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Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Bulletin No. 18 / 30 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:

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

NB: The HOSC Meeting originally scheduled for 15 October 2010 will now take place on 8 October.

Department of Health

Resignation of director of NHS Employers

The chief executive of the NHS Confederation, Steve Barnett, has announced that the director of NHS Employers, Sian Thomas has resigned from her role and a new permanent director of NHS Employers will be recruited as soon as possible through an open process.

See:

[Hunt begins for new director of NHS Employers](#)

Appointment of chair for the NHS Confederation

The NHS Confederation has appointed Keith Pearson to be the next chair for the NHS Confederation.

Mr. Pearson, the current chair of NHS East of England Strategic Health Authority (SHA) will be the first part-time remunerated chair for the Confederation and takes over from outgoing chair Bryan Stoten on 1 May 2010.

See:

[New NHS Confederation chair appointed](#)

Hospital care for dementia patients

The NHS Confederation has published a report '[Acute awareness: improving hospital care for people with dementia](#)' which looks at the key issues for NHS trusts in improving hospital care for patients with dementia, many of whom have been admitted with other conditions.

Prescription cost analyses

The NHS Information Centre and The Office of National Statistics (ONS) has published 'Prescription Cost Analysis, England – 2009' which provides details of the number of items and the net ingredient cost of all prescriptions dispensed in the community in England.

For all the relevant analyses:-

See:-

[Prescription Cost Analysis, England - 2009](#)

Community Care statistics

The NHS Information Centre has published 'Community Care Statistics 2008-09: Social Services Activity Report, England' which presents information on referrals, assessments and packages of care, including information relating to residential care placements and residents during 2008-09, at a council level.

See:

[Community Care Statistics 2008-09: Social Services Activity Report, England](#)

Personal Social Services expenditure

The NHS Information Centre has published 'Personal Social Services Expenditure and Unit Costs, England Final 2008-09' which sets out the information on the money spent on social care by Councils with Adult Social Services Responsibilities, during 2008-09. The statistics also enables analysis of money spent on different types of provision and different client groups within adult services.

See:

[Personal Social Services Expenditure and Unit Costs, England Final 2008-09](#)

Social care and mental health indicators

The NHS Information Centre have published 'Social Care and Mental Health Indicators from the National Indicator Set - further analysis, final, England 2008-09' which supersedes the statistics published in September 2009.

The statistics underpins the new performance framework for local government and meets the Government's commitment to introduce a clear set of national outcomes and a single set of national indicators by which to measure them. The first official year for these indicators is 2008-09.

See:

[Social Care and Mental Health Indicators from the National Indicator Set - further analysis, final, England 2008-09](#)

Government

Funding NHS primary care trusts

The think-tank Civitas argues that England is now in its 16th year of using an unscientific formula for funding NHS primary care trusts (PCTs), and in a new [‘Formulas at war over two sorts of inequality in health funding’](#) examines the evidence presented by expert witnesses at a hearing of the Rural Services All-Party Parliamentary Group in February 2010.

The argument is that that the current PCT-funding formula cannot be defended on any rational grounds, and a new formula (CARAN), which was devised in 2008 to take account of regional variations in age-profile, should be implemented.

See:

[PCT funding formula 'adjusted' to the tune of £10billion](#)

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Other Health Information

Prince's Foundation for Integrated Health

The Trustees from the Prince's Foundation for Integrated Health have decided to close the charity. They argue that the foundation has achieved its key objective of promoting the use of integrated health, as since its inauguration in 1993, integrated health has become part of the mainstream healthcare agenda, with over half a million patients using complementary therapies each year, alongside conventional medicine.

See:

[Prince of Wales's charity shut down after official arrested](#)

Nightingale chapel

Florence Nightingale is to be the first commoner to have a chapel in Westminster Abbey named after her. The tribute to the ‘Lady with the Lamp’ and heroine of the Crimean War is one of the highest honours in the Anglican Church.

The Nurses' Chapel, which is already dedicated to the memory of more than 3,000 nurses from Britain and the Commonwealth who died in the Second World War, will be renamed the Nightingale Chapel with a simple prayer of dedication on May 12, the anniversary of the nurse's birth. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Nobel Peace Prize winner, will preach at a service later to commemorate the life of Nightingale, who died in 1910, aged 90.

See:

[Lady with the Lamp honoured with her own chapel in Westminster Abbey](#)

Scandinavian study on lung cancer

A Scandinavian study suggests that patients diagnosed with lung cancer in England are much less likely to survive the disease than their Scandinavian counterparts. The study, published in Thorax finds that despite similar health spending, Swedes have almost double the survival rate after five years with the disease. This was true regardless of the age and sex of the patient, and how long they were monitored for.

See:

[England 'lagging on lung cancer'](#)

[Social inequalities in non-small cell lung cancer management and survival: a population-based study in central Sweden](#)

Australia looking at using plain packaging with graphic health warnings for cigarettes

Australia has set out plans for new rules forcing tobacco companies to use plain packaging carrying graphic health warnings. Smoking kills 15,000 Australians every year and is the largest preventable cause of disease and death in the country.

Following recommendations from the World Health Organisation (WHO), from July 2012, manufacturers would be required to drop all colour and branding logos from cigarette packets.

See:

[Australia plans plain-packaging rule for cigarettes](#)

Heart disease

New research published in the Lancet suggests that levels of an enzyme produced when fatty materials build up within the walls of the artery could be as good at predicting heart disease as high blood pressure and bad cholesterol.

The scientists, who were funded by the British Heart Foundation, were looking at an enzyme called Lp-PLA2 and its association with coronary heart disease, stroke and other causes of death. The research found that the enzyme was strongly linked with artery disease but argued that further research would be needed to show conclusively that the enzyme was a cause, rather than an indicator, of disease.

