
From: TheInformationPoint@kent.gov.uk [mailto:TheInformationPoint@kent.gov.uk]
Sent: 16 April 2010 17:14
Subject: Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Bulletin No. 16 Friday 16 April 2010

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Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Bulletin No. 16 / Friday 16 April 2010

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Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Information

Date of next HOSC meeting: 10 am, 14 May 2010

Location: Council Chamber, Sessions House

Main Agenda Items: The Future of PCT Provider Services and the Use of Community Hospitals

Other Information:

Internal meetings:

The next HOSC Agenda Planning Meeting will be on Thursday 29 April 2010, 10 – 12 in the Darent Room, Sessions House.

There will be a briefing about the Care Quality Commission for HOSC Members on Tuesday 25 May 2010, 10 – 12, Pendragon Room, Invicta House

Department of Health

Organ donor error

There is to be an independent review after the NHS transplant authority, NHS Blood and Transplant, confirmed 21 cases in which the wrong organs may have been taken from donors, because their preferences on the UK donor register may have been incorrectly recorded.

The British Medical Association (BMA) warned that public confidence could be undermined, but Health Secretary Andy Burnham argued that the error only affected a small percentage of

donors who had registered using their driving licence application and a system had been put into place to prevent the error from happening again.

See:

[NHS 'organ donor error' review to take place](#)

Government

Cancer leaflets

David Cameron has condemned personalised leaflets on Government cancer policy, which were sent out as part of the Labour Party campaign, as some recipients complained that they felt they had been targeted.

The leaflets said that a Conservative government would scrap a Labour government guarantee on how quickly patients would be seen by a specialist, and also contained a message from a breast cancer survivor, praising the Labour Government's policy. David Cameron has called on the prime minister to apologise for the leaflets, which were sent to 250,000 women last month. But health secretary Andy Burnham said it was 'wholly wrong' to suggest Labour had targeted cancer sufferers.

See:

[Labour face apology call over cancer election leaflets](#)

Assessment of the NHS

The King's Fund has published a report '[A high performing NHS: a review of progress 1997-2010](#)' which assesses how far the investment and accompanying reforms since 1997 have transformed the NHS in England into a high-performing health system.

See:

[A high performing NHS: a review of progress 1997 - 2010](#)

[NHS record praised on speed and access to care](#)

Ban on sunbeds for under 18s

Following a campaign by Cancer Research UK, the private Member's bill to protect children and teenagers from the dangers of sunbeds has been passed by the House of Lords.

Aisling Burnand, executive director of policy and public affairs at Cancer Research UK, said: 'We're thrilled that the bill to stop under 18s using sunbeds has passed through the House of Lords and will become law a year today. This is a monumental achievement and legislation will go a long way to curb the alarming numbers of teenagers that use sunbeds.'

See:

[Sunbed ban for under 18s to become law](#)

Top managers in England's NHS trusts received average pay rises of nearly 7% in 2008-09

An [Incomes Data Services report](#) into boardroom pay at more than 380 trusts, found chief executives a 6.9% average pay increase compared with less than 3% granted to nurses. In 2008/09, senior managers in NHS trusts linked to a national pay agreement received a 2.2% rise, while nurses got 2.75% in 2008/09 and 2.5% in April this year.

The report shows that the 6.9% pay increase for chief executives in 2008/09 came on top of a 6.4% rise in 2007/08.

Unions have questioned why bosses have had above-inflation rises when ordinary workers have had much lower rises, but senior managers have responded by saying that NHS trusts are immensely complicated organisations to run, with budgets of many millions of pounds.

The Department of Health said trusts were independent organisations that set their own levels of senior pay.

Contaminated blood verdict

A composer who contracted HIV and hepatitis C through an NHS blood transfusion has won a High Court challenge over compensation levels. But while the judge, Mr. Justice Holman, ruled that the way the UK Government had reached the decision regarding financial settlement for people affected by contaminated blood was flawed, he also asserted that it was not his role to rule on the amount of compensation awarded, and that campaigners should not have 'false optimism'.

The RT Hon The Lord Morris Manchester speaking as the President of the Haemophilia Society and Britain's first Minister for Disabled People said that it was a 'historic decision most warmly welcomed by the haemophilia community.'

See:

[Campaigner wins tainted blood case](#)

National database of patient records

The British Medical Association (BMA) has welcomed the assurance that the upload of patients' records to a national database in England will be suspended in areas where the programme of roll-out has been accelerated.

In December, the Department of Health announced that the roll-out of the Summary Care Record – under which a summary of patients' records is uploaded to a national database unless they opt out – would be accelerated in some areas, and the BMA wrote to the Health Minister calling for the programme to be suspended because of a range of concerns, including lack of sufficient information for patients.

The Department of Health has since assured the BMA's GPs Committee that records will not be uploaded in areas subject to accelerated roll-out until there is greater public and professional awareness.

Dr Grant Ingrams, Chairman of the BMA's GP IT Committee, commented 'This is a positive step, and we welcome the decision to suspend uploads.

Summary Care Records have the potential to improve healthcare for patients if implemented appropriately, and we want to work with Government in future to ensure that the many concerns of patients and doctors are listened to and addressed.

See:

[Upload of NHS care records suspended](#)

Other Health Information

A wider knowledge of simple first aid techniques could save thousands of lives each year

[The St John Ambulance](#) charity's own poll suggests that most people do not feel confident attempting first aid techniques in an emergency situation, while a quarter would do nothing and wait for other people or paramedics to arrive. It believes that if confident first aiders were present on more occasions, many lives would be saved.

