

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 4 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

Alcohol misuse

[Alcohol linked to skin cancer risk](#)

Wednesday 29 January 2014

Scientists believe drinking too much alcohol could set off a chain of reactions in the body that makes the skin more vulnerable to cancer.

[Dry January: Could you go 31 days without alcohol?](#)

Saturday 1 February 2014

Some people took on the challenge of giving up alcohol for 31 days in January. The aim was to make people think about their consumption and to lose weight, save money and make changes.

Chronic conditions

[NICE approves migraine magnet therapy](#)

Wednesday 22 January 2014

"Hope for migraine sufferers as gadget that zaps pain with the push of a button is approved," says the Mail Online, reporting a newly approved magnetic therapy. The widespread media coverage follows the publication of new guidance from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) on the use of a device that gives magnetic pulses for the prevention and treatment of migraines.

[UK heart-attack survival rate 'should have been better'](#)

Thursday 23 January 2014

Thousands of heart attack victims could have been saved if the UK had adopted similar treatment methods to Sweden, research suggests.

[DDT: Pesticide linked to Alzheimer's](#)

Tuesday 28 January 2014

Exposure to a once widely used pesticide, DDT, may increase the chances of developing Alzheimer's disease, suggest US researchers.

[DDT pesticide exposure may up Alzheimer's risk](#)

Tuesday 28 January 2014

"DDT: Pesticide linked to Alzheimer's," BBC News reports. A US study found that levels of the now banned pesticide DDT were almost four times higher in people with a confirmed diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease.

[Multiple sclerosis 'linked to food bug'](#)

Wednesday 29 January 2014

A food poisoning bacterium may be implicated in MS, say US researchers. Lab tests in mice by the team from Weill Cornell Medical College revealed a toxin made by a rare strain of *Clostridium perfringens* caused MS-like damage in the brain.

[Heart failure patients may have higher cancer risk](#)

Wednesday 29 January 2014

"Heart attacks increase the risk of developing cancer," is the completely inaccurate headline on the Mail Online website.

[Research 'changing the treatment of cancer'](#)

Tuesday 28 January 2014

There is a growing realisation among experts that cancer is developing resistance to the treatments currently being used to combat it. This is leading to a fundamental rethink of the way the field is being researched.

[Cancer 'tidal wave' on horizon, warns WHO](#)

Tuesday 4 February 2014

The globe is facing a "tidal wave" of cancer, and restrictions on alcohol and sugar need to be considered, say World Health Organization scientists.

[Cancer: A global threat](#)

Tuesday 4 February 2014

Globally, one in five men and one in six women will develop cancer before the age of 75. And one in eight men, and one in twelve women, will die from the disease. Cancer is the leading cause of economic loss through premature death and disability worldwide - because of the vast sums spent on treatment, but also in lost economic and social activity.

[Sons: Caring for Dad with dementia is 'heartbreaking'](#)

Tuesday 4 February 2014

Tom Wright was aged 56 when he was diagnosed with early onset dementia seven years ago. Since then his sons Ben, 21 and Nick, 28 have had the "heartbreaking" task of caring for him full-time.

Communicable diseases

[H7N9: Bird flu cases surge ahead of Chinese New Year](#)

Thursday 23 January 2014

A surge in cases of the deadly new strain of bird flu has been reported in China at the beginning of 2014.

[New strains of the Black Death could emerge](#)

Tuesday 28 January 2014

"Plague that killed millions is able to rise from the dead," warns The Independent after a new study looked at the genetic history of the Yersinia pestis bacteria.

Diet & nutrition

[Lingonberries claimed to prevent weight gain](#)

Friday 24 January 2014

"Lingonberries 'could prevent weight gain'," says The Daily Telegraph, reporting on the so-called "superberries" from Scandinavia. But before rushing your local Swedish grocer, it's worth noting that these tests were done on mice.

[Vitamin D not needed for healthy people, study finds](#)

Friday 24 January 2014

There is little reason to prescribe vitamin D supplements to healthy adults to reduce the risk of diseases or fractures, say researchers writing in the Lancet. They found no significant reduction in risk in any area after analysing more than 100 trials.

[Genetically-modified purple tomatoes heading for shops](#)

Friday 24 January 2014

The prospect of genetically modified purple tomatoes reaching the shelves has come a step closer. Their dark pigment is intended to give tomatoes the same potential health benefits as fruit such as blueberries.

['Good' cholesterol can turn 'bad', study finds](#)

Monday 27 January 2014

"Good cholesterol also has a nasty side that can increase the risk of heart attacks," BBC News reports after a US study has suggested that labelling cholesterol either "good" or "bad" is oversimplifying a complex situation.

[University of Edinburgh leads research on eating habits](#)

Monday 27 January 2014

A £7.4m research initiative led by the University of Edinburgh is to aim to explain what drives people's appetites.

