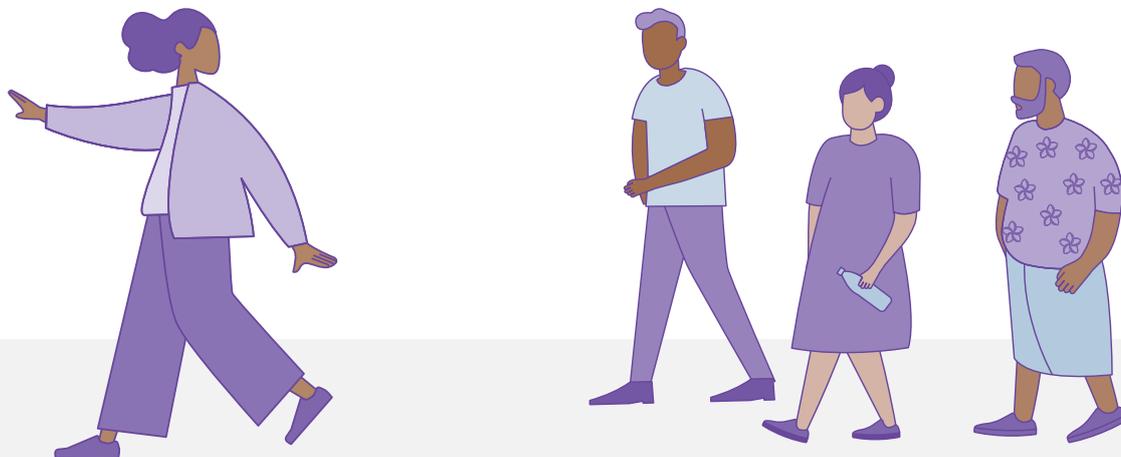
Researchers jointly delivered youth empowerment programmes in each community which enabled youth with leadership potential to:

- learn about the factors that can predispose people to prediabetes, using Pasifika models of health and mental wellbeing
- acquire the skills to co-design effective interventions for prediabetes.

Interventions with a focus on improving physical activity and health literacy among working-age Pacific adults at risk of prediabetes were co-designed by youth in each location. Youth then recruited community members to take part in the intervention.

The interventions were co-delivered by university and community-based researchers, and data were collected by Pacific youth involved in the programme.

Evaluations of both the youth empowerment programme and the health interventions were undertaken using questionnaires and interviews of youth, community partners and intervention participants.



Selected publications

Pasifika prediabetes youth empowerment programme: evaluating a co-designed community-based intervention from a participants' perspective *Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences* 2021; 16:1. doi:10.1080/1177083X.2021.1876743

Pasifika Prediabetes Youth Empowerment Programme: learnings from a youth-led community-based intervention study *New Zealand Medical Journal* 2021; Feb 19;134(1530).

The Long-Term Conditions Partnership

The New Zealand Ministry of Health, Health Research Council of New Zealand and Healthier Lives–He Oranga Hauora National Science Challenge entered a three-way partnership in 2016 to invest in research aimed at improving long-term health conditions.

More information about this study and the Long-Term Conditions Partnership is available at: <http://healthierlives.co.nz>

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What did we find?

The youth empowerment programmes were well received and were scored highly by the 29 youth who completed the module evaluations.

Adult participants in the co-designed health interventions showed an overall 2.4% decrease in body weight over 8 weeks. There was also a decrease in waist circumference (1.6%) and an increase in the average number of daily steps taken following the intervention.

There was a high retention of intervention participants (81% completed; 26 out of 32) which was attributed to the youth and community facilitators' close connections with participants.

Evaluations showed the importance of trust and reciprocity in community partnerships, the capacity and capability of youth advocacy, and the importance of a community-centred and culturally-relevant approach to health interventions.

What did we learn?

It is recommended that researchers developing community-centred interventions work closely with Indigenous and minority communities and consider a co-designed approach, enabling community representatives to take on equal roles as decision-makers in the research.