See:

[Blood protein increases heart disease risk](#)

Severe morning sickness

Norwegian researchers argue that pregnant women are three times more likely to suffer from severe or excessive morning sickness, or hyperemesis, if their mothers also did when they were pregnant.

The researchers argue that hyperemesis, starts before the 22nd week of pregnancy and in its most serious form it can lead to dehydration and weight loss because women cannot keep food or water down. It is the most common cause of admission to hospital in early pregnancy and can be a cause of low birth weight and premature birth.

Around 2% of women suffer excessive nausea and vomiting in pregnancy - known as hyperemesis gravidarum - which can require hospital treatment.

But a study of 2.3 million births showed a threefold higher rate in those whose mothers had had the condition.

See:

[Mother-daughter pregnancy sickness link found](#)

Sunscreen survey

In a survey run by Superdrug and Cancer Research UK, nearly nine out of ten people (87 per cent) are either not using the correct amount of sunscreen, not sure of the amount to use, or not using any sun protection, and could be risking dangerous levels of skin damage, which can lead to skin cancer.

The survey of 2,140 people across the UK has revealed that we are a country of Slapdash Slatherers who don't put on enough sunscreen or reapply it often enough. Not using sunscreen correctly in these ways can result in sunburn, a sign that the skin's DNA has been damaged, in ways that can lead to skin cancer.

The survey found that just over one in ten people (13 per cent) knew that they used the recommended two tablespoons of sunscreen to cover their entire body, whilst wearing a swimsuit or trunks. A fifth (20 per cent), admit they don't use any sunscreen at all.

See:

[Slapdash Slatherers increase risk of dangerous sunburn](#)

Improving nutrition for elderly patients

Researchers from the University of Reading together with chef Heston Blumenthal, have launched a menu of hospital food designed to improve nutrition on elderly care wards.

On the premise that as people age, their taste buds decline and food becomes less appealing, the researchers have been experimenting with introducing strong flavours from Japanese food into British classics like shepherd's pie, with the long-term goal of developing a series of recipes that rejuvenate the palate of older diners, and combat malnutrition.

See:

[TV chef takes on hospital food](#)

New bowel cancer research

New research into bowel cancer resulted in a test greatly reduces the risk of both developing and dying from the disease.

For the past 16 years, Professor Wendy Atkin from Imperial College London has been coordinating a trial of a test called flexible sigmoidoscopy or, more commonly, 'Flexi-Scope'. It involves a tube called an endoscope, which has a tiny camera and light at the end of it. Cancer Research UK is proud to have supported much of Professor Atkin's work, including part-funding this trial.

Doctors can use a Flexi-Scope to look for cancers in the bowel – or for early signs of the disease's development. As with many cancers, early detection is vital for bowel cancer, and over 9 in 10 people will survive their disease for more than five years if it is diagnosed at the earliest stage.

See:

[New study marks major advance in bowel cancer screening](#)

Worldwide mortality

The Lancet have published a paper [‘Worldwide mortality in men and women aged 15—59 years from 1970 to 2010: a systematic analysis’](#) which argues that people in the UK have a higher risk of early death than those in many other wealthy countries.

The study aimed to estimate worldwide mortality in men and women aged 15 – 59 years, and was conducted using a database of measurements of adult mortality for 187 countries from

1970 to 2010 using vital registration data and census and survey data for deaths in the household corrected for completeness, and sibling history data from surveys corrected for survival bias.

See also:

[UK 'has higher early death rate than many rich nations'](#)

New treatment to fight prostate cancer

Researchers who have developed a type of immunotherapy, which harnesses the body's own immune system to fight prostate cancer have had the treatment approved for use by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Provenge, which is designed to be used in men with advanced disease, treats the cancer by provoking a response from the body's immune system, and is the first of this kind of treatment to be accepted by the Food and Drug Administration. But as each dose has to be individually tailored and it is an expensive treatment at \$93,000 per patient, experts have said that it will add to, rather than replace, existing treatments.

See:

[Prostate cancer vaccine wins US approval](#)

[The Prostate Cancer Charity comments on US Government decision to approve a new treatment for prostate cancer](#)

Noisy neighbours

A survey by the Consumer periodical Which? found that at least 3 million UK adults (based on 7% of the population) are experiencing noisy neighbours, but only a quarter had contacted their council. Loud voices/arguing and loud music or TV were the most often quoted causes of neighbour noise.

See:

[Brits lose sleep over noisy neighbours, finds Which?](#)

[Review of the Implementation of Directive 2002/49/EC on Environmental Noise](#)

Children's play behaviour

The think tank Play England reports that new findings presented at the British Psychological Society's Annual Conference indicate that play patterns established in childhood are linked to adult health and behaviour.

In particular, adults who had engaged in more creative play as children were more likely to have a healthy diet and take regular exercise, compared to those reporting environmental restrictions on play (e.g having less time to play) who were more likely to be overweight and have less healthy lifestyles.

See:

[Child play behaviours linked to better health](#)

Medical Royal Colleges concordat

The medical Royal Colleges has produced a concordat which renews the agreement on the appointment process for consultants at foundation trusts, the self-governing organisations that recognise the contribution that advice from the medical Royal Colleges can make to the appointment process for consultants.

The concordat, which updates the 2005 agreement, includes guidelines for foundation trusts and the medical Royal Colleges and outlines how they can work together in the recruitment process.

See:

[Concordat between the medical Royal Colleges and the foundation trust network on the appointment of consultant medical staff](#)

Age UK

The new organisation Age UK will launch a new website which is designed to reflect topics like health, wellbeing and care and offer advice, information and support.

See:

[Age UK](#)

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