

DOES CARDIOVASCULAR RISK FACTOR SCREENING AT COMMUNITY FAIRS IDENTIFY THOSE AT GREATEST RISK?

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One strategy to reduce the prevalence of cardiovascular disease is to identify and treat those at greatest risk by screening for cardiovascular risk factors. One hundred and twenty people who attended community fairs in Redfern, Newtown and Five Dock were screened for blood pressure, cholesterol, body mass index, smoking and exercise habits. A large proportion of the population in the area is from nutritionally at-risk groups, which include the poor, migrant groups, Aborigines and the elderly.

This pilot study identified the health and demographic profile of participants to determine whether those at greatest risk are being reached.

More women (53%) than men (47%) were screened. Fifty percent of participants was tertiary educated, 67% was employed as a professional or skilled worker and 67% was 40 years and younger. Over forty percent of participants had their cholesterol measured before (42%) and had their blood pressure measured in 1989 (44%).

Prevalence %	Cholesterol > 5.5mmol/l	Overweight & Obese	Exercise <3/week	Smoking
Community fairs	27	27	48	26
NHF (1985)	50	38	92	29

Even though the Area has a large proportion of the population at nutritional risk, those who chose to participate in the screenings were from lower risk sub-groups of the population, e.g., women, forty years and younger, professional or skilled workers and tertiary educated.

Compared with the National Heart Foundation's national randomly sampled risk factor prevalence study (National Heart Foundation, 1985), participants of community fair health screenings are less likely to have raised cholesterol, less likely to be overweight or obese, and less likely to exercise less than three times a week.

This evidence suggests that cardiovascular risk factor screening at community fairs is not an appropriate strategy to identify those at greatest risk.

National Heart Foundation of Australia (1985) Risk Factor Prevalence Study, Report No. 2 - 1983, Canberra.

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