

Dear Colleagues,

Please find below a list of news items from the past fortnight that may be of interest to those involved in public health on the afternoon of Tuesday 18 February 2014.

This service, in collaboration with other health libraries in Thames Valley & Wessex, provides topical news and reports of relevance to public health teams, community health practitioners and anyone with an interest in health promotion.

Please contact me if you no longer wish to receive this bulletin, or if you know of anyone else who would like to join the mailing list. The bulletins are now also available on the Health Education Wessex website at:

http://www.workforce.southcentral.nhs.uk/libraries_elearning/library_knowledge_resources/public_health_updates.aspx

Chronic conditions

Can pain be 'switched off'?

Wednesday 5 February 2014

"Pain 'dimmer switch' discovered by UK scientists," reports BBC News. This headline comes from a DNA study that looked at whether pain tolerance is linked to "gene expression".

Cancer 'envy' campaign criticised

Thursday 6 February 2014

A campaign to raise awareness of pancreatic cancer has been criticised for suggesting patients wish they had other forms of the disease.

Pancreatic cancer charity defends breast cancer slogan

Thursday 6 February 2014

A charity has defended an advert showing pancreatic cancer patients "wishing" they had other forms of the disease. Pancreatic Cancer Action say the disease is the UK's 5th biggest cancer killer, yet receives less than 1% of overall cancer funding.

Three-fold increase in UK insulin use, study finds

Thursday 6 February 2014

The number of people using insulin to treat diabetes trebled between 1991 and 2010, researchers from Cardiff and Bristol universities have found.

Guidelines call for more people to be put on statins

Wednesday 12 February 2014

Millions more people should be put on cholesterol-lowering statin drugs to protect them against heart attacks and strokes, according to draft guidelines for the NHS in England.

NICE publishes new draft guidelines on statins use

Wednesday 12 February 2014

"Millions more people should be put on cholesterol-lowering statin drugs," BBC News reports. Draft guidance from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has recommended that the drugs should be given to people with an estimated 1 in 10 or more risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD), which includes conditions such as heart disease and stroke.

A nation of pill poppers

Wednesday 12 February 2014

A sensible step that will cut deaths and disability or a mistake that will medicalise millions? There are starkly opposing views of proposals from the health watchdog the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) to dramatically increase the numbers offered statins.

Strokes 'may be linked to temperature', study finds

Thursday 13 February 2014

"How a change in weather could trigger a stroke: Very cold or humid temperatures can cause a fatal clot to develop," reports the Mail Online website. The headline comes from a US study of the records of 134,510 people who had been hospitalised for a stroke.

Nanofibre lined tubes used to 'move' brain tumours

Tuesday 18 February 2014

"Cancer 'monorails' can be used to kill [brain] tumours by luring them into toxic pits or areas of the body that are safer to operate on," BBC News reports. This headline comes from an exciting new study which used thin tubes (termed 'cancer guides') to guide brain cancer cells away from the tumour to an area outside the brain.

Communicable diseases

New deadly strain of bird flu may have emerged

Wednesday 5 February 2014

"Experts are concerned about the spread of a new strain of bird flu that has already killed one woman in China," BBC News reports. The new strain, which has evolved from an existing bird flu virus called H10N8, has infected two people in China.

Measles global deaths decline by 78%, WHO estimates

Thursday 6 February 2014

Global deaths from measles dropped 78% between 2000 and 2012, the World Health Organization estimates. New figures from the WHO suggest that around 13.8 million deaths were prevented during this time and reported cases declined by 77%.

Inaccurate reporting of cat bite dangers

Friday 7 February 2014

"Why even a tiny cat bite could leave you in hospital: Cats' teeth 'inject bacteria deep into the joints and tissue', doctors warn". The Daily Mail inaccurately claims that one in three people bitten by cats need to go into hospital, and that two-thirds of those people need surgery.

Diet & nutrition

Diabetes claim for low-fat yoghurt not proven

Thursday 6 February 2014

"Yoghurt is key to beating diabetes," is the front page headline from the Daily Express. The news is based on a study looking at the association between dairy intake and the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Vitamin C not proven to 'boost' chemo

Monday 10 February 2014

"Vitamin C keeps cancer at bay, US research suggests," was the inaccurate headline on the BBC News website. The study it reports on did not find that high-dose vitamin C helped with cancer survival, although it did appear to show it reduced some chemotherapy-related side effects.

