

115 *Ehara tau toa I te toa takitahi,
Engari, he toa takitini e.*

BACKGROUND

The National Heart Foundation's "Pick the Tick" programme aims to provide a guide to healthy food choices. Consumer awareness of the "Pick the Tick" programme is high and the proportion of consumers claiming to use the Tick to guide food choices increased from 43% to 55% from 1997 to 2000. However, it is believed (although not empirically demonstrated) that the "Pick the Tick" programme is most effective in high socio-economic groups rather than lower socio-economic groups or Maori and Pacific groups, thus widening health inequalities. This research provides evidence of the effectiveness of "Pick the Tick" for Maori, Pacific and low-income peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

OBJECTIVES

This research aims to provide evidence of the effectiveness of "Pick the Tick" for Māori, Pacific and low-income people. The main research questions are:

1. Are Māori, Pacific and low-income people aware of "Pick the Tick", what are their attitudes to it, and do they use the Tick to guide food choices?
2. What improvements could be made to "Pick the Tick", or alternatives put in place, to meet the needs of Māori, Pacific and low-income people?

METHOD

The research was carried out through the use of focus groups to explore the effectiveness of the "Pick the Tick" programme and to suggest alternative approaches that may be needed. Six focus groups were conducted among food shoppers, stratified as follows:

- Two Māori groups
- Two Pacific groups (one Tongan and one Samoan)
- Two low-income groups, of mixed ethnicity

RESULTS

Little literature exists evaluating "Pick the Tick" as a guide to making healthier food choices, particularly lacking is evidence of whether the program is effective for different population sub-groups. "Pick the Tick" is perceived to be associated with higher-price food items, and therefore is seen as unaffordable by low-income people. An evaluation of "Pick the Tick" is discussed, as well as alternative approaches to making healthy food choices easier.

CONCLUSION

It is important to have evaluative processes in place for food labeling programmes in order to measure whether they meet the needs of all population groups. Promotion of healthy eating needs to be culturally appropriate, as well as practical for low-income people.