[Horsemeat found in food 'three years' before scandal](#)

Tuesday 28 January 2014

Thousands of tonnes of horsemeat probably entered the food chain in the three years before last year's food crisis, according to a frontbench Labour MP.

[Peanut allergy therapy shows promise](#)

Thursday 30 January 2014

"A tough nut cracked? Scientists discover new treatment for peanut allergy sufferers," is the punning headline in The Independent. It comes from research that suggests that exposing children with a peanut allergy to trace elements of peanuts boosts their tolerance to the nut.

[Can vitamins be used to treat ADHD in adults?](#)

Friday 31 January 2014

"Vitamins 'effective in treating ADHD symptoms'," BBC News reports, saying that a wide range of nutrients, including vitamin D, iron and calcium, may improve brain functioning.

[Genes and diet may influence lifespan](#)

Friday 31 January 2014

"Could a blood test help you choose between the Atkins and 5:2? Genes could hold secret to the diets that best suit our bodies," claims the Mail Online. However, no such test is available to help you pick your diet craze. It should also be noted that the research the story is based on did not involve humans, but microscopic bacteria-eating worms.

[Serious food allergies 'have changed our lives'](#)

Thursday 30 January 2014

Even something as simple as eating a sandwich from her packed lunch which has been touched by crumbs of cake can trigger a severe and potentially life-threatening allergic reaction in Niamh Rooney.

[Sugar intake linked to heart disease deaths](#)

Tuesday 4 February 2014

"Three fizzy drinks per day could triple chance of heart disease," says The Daily Telegraph. Its headline is based on a major US study showing a link between high levels of sugar consumption and a higher relative risk of dying from cardiovascular disease (CVD).

Disability

[Cells from eyes of dead 'may give sight to blind'](#)

Saturday 1 February 2014

Cells taken from the donated eyes of dead people may be able to give sight to the blind, researchers suggest. Tests in rats, reported in Stem Cells Translational Medicine, showed the human cells could restore some vision to completely blind rats.

[Donated human eye cells could help restore vision](#)

Monday 3 February 2014

"Cells from eyes of dead 'may give sight to blind'," BBC News reports..... However, the research was carried out in rats genetically engineered to develop visual impairment, so it's not something that will be used to treat people any time soon.

[Technology is helping to give genetic disorders a name](#)

Sunday 2 February 2014

"Yes, my husband had to resuscitate him," says Rachel Jeffares calmly, as she describes one particularly traumatic episode when her three-year-old son Nate stopped breathing at home one night.

['Tinnitus risk' of noisy nights out](#)

Monday 3 February 2014

About two-thirds of people are left with ringing in their ears after a night out at a club, gig or pub, a poll suggests. Campaign group Action on Hearing Loss said the poll of 1,000 adults also showed a third would ignore the "safe level" on their music players.

Drug Misuse

[Khat: What impact will UK herb stimulant ban have?](#)

Thursday 23 January 2014

Home Secretary Theresa May is banning a herb called khat, a stimulant chewed by large sections of the Somali community and grown mainly in East Africa. The UK is the biggest western importer of the plant, which in the next few months will become classified as a class C drug.

[New 'legal highs' pose challenges and risks](#)

Sunday 26 January 2014

Scientists testing "legal highs" say they are coming across new mind-altering psychoactive substances.

[Silent danger: Living with a secret addiction](#)

Tuesday 28 January 2014

"I thought I was hurting myself and my family and felt it was better to take my own life rather than endure this any more." That is how a French academic, currently living and working in Northern Ireland, explained the burden of living with a secret addiction.

[Ex-heroin user: addiction never goes away](#)

Monday 3 February 2014

Tributes have been paid to Oscar winning actor Philip Seymour Hoffman, who died aged 46 from an apparent drugs overdose. The actor had given up drugs for 23 years before reportedly turning to heroin in 2013.... Recovering heroin addict Dominic Ruffey, 40, claims addiction "doesn't go away."

Environmental health

[EU air pollution target 'still too high' for heart health](#)

Wednesday 22 January 2014

A study confirming a link between atmospheric pollution and heart-attack risk strengthens the EU case for tougher clean-air targets, experts say.

Health promotion

[New calls to change sex and relationship education](#)

Tuesday 28 January 2014

Charities and educational groups are drawing up their own guidelines for teaching about sex and relationships in school. It follows the government saying it had no plans to update current guidance, which is nearly 14 years old and doesn't mention the internet.

Health services administration

[Patients should be pushier with GPs, says watchdog chairman](#)

Saturday 25 January 2014

Prof David Haslam, chairman of the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) told the Daily Telegraph people should see themselves as equal partners with their doctors.

[Are your medical records in danger?](#)

Tuesday 28 January 2014

Householders across England have started receiving leaflets about a new NHS scheme called Care.data..... But to some the data-sharing project represents an attack on privacy and confidentiality. Should we be concerned?

