

Case Study: Robyn, Community Health Worker & Stanford Leader



Overview

Robyn is a Community Health Worker at Hora Te Pai Health Services, based at Paraparaumu on the Kapiti coast just north of Wellington.

Robyn’s role has a wide scope and she is encouraged to support people in their health and wellness. She is clear about boundaries and doesn’t do any clinical assessment or answer clinical queries. She has completed the Health Care Assistants paper and has over 20 years’ experience working in the health system in a range of roles. Robyn loves the fact that her job is so varied and interesting.

In any one day, she can be advocating on a patient’s behalf, helping someone find a health or social service, set up or rearrange an appointment, transport someone to a hospital appointment or support someone attending court.

Robyn is a trained Leader of the [Stanford programme](#) and runs the group programme alongside Catherine, one of the nurses at Hora Te Pai. Robyn knows the value of group programmes and has been involved with several group-based initiatives over the years. One of the most successful has been the ‘pool programme’ run at the Coastlands Aquatic Centre in Paraparaumu.



The Challenge

We all know how prevalent obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis and other long-term health conditions are, especially in high need areas where paying for a gym membership or support from a dietitian or personal trainer is out of the question. However, making the lifestyle changes that are typically recommended as part of managing these conditions and reducing long-term complications are very challenging. Cost and access to support programmes or services are major barriers.

Exercise and Wellness Programme

This programme was established two years ago, because of lobbying on the part of Robyn and other members of the Hora Te Pai team who identified the need for a healthy lifestyle programme that was free of charge and easily accessed by their patients. The first programme was supported by Kapiti District Council with funding provided by the Kapiti Lions Club.

The programme is now well established and is a partnership between Compass Health, Sport Wellington, Green Prescription, Hora Te Pai and Kapiti Coast District Council.

"Teamwork and partnerships across health, council and community groups have been key to the establishment of this programme."

- Robyn

Known as the 'Pool Programme'

The programme runs two evenings a week for ten weeks. Participants have their weight, blood pressure and waist measurements taken at week one and week ten. Each session includes time in the pool or walking. The pool activities include aqua ease, aqua jogging, spa, and sauna. Swimming lessons are also given to those who need them.

Once a week there is a talk or other non-pool activity such as Tai Chi, yoga, or Zumba. Visiting speakers cover topics such as healthy homes, arthritis and gout, health screening (diabetes, breast, prostate). Additionally, a nutritionist talks about healthy food options and the group walk to a local supermarket to learn about label reading.

Most the participants are patients registered with Hora Te Pai, however, anyone can be referred to the programme via green prescription.

Robyn credited the ongoing success of the programme to the teamwork and support of the two swimming coaches at the aquatic centre. They have been very enthusiastic and do most of the day to day organisation.

The Results

The biggest benefit of the programme is the change in participant’s confidence and feeling of wellbeing. Most patients’ blood pressure reduces and they lose weight, however, it is the sense of achievement and collegial support that really gives them a buzz.

