Fuelling our passions with the Health Hackathon

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The Health Hackathon is an innovative methodology which seeks to upskill high school students (aged 14–16 years) to develop a health promotion campaign for their school community while fostering industry connections and broadening awareness of careers in health. The programme involves a 2-day workshop where selected students engage in a range of interactive activities and receive presentations from industry professionals on co-design, gamification, digital communications, public speaking and career pathways in health. Students are provided the autonomy to select any health issue which they see as affecting young people and the solution to address these issues.

STUDENT REFLECTION

It was an incredibly insightful experience that not only allowed us to advocate for health issues affecting younger generations but also deepened our understanding of these challenges. We particularly enjoyed the learning process, where we explored others' experiences and mastered presenting our campaign with pride and confidence. One key takeaway was realising the harmful effects of chemicals in everyday products like vapes and cigarettes, which sparked our awareness of similar dangers in skincare products commonly used by youth, often unknowingly. This inspired us to develop an idea centred around raising awareness about harmful ingredients in beauty products. We began thinking creatively about how to implement this idea, both by creating a social media page to reach a wider audience and by dedicating a 'wellness week' at school. It was also very interesting to listen to multiple healthcare workers and their experiences within the healthcare system. We learnt about the endless opportunities within the healthcare sector.

To further enhance student engagement and the impact of their campaigns, the programme could be integrated into schools,

My suggestions

⇒ Integrate campaigns into schools
⇒ Expand campaign implementation across schools
⇒ Reach regional and rural Areas

allowing students to refine their ideas based on mentor feedback. Students could present their campaigns at teacher meetings or school assemblies, supported by partnerships with local health professionals. This approach would empower students to implement their campaigns within their school communities, fostering a culture of advocacy, collaboration and wellness.

We believe that students' voices can be further amplified by integrating the Health Hackathon into schools regular programming for maximum impact. While the winning campaigns, like 'Digital Detox', have been implemented at the winning school, they should also be broadened to other schools to tackle common adolescent issues such as screen time use. Implementing this recommendation will broaden the knowledge of healthcare issues among young people while providing information on how to seek help and access healthcare facilities.

Our final recommendation is to upscale the programme to regional and rural areas to increase young people's awareness of careers in health and address workforce shortages. Engaging schools in these areas could inspire younger generations to pursue careers in health, particularly addressing the urgent issues faced by healthcare workers in these communities. Involving Year 10 students is key as they are starting to consider future careers and studies.

The Health Hackathon provided an excellent platform for students to present campaigns addressing prevalent health issues among youth and propose innovative

solutions. It not only broadened our understanding of healthcare and career paths but also gave us the confidence to advocate for the issues we believe in and take concrete steps to drive change.

Ethics approval This study involves human participants. This manuscript is a Young Voices article which reports of students' experiences of a health service provided by our unit. Participants gave informed consent to participate in the study before taking part.

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