

Queensland Pasifika Women's Health Forum 2014

By Heena Akbar, Queensland University of Technology

Queensland University of Technology (QUT) played a major role in the Pasifika Women's Health Forum held at the Chermiside-Kedron Community (Uniting) Church on Friday 29 August 2014. Ms Heena Akbar, a Pacific Islander PhD student in the Faculty of Health, coordinated this second community forum in partnership with Diabetes Queensland and with other members of the Pasifika Women's Alliance Inc. (PWA), a community organisation whose aims include improving the health and wellbeing of the women from Pacific Island communities in Queensland.

The community forum began with a traditional welcome of songs and prayers. Ms Inez Manu-Sione, President of PWA, then led invited guests including: Hon Tracy Davis MP, Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services; Ms Michelle Trute, Chief Executive Officer; Diabetes Queensland; Professor Debra Anderson, Director of Research, School of Nursing; and Associate Professor Danielle Gallegos, School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences into the hall.



Salome Swan (PWA), Ms Michelle Trute, CEO Diabetes Queensland, Hon Tracy Davies, Associate Professor Danielle Gallegos (QUT), Professor Debra Anderson (QUT)

Over 90 women representing the Pacific Island communities in Queensland attended the forum. The aim of this community forum was to provide diabetes information sessions, specifically on healthy eating, nutrition, exercise and managing diabetes, health checks, a health survey and activities promoting diabetes awareness in the community. QUT School of Nursing and Nutrition students together with Diabetes Queensland undertook health checks and diabetes screening assessments.

Women heard how type 2 diabetes is amongst the highest for Pacific Island communities, with Pacific Islander women being over-represented. The latest report from Queensland Health 2009 on Pacific Islanders provided evidence that diabetes incidence, hospitalisations and deaths from diabetes are on the rise. Pacific Islanders in Queensland are two to four times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes. In addition, women from Pacific Island communities are three to four times more at risk of mortality from type 2 diabetes.

Ms Akbar, whose PhD topic is '*Social and cultural context of managing type 2 diabetes of Pacific Islander women living in Queensland*', believes strongly in a participatory action approach with regard to informing and enlisting Pacific Island women to take responsibility for the management of their diabetes and points to the forum as a great example of where the community have worked together with government and non-government organisations to promote better health. If you would like more information about the project, please contact Heena on h.akbar@qut.edu.au



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