Disability

Bionic hand allows patient to 'feel'

Wednesday 5 February 2014

Scientists have created a bionic hand which allows the amputee to feel lifelike sensations from their fingers. A Danish man received the hand, which was connected to nerves in his upper arm, following surgery in Italy.

Temporary blindness 'boosts hearing'

Thursday 6 February 2014

Temporary blindness heightens hearing and has potential as a therapy for some deaf people, animal research suggests. A study, published in the journal Neuron, showed keeping mice in the dark for a week changed their brains and enhanced hearing.

Deaf children of our time

Friday 7 February 2014

In 2007 I was tasked with finding four deaf primary school starters from a range of backgrounds, so we could follow their educational journeys and maybe shed some light on these issues.

Drug Misuse

Are energy drinks linked to drug use?

Friday 7 February 2014

"Teenagers who consume energy drinks 'are twice as likely to use alcohol and drugs,'" the Mail Online warns. Research suggests that US teenagers who regularly consume energy drinks such as Red Bull are more likely to use drugs as well as smoke and drink alcohol.

Rise in deaths from 'legal highs' in the UK

Wednesday 12 February 2014

The number of UK deaths linked to so-called "legal highs" has risen in recent years - from 10 in 2009 to at least 68 in 2012, figures show. Researchers compiled post-mortem test results for the National Programme on Substance Abuse Deaths.

Ketamine to become Class B drug, say ministers

Wednesday 12 February 2014

Ketamine, the horse tranquiliser used as a party drug, is to be upgraded to a Class B banned substance. Crime Prevention Minister Norman Baker said he hoped to send a message that the drug was harmful.

Health services administration

IFS: 'NHS spend falling 9% per person over eight years'

Wednesday 5 February 2014

The Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) has warned that public spending cuts will hit the NHS despite its protected budget. IFS director Paul Johnson told the BBC's Hugh Pym that the health service would suffer strains because of the growing and ageing population.

Why sharing data is for greater good

Friday 7 February 2014

The recent announcement that data from individuals' GP records would be shared with researchers inside the NHS - and potentially outside - was controversial. In this week's Scrubbing Up, Prof Peter Johnson, Cancer Research UK's chief clinician, says while the decision is up to each of us, population data like this is crucial for making progress in tackling diseases.

Lack of clarity over where NHS savings go, say MPs

Wednesday 12 February 2014

There is a lack of clarity over what the money saved in the NHS in England has been spent on, say MPs. The NHS is in the middle of an efficiency drive with savings expected to be reinvested in front-line care and making services more productive.

GPs voice fears over giant patient records database

Wednesday 12 February 2014

GP leaders say there is a crisis of confidence about a new NHS data-sharing scheme involving medical records. From April, a giant database, Care.data, will be rolled out in England with non-identifiable records to help aid medical research and the monitoring of performance.

Ex-M&S boss to advise NHS managers

Friday 14 February 2014

Former Marks and Spencer boss Sir Stuart Rose is to lead a review into how to improve management in the NHS in England. Sir Stuart will be looking at how managers can improve and become more visible in hospitals.

Adults 'unaware of NHS data plans'

Friday 14 February 2014

Fewer than a third of adults recall getting a leaflet about changes to the handling of medical records, a poll for BBC Radio 4's PM programme suggests.

Giant NHS database rollout delayed

Tuesday 18 February 2014

The start of a new NHS data-sharing scheme in England involving medical records is being delayed by six months. Work to start compiling the largely anonymised records on to the Care.data database was meant to start from April.

HIV & AIDS

Computers select personal medicine

Saturday 15 February 2014

UK-US scientists have given one glimpse of the future of personalised medicine. Using supercomputers, they simulated the shape of a key protein involved in HIV infection in an individual patient and then ranked the drug molecules most likely to block the activity.

Infant & child health

Child leukaemia 'not linked to power lines'

Friday 7 February 2014

Children who live near overhead power lines do not have an increased risk of developing leukaemia, a study has said. Data on 16,500 children who developed leukaemia in Britain between 1962 and 2008 was analysed.