[Giant patient records database 'should be delayed'](#)

Tuesday 4 February 2014

The roll-out of a new NHS data-sharing scheme involving medical records should be delayed as patients have been left "in the dark", a patient watchdog says.

[NHS warned it 'could go bust without radical change'](#)

Sunday 2 February 2014

The head of the health watchdog the Care Quality Commission has made a strong attack on the NHS in England, saying it will go bust without radical change.

[Councils 'pay too little for home care'](#)

Tuesday 4 February 2014

A BBC investigation has found that most local authorities in England are paying less for personal home care than the minimum recommended amount.

Infant & child health

[Are home births 'unethical' and 'dangerous'?](#)

Thursday 23 January 2014

"Home births could be as dangerous as 'driving without putting your child's seatbelt on'," The Independent reports. The headline is based on a recently published narrative review that looked at home births and future risk to the child following birth...

[Baby heart-disease risk 'shaped early in pregnancy'](#)

Friday 24 January 2014

A baby's development in the womb in the first weeks of life is critical for future heart health, research suggests.

[Pregnant mother's fatty diet 'may alter baby's brain'](#)

Saturday 25 January 2014

A high-fat diet during pregnancy has the potential to alter a baby's developing brain and increase its chances of obesity later in life, animal studies suggest.

[Making music videos 'helps young cancer patients cope'](#)

Monday 27 January 2014

Music therapy can help teenagers and young people cope better when faced with treatment for cancer, a study in Cancer journal suggests.

[Pregnant binge drinking 'affects child's behaviour'](#)

Monday 27 January 2014

"One binge in pregnancy 'harms child years later': Children 'more likely to be badly behaved' if their mother drinks more than two glasses of wine," reports the Mail Online.

[Magnet rods straighten curved spines, say guidelines](#)

Tuesday 28 January 2014

Children with crooked backs could benefit from a new treatment that uses magnetic rods to straighten the spine, say draft guidelines for England.

Men's health

[Does marriage make your bones grow stronger?](#)

Friday 24 January 2014

"Marriage really does make you stronger: Husbands have tougher bones than their single counterparts," reports the Mail Online – but apparently this only applies if the man marries after the age of 25.

[Could stem cell research spell the end of baldness?](#)

Wednesday 29 January 2014

"Baldness has plagued men for centuries, but the dreaded comb-over may soon be history," The Times reports, somewhat prematurely. This news comes from laboratory research in which human skin cells were injected into mice.

Mental health

[Mental Health Act detentions up 12%](#)

Tuesday 28 January 2014

The number of people in England being detained under the Mental Health Act has risen by 12% in the past five years, according to the NHS regulator.

[Hospital admissions for eating disorders up 8%](#)

Thursday 30 January 2014

Hospital admissions for eating disorders rose by 8% in England from 2012 to 2013, official figures show.

[Medics see rise in 'healthy eating' disorder Orthorexia](#)

Thursday 30 January 2014

The number of people becoming dangerously obsessed with healthy eating is growing, according to health experts. Sufferers of the eating disorder, known as Orthorexia Nervosa, focus on maintaining a restricted diet rather than achieving a certain weight.

Obesity

[Gastric balloon pill launched in UK](#)

Wednesday 22 January 2014

Most of the UK media has got rather overexcited about the UK launch of Obalon, a gastric balloon in pill form that can be swallowed to help overweight people achieve rapid weight loss without invasive surgery.

[BMI obesity measure 'needs to be lower' for millions in UK](#)

Wednesday 22 January 2014

Millions of people from ethnic minority groups who may be at risk of weight-related diseases are not showing up as obese under current tests, experts say.

[Central heating could be contributing to obesity](#)

Thursday 23 January 2014

“Overheated homes and offices adding to weighty problem,” The Daily Telegraph reports. Dutch researchers have argued that the widespread use of central heating stops people’s bodies using up energy to stay warm, which could be helping drive up obesity levels.

[Stoke-on-Trent obese sent 'motivational' weight loss texts](#)

Monday 3 February 2014

Obese people in Stoke-on-Trent will be sent text messages to encourage them to lose weight, the city council has said.

[England's fattest areas: Copeland 'most overweight borough'](#)

Tuesday 4 February 2014

Copeland in West Cumbria is the fattest local authority area in England, according to new government figures.

Older people

[Older cancer patients 'should not be written off'](#)

Friday 24 January 2014

Older cancer patients should not be "written off" as too old for treatment, a charity has warned. Macmillan Cancer Support said decisions on care should be made based on a patient's fitness, not their age.

Physical activity

[Why city life may be bad for you](#)

Thursday 30 January 2014

When it comes to getting people to be more active, much of the attention is focused on the improving sports facilities, encouraging people to join the gym or lambasting schools for not doing enough PE. But could another crucial factor be the way neighbourhoods are designed?

