



# e-newsletter

The latest in DHBRF news and information

**Issue 22**

**October 2008**

## Research Theme

### Improving Nutrition, Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Obesity

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#### 1. Introduction

The prevalence of overweight and obesity is increasing worldwide, and New Zealand is no exception. In 2006/7 it was found that one in three adults was overweight and a further one in four adults was obese in NZ. Obesity is a major risk factor for chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension and even some types of cancer.

A significant contributing factor to recent increases in obesity is the environment, with

increased availability of energy dense foods and decreased energy expenditure required in many modern occupational and recreational activities. Active awareness of nutritional requirements and benefits of physical activity are key to maintaining a healthy body weight. Improving the nutritional value of our diet and increasing the level of physical activity has many health benefits.



The Ministry of Health strategy to improve nutrition, increase physical activity and achieve healthy weight for all New Zealanders is the Healthy Eating – Healthy Action (HEHA) strategy. Prioritising research in these areas is vital for the treatment and management of health, but most importantly for prevention of health conditions developed as a direct result of neglecting nutrition, physical activity and body weight.

The DHBRF Governance Group recently released a [Translational Research Request for Proposals](#) with the objective of reducing the incidence or impact of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity. It is anticipated that this will fund 10-20 small-scale projects, with findings that can be quickly disseminated through the Health Sector. DHBs and Primary Care Providers are encouraged to undertake and lead the research.

In this issue of the DHBRF e-news the key messages of the Healthy Eating – Healthy Action strategy are highlighted and an important conference on this topic, to be held early in November, is identified.

A fascinating and passionate contribution has been made by Dr Ihirangi Heke, of the University of Otago. A sports psychologist, Ihi is addressing the issue of physical activity in a very practical sense, with Ngati Porou Hauora. His segment details some of the innovative ways health and wellbeing are being tailored to a specific population. Also included in this issue is a profile of an HRC funded research project identifying a link between obesity and anxiety disorders.

A list of publications by HRC funded researchers in the areas of obesity, nutrition and physical activity is also included for download, along with some useful website links.

Next month's DHBRF e-news is on the theme of **Minimising harm caused by alcohol and illicit and other drug use to both individuals and the community**. Please email [ahaggie@hrc.govt.nz](mailto:ahaggie@hrc.govt.nz) if you have any contributions on this topic that may be of interest to newsletter readers.

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## 2. HEHA Key Messages

The Healthy Eating – Healthy Action Strategy **vision** is:

***“An environment and society where individuals, families and whanau, and communities are supported to eat well, live physically active lives, and attain and maintain a healthy body weight”.***

There are a set of **Key messages** defined for the HEHA Strategy, which makes this strategy broader than it may initially appear. These Messages are:

- Eat a variety of nutritious foods
- Eat less fatty, salty, sugary foods
- Eat more vegetables and fruit
- Fully breastfeed infants for at least six months
- Be active every day for at least 30 minutes in as many ways as possible
- Add some vigorous exercise for extra benefit and fitness
- Aim to maintain a healthy weight throughout life
- Promote and foster the development of environments that support healthy lifestyles

There are a number of high profile campaigns in place to target several of these priorities, such as the [National Breastfeeding Promotion](#) and [Push Play](#) Campaigns.

These themes incorporate fantastic ways to improve



overall general health and wellbeing and promote prevention of poor health

throughout life.




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### 3. "Whenua Rediscovery versus Traditional Maori Sport": What Works Best for Physical Activity Promotion on the East Coast

Dr Ihirangi Heke (Waikato) found health research by a circuitous route, with training in Outdoor Adventure Counselling, Maori Studies, Education, Educational Psychology, Athlete Career Education and finally a PhD in Sport Psychology. Ihi has worked in health and physical education in various global locations including Canada, America, the Middle East, Australia and Hawaii. He recently returned to NZ in 2008 to the small East Coast town of Uawa/Tolaga Bay to work with Ngati Porou Hauora as a sport and exercise psychologist in a preventative role addressing health issues on the East Coast.



Dr Ihirangi Heke

In this issue of the DHBRF enews Ihi Heke describes how he was told to “find out what will get our people moving again and write about it”. This has involved the formation of whenua rediscovery via an informal mountain running and biking club, reintroduction of traditional games like Ki o Rahi and carrying out elite high performance sport interventions. These different approaches allow a comparative study opportunity to research what might work best in Maori communities in terms of traditional versus contemporary versus elite exercise recruitment.

Download Ihi Heke’s full article [here](#).

