

New MHF Training

The Men's Health Forum has launched a range of courses for health professionals and others with an interest in working more effectively with men. Five one-day courses will run, in London, in 2002-2003:



- **An Introduction to Men's Health:** Tuesday 12 November 2002 or Wednesday 15 January 2003 or Thursday 13 March 2003 or Friday 16 May 2003
- **Men, Mental Health and Suicide:** Wednesday 4 December 2002
- **Planning Services for Men:** Friday 14 February 2003
- **Working with Young Men:** Thursday 10 April 2003
- **Men and Sexual Health:** Monday 16 June 2003

Discounts for MHF members!

Each course is skills-based and experiential, drawing on participants' own professional experiences as a starting point for developing practice. For this reason, our courses are ideal for those from a range of backgrounds working with, or planning to work, with men. Health promotion specialists, health visitors, district nurses, practice nurses and school nurses will all find this training useful and relevant.

Our objective is to provide those that come on our courses with a skills-based tool-box to enable them to work effectively with men. Because of this

our trainers are chosen because of their wide knowledge and experience of the practical issues. There are discounted fees for multiple bookings and for individual or organisational members of The Men's Health Forum.

PREP accreditation has been sought for each course.

For further information, including copies of the Forum's *Guide to Courses*, contact Robbie Porter, Training and Information Services Officer, on 01905 21340 or e-mail at:

robbie.porter@menshealthforum.org.uk

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National Men's Health Week 2003



NMHW 2002 saw hundreds of men's health projects took place across the country. Dr Steve Ohlsen (left) gives Desmond Swayne MP (right) a check-up at a National Men's Health Week event in Westminster.

The second annual National Men's Health Week (NMHW) will take place in June 2003 (9-15th). The main theme will be improving men's sexual health, including sexually transmitted infections (STIs), sexual dysfunctions (such as erectile dysfunction, or ED), contraception and prostate and testicular health. The focus will not be purely medical – the Week will also highlight the importance of fulfilling sexual relationships for men and their partners.

The Forum, which is organising the Week, hopes that many local health organisations will take part in the Week, perhaps by holding sexual health clinics, providing information in public places or launching initiatives in schools, the workplace or 'male-friendly'

settings like pubs and sports venues. Some 300 local men's health events were held during NMHW 2002 and the Forum hopes there will be even more next year.

The need for such an initiative is clear. The incidence of sexually transmitted infections is rapidly increasing – the number of men in England diagnosed with gonorrhoea went up by 96 per cent between 1996 and 2001 alone. The number of men with chlamydia went up by 109 per cent, making it the most common STI. The incidence of benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) and prostate cancer is expected to double over the next 20 years. One man in 10 has erection problems at some time in his life.

But many men continue to lack knowledge of sexual health and sexual health services. Just one in eight men knows what the prostate gland does, for example, and one in five believe it is located in the testes. Only half of adult men know that a GUM clinic provides sexual health advice and treatment (one in eight believe it has something to do with gum disease). They are also reluctant to seek help: Impotence Association research, based on a survey of over 2000 men, suggests that 85 per cent of men with ED take over six months to seek treatment; nearly half of men with ED take over two years.

Sexual health policies and services have not adapted to meet men's needs. Effective sex education for boys and young men remains sparse, family planning clinics are used by very small numbers of men and there are few sexual health promotion campaigns aimed at men in general. The Department of Health's sexual health strategy has little to

say about men and how to tackle their sexual health problems. Moreover, it focuses almost exclusively on the prevention and treatment of STIs and HIV. The Department of Health's continuing refusal to change its policy on the prescription of treatments for ED by GPs on the NHS is also a major men's health issue.

The Forum and its partner organisations will highlight these (and other) key issues during the Week. They will also launch several national events aimed at generating extensive media coverage.

For more information about NMHW, including a free resource pack for local organisations, please email the NMHW office at: mhw@menshealthforum.org.uk, phone David Wilkins on 01963 362047, or write to 'NMHW 2003' at the Forum office.

Getting to know you

An afternoon of briefings on the latest issues in men's health and consultation on the Men's Health Forum's plans for its future work will be held in London on 14 January.

Exclusively for MHF members, the event will start with a lunch reception. Members who come along will hear MHF President Dr Ian Banks and an exclusive briefing on National Men's Health Week 2003.

More details will be sent to members shortly. If you would like to come along please email colin.penning@menshealthforum.org.uk or send a fax to 0870 130 8281. Places are free but limited. If you have any questions about the event call Colin Penning on 020 8769 0520.

Prostate health awareness project

Prostate health is emerging as a key public health priority. Nearly 22,000 men in the UK are newly diagnosed with prostate cancer each year and the Department of Health has launched a NHS Prostate Cancer Programme. Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), which shares similar symptoms with prostate cancer in the early stages, affects about half of all men by the age of 60, rising to eight out of 10 men in their 80s. Prostatitis, an often painful inflammation of the prostate, affects a much broader age-range and is thought to affect one in eight men at some stage in their lifetime.