[Poor areas suffer 'inactivity pandemic'](#)

Friday 31 January 2014

A "pandemic" of inactivity in poor areas of England is leading to premature deaths, a report shows. The analysis by UKactive, which represents the leisure industry, found 13 of the 15 local authorities where people were the most inactive were in the most deprived parts of the country.

[Vitamin pills 'lower exercise gains'](#)

Monday 3 February 2014

Taking some types of vitamin supplement may make it harder to train for big endurance events like marathons, researchers in Norway suggest.

Prison health

[Met Police custody healthcare a 'major problem'](#)

Tuesday 28 January 2014

The Met Police is struggling to provide adequate medical staffing to assess and treat detainees in their custody, according to a new report. The London Assembly committee said there was a 60% shortfall in the number of nurses providing medical assessments and care for people in custody.

Safety & accident prevention

[Study highlights child burns dangers in the home](#)

Tuesday 4 February 2014

"Hair straighteners and mugs top child burns list," reports BBC News. The news follows an attempt by researchers to get a more accurate picture of what causes children's burns and scalds, and provide clues about how to prevent them happening in the first place.

Sexual health

[Can couples really get stuck together during sex?](#)

Sunday 2 February 2014

It sounds like a scene from a trashy sex comedy. But stories of getting stuck during sex have been with us for centuries - and some of them might just be true. An emergency trip to hospital is never pleasant, but it's certainly not something you would want to happen after sex.

Smoking

[NI charity: Ban e-cig sales to under-18s](#)

Sunday 26 January 2014

A medical charity is calling for the Northern Ireland health minister to outlaw the sale of electronic cigarettes to people under 18 years.

[E-cigarettes to be stubbed out for under-18s](#)

Sunday 26 January 2014

Under-18s in England are to be banned from buying electronic cigarettes, the government has announced. Experts say it is not yet known what harm the tobacco-free devices could inflict and that their contents could be damaging young people's health.

[Child car smoking ban proposal before Lords](#)

Wednesday 29 January 2014

A Labour plan to ban smoking in cars carrying children is due to be put to a vote in the House of Lords later. Labour peers are to table an amendment to the Children and Families Bill detailing their proposal for England.

[Mark Drakeford says e-cigarettes are 're-normalising' smoking](#)

Sunday 2 February 2014

Health Minister Mark Drakeford said he fears that electronic cigarettes are "re-normalising" smoking and believes there is a case for tighter laws.

[Nutt: E-cigs 'greatest health advance' since vaccines](#)

Tuesday 4 February 2014

Getting all smokers to switch to electronic cigarettes would be the "greatest health advance since vaccinations," Professor David Nutt claims.

Social & economic issues

[Girls in parts of England can expect to live to over 100](#)

Monday 27 January 2014

Girls born in parts of England can expect to live to over 100 for the first time, a report has found.

[Catching the mother of all bed bugs](#)

Wednesday 29 January 2014

The ability of bed bugs to return so quickly after human attempts to get rid of them has been explained by University of Sheffield researchers.

[Plastic surgery 'booming' in the UK](#)

Monday 3 February 2014

There has been a dramatic increase in the popularity of plastic surgery in the UK, according to figures from the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (Baaps).

['More under 18s are taking risks with illegal tattoos'](#)

Monday 3 February 2014

It is illegal for anyone under 18 to get a tattoo, but it is claimed more young people than ever are trying to break the law to get one.

Women's health

[Elderly breast cancer warning](#)

Monday 3 February 2014

One in three breast cancers are in women over the age of 70, warns Public Health England (PHE). The organisation is launching a campaign telling elderly women "don't assume you're past it" and to get any changes in their breasts checked out.

[Play to Cure: Smartphone games to fight breast cancer](#)

Tuesday 4 February 2014

If you have ever wanted to help cure cancer, you might now be able to do so - with a spot of space-travel from the comfort of your own home. Scientists at Cancer Research UK have developed an intergalactic smartphone game to help them analyse the overwhelming reams of genetic data generated in recent studies.

[Media hype blood clot risk of birth control pills](#)

Monday 3 February 2014

"Deadly risk of pill used by 1m women: Every GP in Britain told to warn about threat from popular contraceptive," reports the Mail Online. Combined hormonal contraceptives (or "the pill") are in the news after letters were sent to doctors to tell them about the latest evidence on the risk of thromboembolism (blood clots) associated with combined contraceptives.

Workplace health

[Davos 2014: OECD highlights mental health in workplace](#)

Thursday 23 January 2014

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD, is using the World Economic Forum to highlight the issue of stress in the workplace. The OECD says it is one of the key challenges - in the UK alone, nearly 500,000 people were off work for mental health reasons last year.

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: | | |
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| 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 |