

## Assessment of diabetes and cardiovascular disease in visitors to rural field day events

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**Issue:** Approximately 1 million Australians are diagnosed with diabetes including an estimated 130,000 people with type 1 diabetes. Diabetes is a key risk factor for cardiovascular disease, the leading cause of death in Australia. Diabetes is often undiagnosed with many people being on the cusp of diabetes or unaware that they have it.

**Aim:** To assess the benefits of an outreach diabetes and heart disease risk assessment program, for visitors to rural field day events, developed and delivered by two NGOs working in partnership.

**Methods:** A health screening protocol was developed and training provided for volunteer medical students to provide basic health assessments for attendees at three field day events. Visitors to these events were given a basic health screening and provided with individual written reports, accompanied with tips to improve or maintain good health. Follow-up telephone calls were made one month post-assessment.

**Results:** A total of 667 people completed a health risk assessment. 36 (6%) were found to have probable diabetes ( $HbA_{1c} \geq 6.5\%$ ) and one in three (229, 35%) people were found to be in the pre-diabetes range ( $HbA_{1c}$  between 5.7 and 6.4%). The majority (517, 78%) were overweight or obese and more than one in three (259, 39%) people had elevated blood pressure. According to the AUSDRISK classification, more than half (350, 54%) of people surveyed were deemed at high risk of developing diabetes within the next five years. Overall, there were clear gender and region differences in prevalence of pre-diabetes and hypertension. A total of 535 (80%) people assessed were contacted one month later and 74% of those advised to see a GP on the day of their assessment had seen or planned to see a GP. One in three (86,32%) people had received follow-up GP care which included additional tests, routine monitoring, initiation or titration of medications, dietary and lifestyle advice or referral to other health care professionals.

**Conclusions:** Diabetes and cardiovascular disease risk assessments at rural field day events are well received among attendees and are effective in identifying people at risk and encouraging early GP consultation to prevent disease escalation.