

# Case Study 3:

## Annual Preston Health Mela

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### Overview

The Lancashire Gujarat Health Users' Forum (LGHUF) was launched in 2001 to improve the health of the community by raising awareness of disease and conditions. LGHUF has organised an annual Health Mela in Preston, Lancashire since 2002 with the help of Professor Satyan Rajbhandari, a local diabetologist. The Mela has also been held annually in Bolton, Blackpool and Leyland, and more recently in Chorley, Bradford, Wales and London. The Health Mela is held on a Saturday, and is a free open day for the local community. As the name implies, the Mela (Sanskrit for gathering or fair) is intended to be a family fun event, especially for the South Asian communities. The event provides an opportunity to visit a number of health-related information stands, engage with health professionals and seek information and guidance. This raises awareness regarding various health issues including diabetes, hypertension, stroke, arthritis, coronary artery disease and cancer.

### Strategy

There is a wide range of participation in the health mela to make it a significant social event. There are a number of stalls promoting healthy living from the acute hospital trust, CCG and community trust as well as social services and other health related voluntary organisations. Recently, the local rotary clubs and universities have also taken an active role in organising health melas. The University of Bolton is now hosting the 'National Forum for Health & Wellbeing', chaired by Professor Romesh Gupta to oversee health melas all over the country.

The main attraction at the mela is the free walk-in 'Health MOT (Health checks)'. These are performed by medical students and laboratory teams under the guidance of consultant physicians. People get their height, weight, blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose measured. Medical students then provide advice based upon their risk factors and lifestyle, utilising various teaching aids like cardiovascular risk calculation, diabetes risk calculation, and BMI calculations. In recent years, the health checks have added additional patient testing of HbA1c, full lipid profile, proteinuria and counselling by local NHS dieticians, diabetologists, diabetes specialists nurses and podiatrists.

This is very popular amongst people with diabetes. If any problems that require medical attention are detected, the individual is referred to his/her own GP for further investigation and treatment.

### Outcomes

Every year about 1000 people attend Preston Health Mela and 200 people have full health checks. At each event, healthcare professionals diagnose several new cases of diabetes, between five and eight cases of hypertension and between six and ten cases of high cholesterol. In addition, healthcare professionals identify many people with established diabetes who have not had regular checks and make them aware of the benefit of diabetes control in preventing long term complications.

### Key lessons

Health Mela are useful in:

- 1) Improving awareness and promote a healthy lifestyle within hard to reach communities regarding the range of health care services available.
- 2) Providing an opportunity to have a health assessment including blood sugar and cholesterol check and appropriate counselling.
- 3) Catering for special needs of South Asians with diabetes and guide them to the service provided by the local NHS.
- 4) Providing learning opportunities for medical students.