

Maori health rates have improved far more than those of non-maoris this century but still lag behind in most areas. Dr Barker said the narrowing gap was mostly a result of preventative and environmental measures rather than cures or new technology. These environmental measures included provision of pure water supply, adequate waste disposal systems, good housing, adequate food supply, sound personal hygiene and sanitation practices.

Maori tohunga are helping to speed up the discharge of maori patients from psychiatric hospitals said the Minister of Health, Aussie Malcolm. He said all four psychiatric hospitals in the Auckland region had lists of faith healers able to be contacted by patients wanting their services.

And employing more maori doctors would not change the inherent racism of the Health Department, said Canon Hone Kaa. He called on the Health, Social Welfare and Maori Affairs Departments to jointly fund the establishment of health clinics staffed by lawyers, social workers, doctors and nurses. He said in the health field more maori staff needed to be taken on with a policy of affirmative action.

Early jerks proved fruitful

Maori health conference delegates staying at Hoani Waititi marae got regular and strenuous reminders that healthy living was not just a topic for discussion.

Each morning they were awakened at 6am for half an hour of jazzercise and knee jerks before tucking to their muesli and fruit for breakfast.

Bacon and eggs were still on tap for the unenlightened. But all meals were based around fruit, vegetables, salads and brown bread.

This dietitian's delight was not just a concession to the health experts attending the conference.

Marae spokesman Dr Peter Sharples said the marae, which has 140 people employed on work programmes, was strongly oriented towards health, fitness and better nutrition. "Lots of us are on 'gib-board' — that's what we call health food diets" he said. "No meat and no white bread." "It's pretty

hard because maoris are big meat eaters."

He said the marae's 70-strong garden team grew most of the vegetables. The catering team still managed to include traditional maori dishes on the menu by concentrating on seafood and other nutritionally valuable items.

The hakari on the last night of conference featured chow mein, chop suey, mussels, paua, oysters, salads, fresh fruit salad plus — naughty and non-nutritious but nice — pavlova and cheesecake.

Smokers were conspicuous by their discretion, if not their absence, at the conference.

Few people lit up in the dining hall, even when the meal was over. Instead they slipped out for a stealthy smoke on the lawn.

One delegate, visibly shaken by a particularly vigorous address at an outdoor forum, stared at his newly lit cigarette and determinedly stubbed it out.

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