

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders make up 2.1% of the Australian population therefore it is essential that they are thought of when ~~the~~ considering the overall health of a population. The average age of death for a male is only 57 years and for a female it is a little more but still not enough i.e. it is 65 years of age. This is very low in comparison to the European population with the ~~the~~ average age of death for women being from 80-85 and for men being 75-80 (1997 statistics). The main causes of death being cardiac disease (heart disease), respiratory disease, liver disease, kidney disease, stroke, injuries, diabetes mellitus and sometimes simply a poor diet.

Many people suffer from cardiovascular disease in fact the death rate is 1.7 times higher than Europeans and 13-18 times higher than Europeans in the age group of 25-44. This is contributed to the high proportion of obese or overweight people. Unemployment rates are low in the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander community, this results in a lower education compared to Europeans. This lower education means that they are not educated about good nutrition or the risk of eating high-fat foods and ~~the~~ little or no exercise. Strokes are also very common attributing to high cases of atherosclerosis in 17% of Australians.

suffer from due to a diet high in cholesterol and sedentary lifestyles. Of this 17% ~~17%~~ 7% of the sufferers are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. This is a large proportion, portraying that Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders have a diet high in cholesterol. The death rate from stroke is also 3 times higher than that of Europeans.

Diabetes Mellitus is caused through age, gender, nutrition and a lack of exercise. It is when ~~the body~~ insulin is unavailable or when ~~for~~ there is too much glucose for the body to ~~hang~~ handle, therefore ~~that~~ the glucose remains in the bloodstream and doesn't reach the tissues of the body. This leads to muscle wasting, kidney damage from excessive urination due to high glucose levels in blood, eye cataracts, excessive thirst, gangrene and even a diabetic coma resulting in death. The incidence of diabetes mellitus in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is 10-30% compared to the small 3% of European sufferers. Diabetes must be treated with a strict diet of only 40% total calories and 3 meals and 3 snacks each day. As well

take daily insulin tablets or shots
hospital

Unfortunately many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders live in remote areas away from any medical supervision or treatment. Therefore they are at a greater risk of kidney disease. In fact in Alice Springs it has the largest kidney unit in Australia. According to Dr Thompson

a leading eye surgeon in Australia, approximately 40% of his patients suffering from eye cataracts due to diabetes are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Using the information above we can come to the conclusion that diet is an important problem which must be addressed in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. The incidence and death of diseases such as ~~cardiopulmonary~~ cardiovascular disease, diabetes mellitus, atherosclerosis and stroke are all due to ~~the fact that~~ diet and a lack of exercise. This is due to the high levels of unemployment, lack of education about nutrition and geographic isolation.

One more problem that faces Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders in their diet is the high level of alcoholism which can lead to malabsorption of nutrients. Alcoholism in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders is 30% more than Europeans. Alcoholism also leads to liver and kidney disease.

Optimum nutrition obviously needs to be promoted. This includes more ~~environmental~~ Aboriginal Health Officers, early Intervention Programs, and a better supply of ~~foods to~~ foods to geographically isolated areas in need for good nutritional food.

The increase in Aboriginal Health Officers will mean a wider education about ~~nutritional requirements~~ the required nutrition of Aboriginals. The more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders know about the complications

of having a bad diet the better the health of this specific group in the Australian population will be. A greater understanding of the effect of alcohol ~~on~~ and high fat - high cholesterol foods on the body will lead to a decrease in this sort of diet ~~of~~ from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as they come to a realisation of the simple things which need to be done to improve their lifespan. ^{Also} Health officers that deal personally with the people will receive a greater respect from the people.

Early intervention programs include educating youths before the diseases and bad habits set in. These include more exercise and sports programs within schools and communities. This allows the children/youths to exercise and promotion of sports/exercise as fun will ~~allow more~~ increase the numbers of people exercising regularly. If exercise is seen as important many ~~of~~ lifelong diseases, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease will be prevented. ~~The~~ Early Intervention Programs will also include education in schools and communities about nutrition. Public discussions will be held about nutrition and school canteens should only sell nutritional food thus promoting nutrition among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

The final strategy to promote optimum health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is ~~to~~ a better supply of food to ~~the~~ remote areas. ~~This~~ If healthier food is more available then ~~thus~~ this particular



group will be forced to eat better thus the nutrition of this parts of the population would increase. At the moment there is not a very good supply of ~~good~~ good food for people living in remote areas ~~the~~ the foods are very high in fat with a lot of high fat meats such as kangaroo are eaten instead. If the nutritional foods were more available people would consume them more.

Optimum health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders must be obtained as firstly there are large death rates, ~~much higher than~~ ~~the~~ from nutritional diseases (much higher than European population) and they make up for 2.1% of the Australian population and are therefore ^{an} extremely important sector.