THE EFFECT OF A FAMILY-BASED ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION HEALTHY LIFESTYLE PROGRAMME ON HEALTH KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEFS OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

Dayna Te’o*, José Derraik 2,3, Esther Willing 4, Cervantée Wild 2,3, Yvonne Anderson 2,3,5

1 School of Medicine, University of Auckland, Auckland
2 Tamariki Pakari: Child Health and Wellbeing Trust, New Plymouth
3 Department of Paediatrics: Child and Youth Health, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, University of Auckland, Auckland
4 Kōhatu – Centre for Hauora Māori, University of Otago, Dunedin
5 Department of Paediatrics, Taranaki District Health Board, New Plymouth

Background: Childhood obesity remains a growing global pandemic, which imposes a significant health burden on at-risk populations and financial burden on health care systems around the world. The Whānau Pakari Programme is a multi-disciplinary, whānau-focused programme for children and adolescents affected by obesity or who are overweight with weight-related comorbidities. The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of the Whānau Pakari programme on the health knowledge and beliefs of its participants and their caregivers over time.

Methods: This mixed-methods study included quantitative analysis of health knowledge and qualitative content analysis of health beliefs data over five years. Comparison of the Whānau Pakari data with the National Survey of Children and Young People’s Physical Activity and Dietary Behaviours in New Zealand: 2008/09 was also undertaken.

Results: Improvements in the health knowledge of the Whānau Pakari cohort were observed over time and were sustained up to 5 years post-baseline assessment. By 12 months the health knowledge of the Whānau Pakari cohort surpassed that of the New Zealand cohort in the majority of categories. Beliefs regarding the benefits of healthy living centred around an improvement in physical functioning, mental and emotional wellbeing, and enhancement of appearance. An increase in the depth and development of health beliefs was observed over time.

Conclusion: The retained health knowledge and development of health beliefs long term shows promise of a foundation of knowledge that could motivate families and communities to make healthy behaviour change in the future. This study highlights the importance of context when interpreting findings surrounding health knowledge and beliefs and emphasises the important role that community-level healthy lifestyle change programmes have within the delivery of effective health promotion.