Charity urges EU to give kids cancer drugs access

Tuesday 11 February 2014

"Children with cancer 'denied drugs because of EU rules,'" reports the BBC. This and other headlines in the media are based on a press release issued by the Institute of Cancer Research (ICR), London. The ICR has called for urgent changes in European Union (EU) regulations.

More healing sleep for newborns

Sunday 16 February 2014

Sleeping like a baby is an oft-used cliche. But while sleep is crucial for sick and premature babies to grow and recover, it can be difficult in a bright, noisy hospital. However those in a specially-designed ward in Bath can be confident of getting plenty of rest.

Brain development may be affected by chemicals

Monday 17 February 2014

"Number of chemicals linked to problems such as autism doubles in just seven years," reports the Mail Online. This headline uncritically repeated the conclusions of a new literature review by two researchers.

Call for better tongue-tie care for babies

'Desperate families need better help' with tongue tie

Tuesday 18 February 2014

Services for babies with breastfeeding problems caused by tongue-tie need to be improved, a parenting charity has said. The condition, which restricts the movement of the tongue, can be treated with a simple procedure.

Men's health

Breaking the silence on male rape

Thursday 13 February 2014

Rape is a crime that affects thousands of people, and for many victims one of the hardest things can be getting the help they need to move on with their lives. It can be particularly hard for male survivors, as there are only five special support centres in the UK for men. There are 145 for women and girls.

Mental health

Schizophrenia: Talking therapies 'effective as drugs'

Thursday 6 February 2014

Changing the way people think about and deal with schizophrenia could be as effective as drugs, say researchers. Cognitive behavioural therapy is an officially recommended treatment, but is available to less than 10% of patients in the UK with schizophrenia.

'Talking therapies' could help with schizophrenia

Thursday 6 February 2014

"Schizophrenia: Talking therapies 'effective as drugs,'" reports BBC News. But this headline is in fact arguably misleading. The BBC reports on a new study comparing the use of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) with no treatment in people with schizophrenia (or more precisely, schizophrenia spectrum disorders).

Commuting 'can lower your sense of wellbeing'

Thursday 13 February 2014

"It's official: Commuting to work makes you miserable," the Daily Mail reports. A new report compiled by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) has found that daily commuting took a toll on most commuters' sense of wellbeing.

How Asperger's reignited a passion for art

Monday 17 February 2014

At the age of 38, artist Raj Singh Tattal was unemployed and depressed. Then he received a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome and everything changed.

Test 'predicts' teen depression risk

Tuesday 18 February 2014

A tool for predicting the risk of clinical depression in teenage boys has been developed by researchers. Looking for high levels of the stress hormone cortisol and reports of feeling miserable, lonely or unloved could find those at greatest risk.

Eating disorders: Sufferers unaware condition can be 'fatal'

Tuesday 18 February 2014

The families of two young people who died from an eating disorder say sufferers do not realise the condition can be fatal. It is hard to gauge how many people die from anorexia and bulimia as death certificates normally record heart or kidney failure instead.

Older people

NICE drugs policy for the elderly is unchanged

Tuesday 18 February 2014

"NHS ban medicine if you are 'too old' in new attack on Britain's elderly" is the headline in the Daily Express, with many other news sources echoing similar dire warnings.

Physical activity

Shivering could count as exercise, study finds

Wednesday 5 February 2014

Shivering for 10-15 minutes a day could be equivalent to doing an hour of exercise, a study suggests. Scientists from Sydney University placed volunteers in temperatures below 15C for the experiment.

'Boris bikes' may be good for your health

Friday 14 February 2014

"London's cycle hire scheme has had a positive effect on the health of its users," BBC News reports. So-called "Boris bikes" (named for the "colourful" Mayor of London, Boris Johnson) have led to improvements in both physical and mental health, researchers report.

Boris bikes 'good for health of users', study says

Friday 14 February 2014

London's cycle hire scheme has had a positive effect on the health of its users, suggests a study in the British Medical Journal. It says "Boris bikes" have greater benefits for men than women, and for the over 45s who have more to gain from increased physical activity.

Is there such a thing as a 'lazy gene'?

