

Feedback for residents: Promoting Healthy Lifestyles in IRT Self Care Communities

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Project aims

In partnership with IRT and the Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute (IHMRI), the Centre for Health Initiatives (CHI) conducted a ‘demonstration project’ in 2011 within three IRT residential communities in the Illawarra. The project aimed to:

- provide residents with health information to highlight their personal health risks and opportunities for health status and quality of life improvement.

What we did

The research incorporated four key stages:

1. **Focus groups with residents** in the three communities to identify perceived existing ‘health promoting’ features and resources in their resident communities

2. **Baseline Health Risk Assessment (HRA)** and assessment of health status and quality of life in the communities. Two hundred and twenty-six envelopes containing the study surveys were posted into resident letterboxes at three IRT villages. Resident identities were coded on addresses, in order to maintain anonymity. We then compared each individual’s health behaviours against current guidelines for health indicators and behaviours from government health authorities, and behaviours for each individual into four categories:

1. Recommend immediate action
2. Think about action
3. No action required
4. Unable to determine



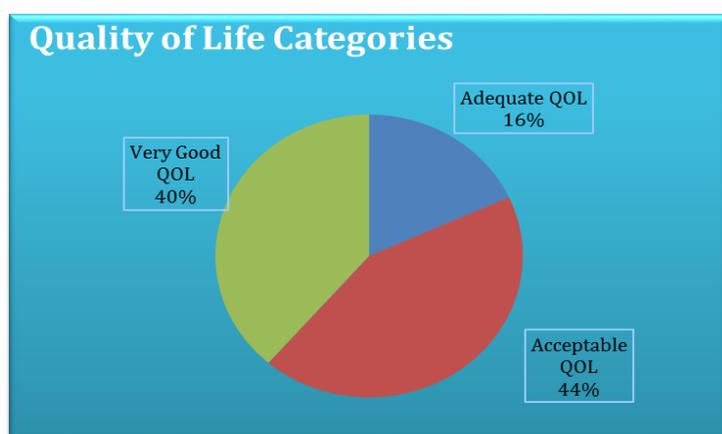
3. A **healthy lifestyle intervention** which gave personal feedback and health information based on data from each resident’s Health Risk Assessment compared to health guidelines. Participants were then asked to prioritise an area of action and set a goal for the three month intervention period.

4. An **evaluation** of the healthy lifestyle intervention – asking people what they thought of the feedback and health information and whether they had changed any of their health behaviours as a result. Surveys were returned from 39 residents.

What we found

Pre-intervention

Overall, residents perceived their health levels as acceptable to good, with reported above average functional health and well-being for all categories of the health survey except for general health, which was only slightly lower than average. However, the majority of residents did appear to have areas of health status/behaviour which would benefit from action. Many people were also advised to address health behaviours for the early detection of health conditions.



Post-intervention

The majority of people involved in the research (who returned their surveys) viewed the individual health information and brochures positively, with both types of health information appearing similar in terms of motivating intentions or actions to improve health behaviours. Seventeen people stated the health brochures motivated them to take actions to improve their health, and 12 participants developed a personal health goal to work towards.

A number of improvements were noted in the health behaviours of participants in all communities after the intervention; however the low number of returned surveys means that this did not reach statistical significance (this means we

cannot guarantee that these results occurred as a result of the intervention, and were not just by chance).

Findings do suggest that some of the residents involved in the project have received a benefit from the health feedback and information that was provided to them. However, some participants felt they were not able to describe their limitations adequately through the HRA and were therefore given feedback which they felt they were unable to act on. It is noted that a number of individuals were further intending to change behaviours in a number of areas related to weight, fat intake and physical activity.

Individual comments about the research by participants

The program received many positive and negative comments and recommendations that will be incorporated to improve any future work in this area.

- *“I totally agree with the project and I feel sure most residents will benefit should they desire”.*
- *“I have become ill since the last survey and I don’t think this is covered here.”*
- *“I disagree with your recommended actions for me.”*
- *“Excellent concept, would be much better served by personal interview than by statistical returns without qualifications.”*

The Centre for Health Initiatives would like to thank everyone who participated in this research.

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