The charity is focusing a new campaign on five health emergencies which account for 150,000 deaths each year in England and Wales. These include heart attacks, choking and severe bleeding.

The charity is offering a free pocket guide containing simple instructions on treating patients with heart symptoms, bleeding, choking, or who are unconscious, either breathing or not breathing.

Health survey using Google

A team of researchers from Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust conducting a survey that is published in the periodical *Archives of Childhood Diseases*, have concluded that typing your child's medical problem into Google is unlikely to deliver much in the way of good advice.

The team used Google to find UK-based advice on five common issues, including breastfeeding and autism, but found that only about 200 of 500 sites offered correct information, and the quality of advice varied significantly, with half the search results failing to answer the question. However, Government-run sites were the only completely reliable source.

See:

[Internet child health advice 'wrong'](#)

Risk of stroke

Research from Cambridge University suggests that sensible drinking can substantially reduce the risk of stroke, but the combination of smoking and drinking significantly enhances that risk.

The research study which looked at 22,254 people over the age of 12 people in the UK found non-smokers who drank moderate amounts were nearly 40% less likely to have a stroke than non-drinkers. But once cigarettes were added, this protective effect vanished. Out of the 22,254 people in the trial, there were nearly 9000 strokes.

See:

[Alcohol 'only protects non-smokers against stroke'](#)

Gene therapy and heart attacks

Scientists at the University of Bristol suggest that gene therapy could be an effective way to improve survival rates among heart attack patients. The research found that boosting levels of a natural growth factor in the heart could help the muscle to recover after a heart attack through both a direct protective effect on heart muscle cells and by stimulating the growth of new blood vessels.

Professor Peter Weissberg, Medical Director of the BHF, said: "The discovery that increasing the production of a natural defence chemical in the heart can help the muscle to repair is very exciting. But much more research is needed before we can translate this success into a safe and practical treatment for humans.

See:

[Gene therapy boosts recovery from heart attack](#)

Preventing blood clots during therapeutic hypothermia

Researchers from Australia argue that they may have found a way to stop blood clots during therapeutic hypothermia, a procedure for many types of heart surgery and problems like cardiac arrest, by developing a blood thinning drug which works in low temperatures, but 'switches off' as the body temperature increases.

Commenting on the findings Professor Peter Weissberg, Medical Director at the British Heart Foundation, said: "This is a clever piece of science and may have uses in clinical practice.

See:

[New drug could stop blood clots at low temperatures](#)

The Work Foundation has published a report 'Why Do Employees Come to Work When Ill?: an investigation into sickness presence in the workplace' which emphasises that employers should not ignore the impact of sickness presence – working when ill- as it relates to lower performance, higher sickness absence, higher work-related stress and poorer psychological wellbeing.

The Work Foundation's research into sickness presence

The Work Foundation has published a report '[Why Do Employees Come to Work When Ill?: an investigation into sickness presence in the workplace](#)'.

The report, is one of the first studies investigating the links between sickness presence (attending work when self-perception of health justifies taking time off) and individual performance, and highlights the importance of better understanding and addressing the issue of sickness presence, and how it relates to lower performance, higher sickness absence, higher work-related stress and poorer psychological wellbeing.

Trans fats

Senior doctors argue in an editorial published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) that banning trans fats from all foods in the UK could help to prevent thousands of heart attacks every year and help save lives.

Previous studies have also found that trans fats, the solid fats found in margarine, biscuits, cakes and fast food, increase the risk of heart and circulatory disease, and for this reason are completely banned in some countries. However, the Food Standards Agency said the UK's low average consumption made a complete ban unnecessary.

Victoria Taylor, Senior Heart Health Dietitian at the British Heart Foundation, said: 'This editorial highlights just how important it is for us to keep industrially produced trans fats out of our diets to help keep our hearts healthy'.

See:

[Medics call for ban on trans-fats in UK food](#)

Genes and kidney disease

An international team of scientists have discovered 20 genes that could help explain the causes of kidney disease and 'revolutionise' treatments.

Chronic kidney disease affects about one in ten adults, and it was known there was a genetic component to the disease, but not which genes were involved. The researchers looked at the genes of nearly 70,000 people across Europe, and found 13 new genes which influence renal function, and seven which affect the production of a chemical waste molecule.

See:

[Experts hail kidney gene find](#)

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) virus

Researchers at the University of Edinburgh has found that the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) virus is the single largest cause of lung infection in children, claiming the lives of up to 200,000 children worldwide each year, and hospitalising about 3.4 million children.

The study, which is published in the Lancet, confirmed that RSV infects most children before the age of two, and usually causes mild cold-like symptoms, but can lead to serious illness in babies who are born prematurely or who have congenital heart disease. The scientist also hope the research will help contribute to the development of a vaccine against the infection.

See also:

[Global burden of acute lower respiratory infections due to respiratory syncytial virus in young children: a systematic review and meta-analysis](#)

Patient obesity

A trial of 159 students has found those training to enter the health service need better teaching in order to prevent discrimination against obese patients.

Researchers said previous work had found high levels of 'anti-fat prejudice' among health professionals, but the study, reported in the journal Obesity, also found that such prejudice could easily be turned around by the influence of training.

See:

[Training cuts student medics 'anti-fat' prejudice](#)

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