



Media Release

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Pacific Health Symposium

Mind, Body and Spirit are the themes for the upcoming Pacific Health Symposium, 'LotuMoui', to be hosted by the Counties Manukau District Health Board in early December.

In a pioneering partnership, Counties Manukau DHB and Pacific churches will join forces to get important health messages out into the Pacific community. LotuMoui is to be held from December 1-2 and will enlist the help of leaders of churches, religious and faith-based groups in the Pacific community. Their aim is to fight the health problems facing the Pacific population.

"It is recognised within the health sector that services that separate the physical, mental and social dimensions of Pacific wellbeing are least likely to be effective for Pacific people. The key to improving the health and wellbeing of Pacific populations is a commitment to engaging Pacific populations and fostering a holistic view of Pacific health," says Margie Fepulea'i, General Manager of Pacific Health at Counties Manukau District Health Board.

The 2001 census counted in excess of 232,000 Pacific people in New Zealand and it also noted that 84 percent of Pacific people identified themselves as affiliating with a religious or faith-based organisation. Over 40 percent of New Zealand's Pacific population live in the Counties Manukau region - a significant number of Pacific people to target through the leaders in attendance at the Symposium.

"For Pacific peoples, the church and their faith have long been the place of gathering, reflection and spiritual nourishment. It is only natural that the leaders of this aspect of Pacific people's lives should work with health professionals to battle health problems," says Mrs Fepulea'i.

The Symposium will feature keynote speeches from such esteemed Pacific dignitaries as Dr Feleterika Nokise (Principal of the Theological College in Suva, Fiji), Dr 'Ana Taufe'ulungaki (University of the South Pacific, Fiji), Dr Maika Kinahoi-Veikune (Clinical Advisor at Counties Manukau DHB) and Dr Debbie Ryan (Chief Advisor - Pacific to the Ministry of Health).

The day will also include workshops on various themes, group discussions and a Pacific-style market place set up to provide opportunities for Symposium attendees to receive key health-related information. In addition, there will be an opportunity to break into ethnic specific and religious denomination groups to discuss the ways in which to put the health messages highlighted on the day into practice.

LotuMoui will also see the launch of the Pasefika LotuMoui Grant that will allow for up to 50 Pacific churches to implement health promotion and disease prevention programmes for their congregations and wider communities. In addition, Counties Manukau DHB will look to partner with churches to ensure that the healthy lifestyle programmes are sustainable.

LotuMoui will take place over two days, December 1-2, at the Waipuna Conference Centre in Mt Wellington. There will be no cost to attend.

For further information please call Akesa Burling at Counties Manukau DHB on 262-9581.

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