Despite the widespread prevalence of these conditions, many men remain unaware of the symptoms and possible treatments. This leads to unnecessary suffering as well as delayed diagnosis and treatment that, in cases of prostate cancer, may be life threatening.

Given men's general reluctance to access health services, it is important to develop innovative ways of providing them with health information and of encouraging them to see a health professional where appropriate. It is becoming increasingly clear that taking health interventions to 'where men are' can make a significant difference and, in this context, the workplace is an obvious venue.

The aim of this project was to develop a workplace-based method of increasing men's awareness of prostate problems and their symptoms and to encourage those affected to seek appropriate help. The fieldwork and analysis was conducted by CEDC (Community Education Development Centre) in partnership with the Institute of Health at Warwick University.

The study surveyed 2,730 men at three Royal Mail sites in the West Midlands. They were surveyed twice, before and after a variety of health promotion interventions. 458 men replied to both surveys, 17% of the total male workforce. This group provided the quantitative data.

There were three main health promotion interventions, each used at a different site. Site One had posters and

leaflets; Site Two had posters and leaflets plus a nurse who talked to men in their breaks; Site Three had posters, leaflets, a nurse plus peer educators, male employees briefed to offer basic information to their colleagues.

Although the study found relatively high levels of knowledge before the interventions, there was still a marked improvement. The proportion of men who knew that passing water more often, especially at night, was a symptom of prostate disease increased from 64% to 88%. Similarly, post interventions, 84% knew difficulty in passing water was a symptom, up from 72%. Revealingly, however, men's awareness of the level of their lifetime risk of developing prostate disease was virtually unchanged – the proportion that knew that the risk was 1 in 2 increased from just 9% to 11%. This may well have been because the posters used for the interventions focused on symptoms and did not mention the level of risk.

About three-quarters of the men at all three sites saw the posters, one in six saw the leaflets. At Sites Two and Three, one in six men talked to the nurse and, at Site Three, one-third knew about the peer educators and one-third of those talked to them. Interestingly (and surprisingly), all three sites recorded similar levels of increased symptom awareness.

The study also found that the men welcomed health promotion interventions at work. About three-quarters said they would be willing to discuss health in the workplace; over 95 per cent felt leaflets and posters should be available in the workplace and over two-thirds reported that they would talk to a nurse at work.

This study suggests that the workplace can provide a setting for effective health promotion work to raise men's awareness of prostate health. The Forum intends to use this research to develop further workplace prostate projects and as the basis for further research. The full report will be published this autumn.

News from Westminster

The Forum continues assisting the All Party Parliamentary Group on Men's Health in its work. Launched in early 2001, the Group has looked at issues including suicide, benign prostate diseases and weight problems. The Group has successfully raised the profile of these issues in Parliament and with the Department of Health. In National Men's Health Week the Group held a day of health checks for male MPs – the first such event in Parliament.

This autumn the Group will start an inquiry into men's health policy. Taking a lead from the Forum's 'Getting it sorted' report, the Group will look at ways to improve policy on men's health and will hear from national and local policy makers.

If you would like to keep up to date with the work of the All Party Group on Men's Health see the Group's page at

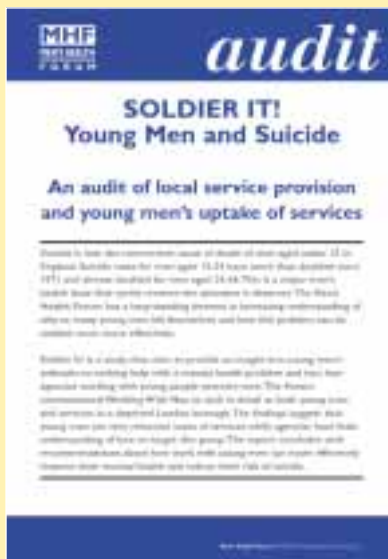
www.allpartygroup.org.uk.



Hazel Blears MP, the Minister for Public Health, will meet the Group this Autumn.

Soldier It!

Young men and suicide



Soldier It! and the Forum's previous reports on Young men and suicide are available from our website www.menshealthforum.org.uk and from the Forum's office.



Young men are very reluctant to discuss mental health problems and young people's agencies are poor at providing them with the kind of services men are likely to use. This is the depressing conclusion of a new Men's Health Forum report on young men and suicide based on research into young men and services in the London Borough of Newham.

The study, *Soldier It!*, is based on interviews with a diverse group of 25 young men as well as workers at 10 local projects. It found that the young men were, in general, surprisingly 'sex-typed' in their attitudes to dealing with emotions and mental health problems. In other words, they conformed very closely to the stereotyped notion of how men are 'supposed' to deal with these issues: talking about problems is a waste of time, crying is 'sissy' and it is important to 'soldier it' and cope.

The agencies tended to accept these attitudes as inevitable and saw young men as a difficult group to work with. The majority did not show any significant understanding of young men's needs or issues, did not target young men and had no strategy for dealing with them. Outreach work with men was extremely limited.

