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NEWSLETTER

MAY 2014



SALSA (Students As LifeStyle Activists) is a partnership program with Mt Drutt & Blacktown Medical Practitioners Association, Rooty Hill High School, University of Sydney and Western Sydney Local Health District

The SALSA program has grown in both size and vision this year with the recruitment of an additional seven schools and the development of a comprehensive evaluation plan and questionnaire. Funding support from the Australian Government Department of Health and Western Sydney Medicare Local.

SALSA EDUCATORS

We have held two successful SALSA Educator Workshops at the University of Sydney with over forty students from the Faculties of Medicine, Public Health International, Exercise Physiology, Physiotherapy, Speech Pathology, Health Communication and Education. The continued popularity of the SALSA program amongst Sydney University students indicates the willingness of students to participate and apply their knowledge to a community setting.

SOCIAL MEDIA

SALSA is now represented on a number of social media sites and these will play a greater role in communicating with and encouraging SALSA recipients and their families in the near future.

SALSA has an active Facebook page and our aim is to reach a target of 500 Facebook likes by the end of 2014.

Please make sure that you like us on Facebook and google 'students as lifestyle activists' to access our website.



EVALUATION

A detailed evaluation plan has been developed in association with our Advisory Committee and experts in the fields of Medicine, Community Health and Education. The plan has been submitted to the Department of Health as part of our funding agreement. We received ethics approval from the University of Sydney for the evaluation study of the SALSA program and are awaiting approval from the NSW State School board (SERAP).

We are delighted to report that we have finalised a student friendly online questionnaire comprising of 24 questions on nutrition and physical activity. The questionnaire was designed based on best evidence in the literature and also in consultation with experts, in order to assess key outcomes of the SALSA program for Year 8 students and SALSA Peer Leaders. When trialled at Rooty Hill High School, the online questionnaire elicited very positive and encouraging feedback in regards to the comprehension of questions and the ease of online use by the students.



Above: Year 10 Peer Leaders from Nepean High School completing the eval. survey

Top right: SALSA educators in Jordan

Below right: SALSA Team members (anti-clockwise), Dr Shah (Director), Amy Andrew (Project Officer), Crystal Hillary (High Schools Project Officer) Dr Corinne Patching (Senior Project Officer), Dr Vanessa Shrewsbury (Evaluation Officer)

Conferences and Publications

A needs assessment was conducted at the end of 2013, which investigated how healthy lifestyle messages can reach the homes of SALSA participants. These findings have been compiled into a report with a view to publication in the near future and will be delivered as an oral presentation by **Amy Andrew** (Project Officer) at the July Primary Health Care Research Conference (PHCRIS) in Canberra.



SALSA IN JORDAN

Thanks to Nihya Al-sheyab, the SALSA program is now international, with the implementation of the program in 6 High Schools in Northern Jordan. Funding for this venture has been received from the deanship of research, Jordan University of Science and Technology.

Approximately 20 undergraduate students from different faculties at Jordan University of Science and Technology have been trained to be SALSA peer educators, conducted several Peer leader workshops and supervised the delivery of the SALSA lessons to Grade 8 students.

Please visit our Facebook page for photos and video of the Peer Leader workshops that were conducted recently in Jordan.

SALSA SCHOOLS

We have recruited a record number of 13 High Schools for program implementation and 10 High Schools for evaluation this year, demonstrating a high demand and level of support for the SALSA program in Western Sydney.

We have conducted planning meetings with Personal Development Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) staff, Head Teachers and Principals from all schools who will be undertaking the SALSA program this year.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A SALSA program Advisory Committee was formed at the beginning of this year to guide and support the vision and direction of the program. The committee comprises of leaders in the fields of nutrition, physical activity, education, public health and General Practice.

The committee meetings are held quarterly and two meetings have been conducted to date.

SALSA Advisory Committee members include:

Prof Louise Baur: CHW, USYD

Mr Ian Corless: WSML

A/Prof Michael Dibley: USYD

Ms Diana Dous: WSML

Prof Vicki Flood: USYD, StVincent's

Dr Louise Hard: USYD

Dr Ralf Itzwerth: IT Adviser

Mr Andrew Pesle: RHHS

Ms Helen Ryan: WSLHD

Prof Kate Steinbeck: ADAM, USYD

Dr Kean-Seng Lim: MDMPA

Dr Smita Shah: PERU, WSLHD

