

Public Health Association of New Zealand

Media release 23 September 2010

Growing up in New Zealand study recruits Māori whānau

Growing Up in New Zealand is a new longitudinal study of New Zealand-born children, led by the University of Auckland. It will follow a group of 7000 children in the context of their families from before they are born until they are adults.

The study aims to discover what it takes to raise happy, healthy children and therefore improve the lives of all New Zealand children.

“We have recently finished recruiting pregnant women for Growing Up in New Zealand,” Dr Polly Atatoa-Carr told the Public Health Association’s annual conference in Ngaruawahia today.

All women living in the Auckland, Counties-Manukau and Waikato DHB regions, whose babies were due between 25 April 2009 and 25 March 2010, were invited to participate.

“We found our pregnant women by any means possible. We accessed them through lead maternity carers like mid-wives and doctors. We also worked with other community agencies like Plunket, Family Start and Māori organisations. We had teams working in malls and markets so that people could find out about our study.

“We interviewed our mothers before they had their babies, and we also talked to their partners where possible. We will continue to follow up these families approximately every 18 months until the children are young adults. The study looks at many important areas of child development including health and wellbeing, family and whānau, education, neighbourhood, culture and identity.”

Dr Atatoa-Carr said the results from the first interviews are currently being analysed, and information about the cohort will be available at the end of November this year.

Whānau have responded positively to being involved in the study. Raymond (Moko) Kumar, a stakeholder liaison manager for Growing Up in New Zealand, told the conference, “With Māori we wanted to make sure that we could provide safe and genuine opportunities to participate.”

The project has taken account of the following principles to guide its approach:

- Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- Kaitiakitanga, and
- Māori research ethics.

“The stories collected from whānau involved in Growing Up in New Zealand are a taonga which will be safeguarded,” said Moko Kumar.

“Growing Up in New Zealand can contribute to the developmental aspirations of Māori, improve inequalities, showcase Māori in a positive light, and enhance the policy environment for Māori whānau into the 21st Century.”

Ends

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