

9460 Conference passing around a hefty chunk of foam that represents their body fat.

The associate professor of Community and Population Health at Edith Cowan University (and the partner of D9460 Governor elect Zaki Dorkham), Samar says the project is about weight loss, choosing healthy foods and taking up regular exercise that will help prevent chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.

The challenge was launched in April 2007 with dieticians and physical activity specialists visiting each of the 23 clubs (nine city clubs and 14 in the country) to talk about nutrition, exercise and other healthy lifestyle habits.

At the same time, each of the clubs appointed two champions who are responsible for monthly weigh-ins by members.

The weigh-ins will continue until February 2008 and the results will be announced at the D9460 district conference in Bunbury in March, when the club recording the highest reduction in average BMI will be awarded the ECU Waist Disposal Trophy.

Altogether 411 Rotarians are participating in the weigh-ins. And statistics from the first few months of the challenge starkly illustrate the scale of the weight problem in the community.

Nearly 90 per cent of the participants are overweight or obese.

Some of the clubs have recorded improvements in their overall averages, and just over a third of the Rotarians taking part have lowered their BMI readings, but a lot more needs to be done.

A number of clubs have now moved into a third stage of the

project, where Rotarians with readings in the high overweight range heading towards obesity are offered a telephone lifestyle coaching service.

Over the next 12 months, they will have the advantage of a tailored weight loss program and personal lifestyle advice by trained health professionals.

Samar says the hoped-for outcome is Rotarians who have reduced their weight, improved their eating habits and level of physical activity and lowered their cholesterol, blood pressure and glucose levels. And that leads to a better quality of life and general health.

Because, as the Rotary Waist Disposal Challenge slogan puts it, "If you don't have enough time for good health, one day you might not have enough health for a good time."

The clubs taking part in the challenge are Albany East, Albany Port, Bunbury, Bunbury Central, Bunbury Leschenault, South Bunbury, Busselton Geographe Bay, Collie, Esperance, Esperance Bay, Harvey, Margaret River, Mount Barker, Katanning, Applecross, Attadale, Cockburn, Fremantle City, Mandurah, Mandurah Districts, Melville, Palm Beach, Rockingham.

The project is sponsored by the Australian Rotary Health Research Fund, the Rotary clubs of Melville and South Bunbury, Edith Cowan University, Telstra and the WA Country Health Services.

The program is also set to extend beyond WA, with District 9830 in Tasmania planning to take up the challenge in 2008. Other Rotary clubs and Districts interested in finding out more about the Rotary Waist Disposal Challenge can contact

Associate Professor Samar Aoun on 0419 911 940, by fax on (08) 9273 8428 or by email to s.aoun@ecu.edu.au

John Feary
Rotary Club of Booragoon, WA

Now hear this

Greetings Fellow Down Under Rotarians.

I am a member of the Community Committee of Western Springs Club here in Auckland, New Zealand. I am also a member of Rotarians for Hearing Restoration (RfHR).

My interest is in how we hear, and in restoring cells in the inner ear when we lose the ability to hear.

Professor Thorn and his team at the Auckland Medical School are an important part of a worldwide network studying how we hear.

I do not currently have any addresses of Australian Universities doing important and exciting research in this area. Professor Thorn has addressed our club and his presentation was first class. I have commended this presentation to our District 9910 Conference Committee for 2009 as a topic worthy of Rotary support.

The latest news from our RfHR in the United States and Canada involved a worthwhile fundraising project aimed at gathering more than 1000 drummers to set a new world drumming record. While they did not quite set the record, money raised did go towards helping thousands and thousands of deaf children and adults. For more information on the Woodstick 2007 festival, go to: www.woodstick2007.com.

Tom Rogerson
Rotary Club of Western Springs, NZ

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