

National Heart Forum news briefing – 5 February 2003

Summary

News

- Concern over DIY genetic tests
- Study links shaving habits to stroke, heart and cancer risk
- Study finds five drinks a day 'boosts stroke risk'
- Welsh Assembly Government tackles child poverty
- Child Poverty Chair is announced – Wales
- Prescott sets out action plan for sustainable communities
- Department of health publishes guidance on piloting children's trusts – England
- Strategy for Older People launched in Wales
- More money for rural buses

Nutrition

- Salt is the killer of the kitchen
- Fast food is addictive in same way as drugs, say scientists
- Brussels plans ban on 'misleading' food claims
- Claims for chocolate and heart health

Obesity

- Scottish plans to tackle obesity outlined

Physical activity

- New appointments to sportscotland
- £77 million investment in local transport across Wales announced by minister
- High cost of broken fitness resolutions

Smoking

- Irish republic to ban smoking in pubs

Publications/resources

- Meeting department of health smoking cessation targets: Recommendations for primary care trusts
- Meeting department of health smoking cessation targets: Recommendations for service providers
- Pre-retirement pilots 2001-2003
- Prevention and reduction of alcohol misuse (review of reviews)
- Health equity audit made simple

Events

- FSA seminar - Involving consumers in policy making: Who benefits?

News

Concern over DIY genetic tests

BBC news online: The UK government's advisory body on genetics is likely to recommend companies should be able to sell genetic testing kits direct to the public. The tests claim to predict an individual's chance of developing diseases such as heart disease and obesity. The Human Genetics Commission has been consulting on the issue, and the majority of responses favour self regulation by industry, despite calls for stricter controls. A final report is due in the spring.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/2723579.stm>

Study links shaving habits to stroke, heart and cancer risk

BBC news online reports that shaving less than once a day could increase a man's risk of having a stroke by around 70%, according to results from the Caerphilly heart study. The study also found men who shaved less regularly were at a higher risk of suffering a heart attack and of suffering from lung cancer. Professor Shah Ebrahim and his team from the University of Bristol say it is more likely to be because a man needed to shave infrequently, due to having less testosterone in their bodies. *Am J Epidemiol* 2003; 157:234-238.

BBC news: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/2729457.stm>

Journal abstract: <http://aje.oupjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/157/3/234>

Study finds five drinks a day 'boosts stroke risk'

BBC news online: A meta-analysis study has found that people who have more than five alcoholic drinks a day increase their risk of having a stroke by more than 60%, but two a day could reduce the risk of the ischemic stroke, the most common kind by 30%. Kristi Reynolds et al analysed 35 previously published studies into the link between stroke and alcohol carried out between 1966 and 2002. *JAMA*. 2003;289:579-588

BBC news report: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/2726243.stm>

Journal abstract: <http://jama.ama-assn.org/issues/current/abs/jma20035.html>

Welsh Assembly Government tackles child poverty

The Welsh Assembly Government is to develop a strategy to combat child poverty in Wales and a Child Poverty Task Group is to be set up to take this work forward, Minister for Children Jane Hutt announced on 31 January. She was speaking at the launch of the Children's Manifesto, which highlights the importance of tackling child poverty.

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/news/index.htm>

Child Poverty Chair is announced – Wales

Charlotte Williams, a lecturer in Social Policy at the University of Wales Bangor, has been appointed chair of the new child poverty task group Welsh minister for health and social services Jane Hutt announced on 5 February. Charlotte Williams has worked as a local authority social worker and a housing officer in Welsh authorities and a social services development advisor on a World Bank funded structural adjustment programme in the Caribbean.

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/news/index.htm>

Prescott sets out action plan for sustainable communities

A £22 billion plan to drive forward thriving and sustainable communities for this and future generations was launched by the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott on 5 February. He said much of the Sustainable communities: building for the future plan is properly about housing. But sustainable communities need more than just housing they need for example jobs; good schools and hospitals and a safe and healthy local environment.

See document: <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/communities/index.htm>

Press release: <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/news/0302/0015.htm>

Department of health publishes guidance on piloting children's trusts – England

DH has released a document for England, which contains information for local authorities, health bodies and other interested organisations and individuals about Children's Trusts, including their legal status, what services they may commission or provide and who should be involved in their development and implementation. It also explains how to submit an application to become one of the first pilot Children's Trusts, to start during 2003.

www.doh.gov.uk/childrenstrusts/piloting.htm

Strategy for Older People launched in Wales

The Welsh Assembly Government launched its landmark Strategy for Older People, the very first of its kind in the UK on 30/01/03. The strategy can be accessed via the link below.
<http://www.wales.gov.uk/subisocialpolicy/content/ssg/contents-e.htm>

More money for rural buses

Sparse public transport is often a key factor in low income families having poor access to affordable food. New bus schemes to improve public transport in rural areas across England will receive £20 million from the government.
<http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/page7082.asp>

Nutrition

Salt is the killer of the kitchen

BMJ online news report: Roger Dobson (The Independent 5/02/03) looks at the over-consumption of salt in the Western diet, and asks how we can cut down. He points out that a great deal of salt is 'hidden' in everyday foods, so that a person may cut down on table salt and obviously salty snacks, but may find they are still consuming more than the recommended daily intake. Soon-to-be-published research by doctors at St George's Hospital, led by Professor Graham MacGregor, shown that reducing salt intake from 12 to six grams a day would prevent 34,000 heart attacks and stroke deaths per year.
<http://bmj.com/uknews/news20030205.shtml#5>

