

Understanding Facilitators and Barriers to Engagement in Whānau Pakari: A family-based, multi-disciplinary programme for children and adolescents

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Background: Multi-disciplinary programmes are recommended best practice for management of childhood obesity, yet the the engagement of families in intervention programmes remains challenging. Whānau Pakari is a family-based, multi-disciplinary obesity intervention programme for children and adolescents. Greatest reductions in BMI SDS were achieved when participants attended $\geq 70\%$ of sessions. The objective of this study was to understand facilitators and barriers to engagement in Whānau Pakari, particularly for Māori.

Methods: Past eligible Whānau Pakari participants, including those who were offered a referral but then declined further contact, were invited to undertake an anonymous survey online, by phone or by post (78 were unable to be contacted, leaving a total $n=344$).

Results: Of those eligible to participate, 21% completed the survey (45% identified as Māori and 89% female). All respondents had accepted their referral to Whānau Pakari. High attendance levels were associated with respondents reporting the sessions to be conveniently located ($p=0.03$). Attendance levels were lower when respondents considered other priorities to be more important for their family ($p=0.02$). Māori more frequently reported that past negative experiences of healthcare influenced their decision to attend Whānau Pakari ($p=0.03$). Common

facilitators identified in survey responses included ongoing programme support, perceived convenience of the service, and parental motivation to improve their child's health.

Key take home messages: The ongoing support from the multi-disciplinary and intersectoral Whānau Pakari team was a key facilitator to continued attendance and retention. Parental and self-motivation to improve health and perceived programme convenience were additional facilitators. In-depth interviews are being undertaken to understand the relationship between past experiences with healthcare and subsequent engagement with services such as Whānau Pakari, particularly for Māori. Given only participants who accepted their referral responded to the survey, there is a need to determine barriers to initial engagement for the group who declined further contact with the service.