Monday 17 February 2014

"A mutation in a gene with a critical role in the brain could explain why some people are 'couch potatoes'," The Independent reports, while the Mail Online claims that "there might soon be a pill to get you moving".

Safety & accident prevention

Health and Safety Newsletter

Health and Safety Newsletter Winter 2013. In this issue: Major injuries hit all-time low, The ABC of health and safety, Updated and simplified ACOPs and why blaming health and safety can be so short-sighted.

Smoking

Smoke effect '11 times worse' in enclosed spaces

Friday 7 February 2014

Hundreds of doctors and health experts have signed a letter urging MPs in England to support a ban on smoking in cars carrying children. Critics say the move would be an unnecessary intrusion into people's lives, but those supporting it say second hand smoke is a major cause of ill health in youngsters.

Health experts urge MPs to back car smoking ban

Friday 7 February 2014

More than 700 doctors and other health experts have put their names to a letter urging MPs to back a ban in England on smoking in cars with children present.

MPs vote to ban smoking in cars carrying children

Tuesday 11 February 2014

"MPs overwhelmingly back ban on smoking in cars carrying children," reports The Guardian. The media headlines are based on the passing of an amendment to the Children and Families Bill in the House of Commons, which empowers – but does not compel – ministers to bring in a ban on smoking in cars carrying children.

Roll-ups 'as hazardous as factory made cigarettes'

Wednesday 12 February 2014

"Rollies vs Straights: Roll-your-own 'at least as hazardous as any other type of cigarette,'" reports The Independent.

Is a complete ban on smoking next?

Tuesday 11 February 2014

It is often said if smoking was invented today it would never be legalised. But with MPs voting in favour of banning smoking in cars with children present - and Downing Street confirming it will now act - it raises the question: what next?

Quitting smoking can 'relieve stress,' study finds

Friday 14 February 2014

Quitting smoking can relieve stress, according to a new study. Researchers at the Universities of Birmingham, Oxford and Kings College London found that quitting was just as effective as taking antidepressants.

Social & economic issues

Female genital mutilation: Hospitals to log victims

Thursday 6 February 2014

Doctors and nurses in the UK are to be told to log details of the injuries suffered by victims of female genital mutilation (FGM). The move is designed to gather more information on the practice, which was outlawed in the UK in 1985. The children's charity, NSPCC, which set up a FGM helpline seven months ago, says it has already received 153 calls.

Social work training needs upgrading, says Martin Narey

Thursday 13 February 2014

The training of social workers in England needs upgrading, with more emphasis put on practical skills, a government adviser has said. Sir Martin Narey's report also suggests some of the students recruited are not up to the job and that course standards vary.

The evolutionary puzzle of homosexuality

Tuesday 18 February 2014

In the last two decades, dozens of scientific papers have been published on the biological origins of homosexuality - another announcement was made last week. It's becoming scientific orthodoxy. But how does it fit with Darwin's theory of evolution?

Women's health

Female stroke survivors' quality of life investigated

Monday 10 February 2014

"Women have a poorer quality of life after stroke than men," reports BBC News. This headline stemmed from a new US study that found women had a lower quality of life than men three and 12 months after experiencing a stroke or mini-stroke.

#BBCtrending: The woman in Ireland who tweeted her abortion story

Monday 17 February 2014

Some women who have an abortion don't even tell their closest friends and family - but one woman in Ireland has used Twitter to tell the story of her abortion 20 years ago, in the hope it will help lift the "taboo".

Workplace health

Violence at work

Friday 14 February 2014

The number of violent incidents at work has declined over the last decade, with the incident rate remaining stable over the last four years.

Local news: []

Other relevant bulletins – in order to avoid duplication we leave DH and NICE publication to Public Health Awareness Bulletins.

Other South East Public Health news update services:		
Title	Focus areas	Contact details/ Website
NICE Public Health Awareness Bulletins:	A monthly update containing national public health news and information from NICE.	https://www.evidence.nhs.uk/about-evidence-services/bulletins-and-alerts/whats-new-in-public-health/public-health-bulletin-archive
Health Intelligence bulletin	Fortnightly email update containing public health news, publications and information from government and other relevant websites.	Jill Rutland Kent & Medway Public Health Network jill.rutland@nhs.net