#### 4. Connection Found Between Obesity and Anxiety Disorders

An HRC funded study involving nearly 13000 New Zealanders has shown for the first time a strong link between specific anxiety disorders and obesity. Researchers from the University of Otago, Wellington, collected data as part of Te Rau Hinengaro: the New Zealand Mental Health Survey. Clear links have been shown between obesity and some anxiety disorders such as post traumatic stress disorders (PTSD), some of the phobias (irrational fears) and also to a lesser degree with depression.

Lead investigator Dr Kate Scott said the findings do not prove that mental health disorders cause obesity, but poor mental health could make it hard for people to resist pressures of ‘emotional eating’. “Anxiety and stress can disregulate people’s eating and they can overeat to deal with or distract themselves from an anxious state,” she said. “If that happens on a regular basis, they will put on weight.”



Download the full article [here](#).

#### 5. Auckland Nutrition Research Network

An example of the significance that nutrition plays in current health issues is highlighted

with the establishment of a new Auckland-based collaborative group. Researchers at the University of Auckland Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, the Department of Nutrition Services at Auckland Hospital and the Auckland District Health Board are in the process of establishing the Auckland Nutrition Research Network (ANRN).

It is proposed that the ANRN will reach out to all individuals with a professional interest in nutrition, and will provide a forum for the presentation of research, professional networking and for the discussion of a broad range of nutritional issues.

The formation of the ANRN is currently in progress with the inaugural meeting scheduled for 29 October. For further details please contact Dr Clare Wall on (09) 3737 599 extension 89875 or [c.wall@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:c.wall@auckland.ac.nz).

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## 6. Healthy Eating - Healthy Action: HEHA Conference

The HEHA Conference is scheduled to take place in Auckland on 3-4 November 2008. The theme is **HEHA Research, Evaluation and Monitoring 'What's happening in our backyard?'**

The conference will explore what works to improve nutrition, increase physical activity and reduce obesity within New Zealand and share in the great research and evaluation being undertaken, including profiles of Ministry-funded research and evaluation and provide a valuable networking opportunity for the sector.



View the [conference outline](#), and visit the [conference website](#) for further information.

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## 7. Recent Publications by New Zealand Researchers

New Zealand has an excellent track record in producing research results for presentation in international journals. Some recent publications from HRC funded researchers in the areas of nutrition, obesity and physical activity that may be relevant to DHB core business have been highlighted for [download here](#).

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## 8. Useful Links

Some websites of interest in the area of **Improving Nutrition, Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Obesity** include:

[New Zealand Health Strategy DHB Toolkits](#)

[Ministry of Health HEHA website](#) (with link to HEHA strategy documents)

[HEHA conference](#)

[SPARC](#)

[Push Play](#)

[Mission On](#)

[Active Smart](#)

[Agencies for Nutrition Action](#)

[Feeding our Futures](#)

[Fight the Obesity Epidemic](#)

[National Breastfeeding Promotion Campaign](#)

[New Zealand Breastfeeding Authority](#)

**[Ministry of Health: Health Targets: Improving Nutrition, Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Obesity](#)** – including progress made in 2007/08:

View more information on progress in 2007/08, including graphs, on the [Improving Nutrition, Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Obesity Quarterly Reports page](#).

Specific information on each DHB's progress towards their local targets is provided on their individual pages. You can access them on the [Targets by DHB page](#).

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## 9 . Next DHBRF e-newsletter:

The next issue of the DHBRF e-newsletter will focus on the theme of **Minimising harm caused by alcohol and illicit and other drug use to both individuals and the community**. If you have a proposed newsletter item relevant to this theme please email [ahaggie@hrc.govt.nz](mailto:ahaggie@hrc.govt.nz)

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## 10. About the purpose of the DHBRF e-newsletter:

- Provide DHBs with information relevant to DHB core business i.e. funding and planning activities
- Identify research that could inform planning for public health services
- Identify less relevant research which may have more of a biomedical focus
- Monthly communications focus on one of the priority population health goals as outlined in the New Zealand Health Strategy
- Information is taken from an annual HRC report identifying publications produced by New Zealand research teams or funded by the HRC between May 2005 – June 2006

**Information included represents highlights of findings of high-quality research, readily available at the time of writing**

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#### 11 . [Subscribe/unsubscribe](#)

To subscribe or unsubscribe, send an e-mail containing your title, name, job title, organisation, mailing address, phone and fax number, with the subject line "Subscribe DHB eNewsletter" or "Unsubscribe DHB eNewsletter" to [jlawson@hrc.govt.nz](mailto:jlawson@hrc.govt.nz).

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#### 12 . [Contact Us:](#)

To contact us telephone Aroha Haggie at the HRC on (09) 303 5207 or email: [ahaggie@hrc.govt.nz](mailto:ahaggie@hrc.govt.nz)

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Check out the HRC's website on [www.hrc.govt.nz](http://www.hrc.govt.nz)