Soldier It! suggests how agencies can begin to work more effectively with young men. The report's recommendations include:

- Gender attitudes towards coping, help-seeking and emotions must be reflected in agencies' strategies if they are to impact on significant numbers of young men.
- When working with young men, approaches that highlight 'emotional fitness' and 'mental strength', within a positive and non-stigmatising framework, may impact more successfully on significant numbers of young men than approaches that rely on phrases such as "Desperate, need someone to talk to?"
- Skills development courses that aim to broaden young men's coping strategies (for example, the ability to ask for help, recognizing emotions and the development of a range of emotional outlets etc.) may be a very useful foundation for significant numbers of young men.
- The development of specific skills for professionals to target and engage young men should be incorporated within the broad range of professional training to ensure that agencies are equipped to work effectively with young men.
- Schools should ensure that young men are provided with clear opportunities to talk about their personal concerns. This may be through Connexions, Personal Social and Health Education, school nurses or existing pastoral support.
- Initiatives targeting young men should use both traditional health agencies (GP surgeries, GUM clinics and advice and counselling services) as well as non-traditional avenues (such as leisure and recreation venues, pubs, clubs, websites, and radio) to publicise services and information.

Soldier It! can be downloaded from the Forum's website, www.menshealthforum.org.uk. Printed copies are available from the Forum office for £10.00 (inc p&p).

Men's Health Projects – the UK wide directory

The Forum's unique database of men's health projects on www.menshealthforum.org.uk is about to be updated thanks to a grant from the Department of Health.

The database is a unique resource and holds details of some 120 projects. It can be searched using a range of variables, including target group (e.g. young men) and location (e.g. West Midlands). This makes it useful to those planning to work with men or keen to find out what's happening locally and to commissioners of services interested in discovering what work is being done elsewhere. Projects listed on the database also benefit from having information about their activities disseminated more widely.

The updating will begin in October 2002 when all projects currently listed will be asked to check their entries. This stage of the project should be completed by March 2003. At the same time, steps will be taken to identify new initiatives and add their details to the database. An intensive search for new projects will begin in early 2003.

Any local projects interested in having their details added to the Forum's database should contact Matthew Maycock for a questionnaire. Fax Matthew on 020 7388 4477 or contact him by e-mail at: matthew.maycock@menshealthforum.org.uk (quoting database review).

For other information about the database, please contact the Forum's Information Services Officer, Robbie Porter, on 01905 21340 or by e-mail at: robbie.porter@menshealthforum.org.uk.

Men's Health Journal New issue coming soon.

Includes: Preventing type 2 diabetes in men, Enabling men to access help for testicular cancer, Putting men's health on the curriculum and Prostate health awareness campaign – promoting men's health in the workplace.

Members subscription forms available from the office. Non-members call Martina at MEP on 020 7561 5400.



If you're interested in discussing issues in men's health policy and practice with a diverse mixture of health professionals, academics and others with an interest, including other Forum members, you might like to join the Men's Health Forum e-discussion group. Just visit our website, www.menshealthforum.org.uk and click on Discussion Network. You choose how often you post and in what form you receive your mail. No spam and no obligation to contribute.

The discussion network is just one of the services run through the Forum's two websites. Both sites are now added to regularly and include our news service that is updated at least three times a week. www.malehealth.co.uk, our health information site aimed at the man in the street of whatever age, also features new easy-to-follow health tips every week and a new feature article every month.

Pay the sites a visit and do the Forum a favour by boosting our hits!



Staff Update



David Wilkins, the Forum's new Policy and Special Projects Officer

David Wilkins joined the MHF staff team in September. David brings an enormous amount of experience to the position of Policy and Special Projects Officer after working in the NHS for over ten years, most recently on a joint appointment with Bournemouth University where he was a Lecturer/Practitioner in Health Promotion. He is an experienced trainer and has published a number of articles about men's health and health improvement. After his appointment, David said "I'm looking forward to developing our policy role and am really excited about organising National Men's Health Week 2003".

To find out about the rest of the MHF staff team, or to find out who's who on the organisation's Executive and who is a Trustee visit the 'About us' section of:

www.menshealthforum.org.uk.

MHF Diary

6 November

Health Development Agency conference: Young men's health – what works and why?

Birmingham

A Young People's Health Network conference in association with Working With Men and the West Midlands' office of the Health Development Agency.

For further information contact: NCB Conference Department, 8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE. Tel: 020 7843 6042/40, Fax: 020 7843 6039, email: conferences@ncb.org.uk

12 November

MHF Training: An Introduction to Men's Health

London

Contact Robbie Porter, 01905 21340, email Robbie.porter@menshealthforum.org.uk

4 December

MHF Training: Men, mental health and suicide

London

Contact Robbie Porter, 01905 21340, email Robbie.porter@menshealthforum.org.uk

14 January 2003, 1pm – 4.30pm

MHF members briefing

London

An afternoon event for members of the Men's Health Forum to catch up with the Forum's work and with each other.

Contact Colin Penning, Tel: 020 8769 0520, email colin.penning@menshealthforum.org.uk.

15 January 2003

MHF Training: An Introduction to Men's Health

London

Contact Robbie Porter, 01905 21340, email Robbie.porter@menshealthforum.org.uk

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