

The Enhance research project: enhancing food security and physical activity for Pacific, Māori and low income peoples

Both food security¹ and physical activity have been identified as key issues for improving the health and well-being of New Zealanders.

The Enhance research project looked at the contribution and interaction of various environmental factors to food security and physical activity for Pacific, Māori and low-income peoples. The research also identified how these factors might be modified to improve food security and physical activity for these groups.

Jointly funded by the HRC and the Ministry of Health and led by the Clinical Trials Research Unit at The University of Auckland, the Enhance research team was multi-cultural, including Pacific and Māori researchers, and multidisciplinary. This diversity enabled the project to address issues for Māori and Pacific peoples from their perspective, and to explore a wide range of environmental factors and potential interventions, as well as providing an excellent opportunity for development of the health research workforce.

Dr Ausaga Fa'asalele Tanuvasa (Samoa) was a co-investigator on the Enhance research team. Building a vibrant Pacific research capacity and capability, including mentoring Pacific researchers is a key focus for Ausaga. This focus led to the appointment of Tolotea Lanumata (Tonga) in September 2007 as a research fellow to work on the Enhance project. As a result of this project, Tolotea is undertaking an HRC funded PhD, investigating *Pacific perspectives on promoting children's healthy eating*.

The Enhance research results suggested three key interventions to enhance food security (availability of money in households, cost of food and food purchasing factors), and two key areas with regards to physical activity (improvements to urban design, the development of culturally-specific physical activity programmes). This resulted in a 'portfolio' of interventions to enhance food security and physical activity for Pacific, Māori and low-income people, and a range of ideas that might enhance food security and physical activity including:

- Strengthening of policies to ensure full and correct benefit entitlements for all beneficiaries;



Dr Ausaga Fa'asalele Tanuvasa and Tolotea Lanumata

Key words:

- Food security, physical activity, low-income, Māori, Pacific, multi-cultural, health and well-being

Aims of this research:

- To explore the contribution and interaction of environmental factors to food security and physical activity for Pacific, Māori and low-income peoples

- Regulation of fringe credit lenders, to increase protection for the most vulnerable people in our community (e.g. Pacific people on a low income), to leave them potentially less indebted and with more money available to spend on food;
- Continued support for culturally-specific physical activity programmes while the evidence base is building; and
- Further targeted research to explore the influence of the built environment on physical activity and related health outcomes.

This project will also inform the future development and implementation of effective interventions to tackle these important issues for high-priority population groups.

¹ Food security is defined as the assured access to sufficient food that is nutritious, of good quality, safe, and meets cultural needs, and has been acquired in socially acceptable ways.

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