Fast food is addictive in same way as drugs, say scientists

The Independent online (30/01/03) reports that overeating might not be a simple matter of self-control. Lovers of burgers, fizzy drinks and other fast foods could be in the grip of an addiction similar to that experienced by users of hard drugs. The claims are based on preliminary animal studies published in the journal *Obesity Research*, but are being cited by lawyers acting for overweight Americans, who in are seeking compensation from the fast food industry. Colantuoni C et al. published their findings in *Obesity Research* 10:478-488 (2002).
Journal abstract: www.obesityresearch.org
Independent report: www.independent.co.uk/story.jsp?story=373884

Brussels plans ban on 'misleading' food claims

The European Commission to drawing proposals to ban food companies from making 'misleading' claims that their products improve health and well-being. Food giants Nestle, Danone and Kellogg will all be affected as they all make extensive use of health claims in their marketing and labelling. Reported in Financial Times.
<http://news.ft.com/>

Claims for chocolate and heart health

Research from the University of California, published in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association, has claimed that chocolate eaten in moderation is good for your heart. Reported in the Daily Mail.

Obesity

Scottish plans to tackle obesity outlined

The Executive is backing preventative measures to ensure that adults and children in Scotland "get fit, not fat", deputy First Minister Jim Wallace said at a symposium jointly hosted by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow and the Public Health Institute

of Scotland. He said much work was currently underway including the Executive's National Healthy Eating Campaign, launched in January and the Physical Activity Strategy which will be launched in February. The Strategy embraces the recommendations made in the Physical Activity Task Force's report 'Let's Make Scotland More Active', published in June 2002.
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/pages/news/2003/01/SEJD203.aspx>

Physical activity

New appointments to sportscotland

Steven Grimmond and Kim Atkinson have been appointed to the board of **sportscotland**. The appointments are for four years.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/pages/news/2003/01/SETCS127.aspx>

£77 million investment in local transport across Wales announced by minister

A major £77 million package of transport investment for Wales in 2003-04 was announced by Minister for Environment Sue Essex on 30/01/03. The Welsh Assembly Government's Transport Grant package includes an additional £14.2 million to improve bus services and to enhance facilities for walkers and cyclists across Wales. Ms Essex also confirmed the continuation of the Safe Routes to School initiative with an allocation of £3.3million
www.wales.gov.uk/news/index.htm

High cost of broken fitness resolutions

BBC news online: Failed New Year's resolutions to get fit and lose weight in 2003 have cost the nation's quitters around £335m, a survey by Norwich Union Healthcare suggests. About 15m people invested in getting fit, but half of those have already thrown in the towel and are just as fat as they were a month ago. Nearly half of those who gave up said they lacked will-power. However, 42% said busy home and work lives left little time to get fit.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/2719841.stm>

Smoking

Irish Republic To Ban Smoking In Pubs

The Irish health minister has announced that all workplaces including restaurants and pubs will be smoke-free from 1 January 2004. The draft regulations have been published with a report on the evidence of the health risks of passive smoking. The report can be accessed at:
<http://www.doh.ie/pdfdocs/tobreg.pdf>

For the latest news on tobacco please subscribe to ASH daily news at:
www.ash.org.uk/html/about/subscribe.php

Publications/Resources

Meeting department of health smoking cessation targets: Recommendations for primary care trusts

Produced by the Health Development Agency (HDA) this document provides primary care trusts with information designed to help them plan how to continue offering high quality, evidence-based smoking cessation services, and meet the targets set in the government's Priorities and Planning Framework 2003-2006.

http://www.hda-online.org.uk/documents/smoking_cessation_targets_part1.pdf

Meeting department of health smoking cessation targets: Recommendations for service providers

This document offers information on important aspects of service provision. It is complemented by the publication above.
http://www.hda-online.org.uk/documents/smoking_cessation_targets_part2.pdf

Pre-retirement pilots 2001-2003

Produced by the Health Development Agency, the pre-retirement pilot aims to explore a number of approaches to improving health and wellbeing, and reducing health inequalities, for people aged 50 to 65, in order that they may have healthier and fulfilling later lives.
http://www.hda-online.org.uk/documents/preretirement_pilots_pack.pdf

Prevention and reduction of alcohol misuse (review of reviews)

This summary of the evidence briefing published in 2002 presents the current evidence from selected good quality systematic and other reviews and meta-analyses published since 1996. It aims to identify interventions shown to be effective in preventing or reducing hazardous/risky drinking and alcohol-related harm and has been produced by the Health Development Agency.
<http://www.hda-online.org.uk/documents/AlcoholSumPO.pdf>

Health equity audit made simple

A briefing for primary care trusts and local strategic partnerships working document – produced by the Health Development Agency.
<http://www.hda-online.org.uk/documents/equityauditfinal.pdf>

Events

FSA seminar Involving consumers in policy making: Who benefits?

The Agency is hosting a seminar with the National Consumer Council on ways of involving consumers in decision making. The seminar will discuss ways of increasing contributions from consumers in food policy decision making, particularly those from disadvantaged groups.
<http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/107676>

Tobacco - for the latest news on tobacco please subscribe to ASH daily news at:
www.ash.org.uk/html/about/subscribe.php

For information on the latest developments in coronary heart disease prevention including position statements from the National Heart Forum visit: www.heartforum.org.uk

This email briefing is available as a once-weekly or three-times weekly update. If you wish to subscribe to or unsubscribe from either of the mailing lists or amend your details in any way, email modi@heartforum.org.uk indicating your requirements. Any feedback/comments are also welcome.