

National Asian Health Forum: Speaker Profiles

Ruth De Souza

Ruth is a senior research fellow with a passionate interest in issues relating to migrants and refugees and their incorporation and engagement in a bicultural society. As well as coordinating the Centre for Asian and Migrant Health research, Ruth is the Programme Leader for the new Graduate Diploma in Addictions. She is also completing a PhD about the discursive constructions of migrant motherhood. Ruth is a Board member of Counties Manukau District Health Board, Board member of the Asia New Zealand Foundation, Secretary of the Refugee Council of New Zealand, Member of the ARMS Trustee Appointment Committee (appointee of the Auckland City Council), and a Member of the Lottery Community Sector Research Committee. Ruth will be facilitating the forum.

Dr Geeta Gala

Geeta is a Public Health Medicine registrar working in Public Health Operations, Ministry of Health on the burden of cardiovascular disease in South Asians. She has a paediatric background and completed a Master's in Public Health from the University of Auckland. She has done a Health Needs Analysis for Asian people in Counties Manukau. Geeta will be providing an overview of her current work at the Ministry of Health.

Dr Kawshi De Silva

Is the chairperson of the Asian Health Foundation of New Zealand. Kawshi will be presenting on the 'AROGYA' project, which aims to improve nutrition and physical activity in Indian Communities. Developed in conjunction with Total Health Care Otara and East Health PHO, the programme is delivered at a temple using faith based concepts.

Dr Ajith Fonseka

Is a public health specialist and Project Manager at the ETHC. Ajith's work primarily involves population health planning, project development, implementation & evaluation, health promotion and analysis of health information. He has a passion for public health, which comes from his work in rural Sri-Lanka. Ajith will be co-presenting on the "AROGYA" project, which he has been involved in since the implementation stage and where he undertook the programmes process and impact evaluation.

Shirin Foroughian

Shirin Foroughian is currently working and doing a doctoral degree at the University of Auckland, School of Population Health. Her main research focuses on childhood overweight/obesity in particular in refugee and other migrated communities. Shirin is trained as a nutritionist and is particularly interested in nutrition related health topics within the framework of epidemiology and health promotion. Her latest research titled, Lifestyle and Obesity in Asian Adolescents, investigates the nutritional and exercise behaviours of young New Zealand Asians. Shirin will present on this research and provide insight into how to engage with this increasingly high needs population.

Dr Scott Duncan

Scott Duncan is a Research Fellow and PhD Graduate in the Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research at AUT University. Areas of expertise include the measurement of physical activity and body composition in population research, ethnic variation in the correlates of childhood obesity, and the assessment of physical activity and nutrition environments in schools. Scott is particularly interested in addressing the problem of overweight and obesity in New Zealand Asian children.

Faieza Ali

Is a Diabetes Nurse Specialist at Auckland District Health Boards Diabetes Service. For her Masters Faieza examined Fijian Indian patients' understanding on diabetes; how they self manage; barriers they face with their management, and views on a culturally tailored educational intervention. Faieza will be providing an overview of the barriers to healthy eating and physical activity in Fijian Indians along with the current and future strategies Auckland DHB is employing to tackle the growing rates of diabetes in this population.

Kai Hong Tan

Is a nutritionist at the New Zealand National Heart Foundation. Over the past four years she has worked with takeaway food retailers to increase the availability and range of healthy food choices in local town centres. Kai will be presenting this work along with one of her more recent projects which has involved a pilot programme to improve the food environment outside school gates.

Martin Dickson

Is an Evaluation Researcher at the New Zealand National Heart Foundation and coordinates a team of Cantonese and Mandarin speaking Tips on Chips 薯條秘笈 trainer/researchers. Martin will be sharing his team's work around this programme where they trained the staff of 51 takeaway operations in the Auckland Region.

Joey Chang

Is a Technical Officer from Auckland's Regional Public Health Service. As one of the trainers on the Tips on Chips Programme, Joey worked closely with Chinese takeaway operators to improve the nutritional quality of the food they sell while ensuring they maintain a profit. Joey will be sharing his experiences as one of the Tips on Chips trainers.