

Improving Pacific experiences in Health Practices

A traditional Samoan Ava ceremony, role playing scenarios and presentations about understanding Pacific cultures were all on display as Health Hawke's Bay hosted their first Pacific cultural training workshop for our providers.

With clinicians, allied health staff in primary healthcare and services attending the Folau Workshop, it was an opportunity to safely learn how to implement different Pacific cultures in Hawke's Bay's healthcare.



The Folau Workshop sits under Health Hawke's Bay's Pacific Health Strategy to implement Pacific cultural safety training into primary healthcare.

The workshop addresses ethnic biases and attitudes that impact on the provision of high-quality care, gives staff and providers greater understanding of the Pacific community, and supports Pacific peoples to feel well-supported and valued in primary care.

Enrolment for the workshop was maxed out as presentations were delivered from Health Hawke's Bay's Pacific Senior Advisor Saele Tanielu and Fomai Consulting's Ausage Fomai.

Presenting the make-up of Hawke's Bay's Pacific ethnic groups and enrolled versus unenrolled data, Saele is delighted at the high interest shown by participants for supporting Pacific communities.

“In Hawke's Bay, we have just under 11,000 residents identifying as Pacific.

“We have temporary visa holders in Hawke's Bay doing seasonal work that makes-up a large number of the Pacific population and they are not eligible for funded healthcare.”

One of the health challenges for Pacific peoples in the region is high skin and respiratory issues.

A contributing factor for this is the different air conditions in Hawke's Bay compared to Pacific Islands.

"With warm temperatures in the islands, when we visit, our skin glows and the skin heals itself for the natives," says Saele.

"When they arrive in the drier Hawke's Bay air, particularly in the orchards when working, it can cause issues such as scabies and eczema.

"There's a need to communicate and educate the community that the air is different here and that different creams may be needed to heal skin compared to traditional creams that our Pacific community may rely on."

It is important that communication is delivered in a way that the community can understand says Saele.

In his presentation to attendees, Ausage emphasized the importance of language.

"Language is a barrier in healthcare and can make a difference between a Pacific person showing hesitancy to walking into a practice versus building trust and confidence with providers."



Attempting to greet patients in their traditional Pacific Island language and respecting the values of individuals goes a long way says Ausage.

"If you are meeting a Pacific patient for the first time, ask where they are from, greet them in their native language and build a trusting relationship with them.

"A small gesture will go a long way to a Pacific persons' relationship with their health and healthcare providers."

With attendees appreciating the workshop, finding the presentations insightful and capacity at its limit, plans are underway to hold further Folau Workshops as interest in cultural training grows in the region.

We will continue to serve all communities in the region and support providers to deliver healthcare to Hawke's Bay whānau.

