

February 2018

## PSNC Briefing 012/18: Update on the Health and Care Landscape

This briefing is part of a series issued regularly by PSNC to inform pharmacy contractors and LPCs of developments in the wider health and care landscape beyond community pharmacy. These briefings contain useful background information to help you understand what is happening in the wider health and care environment which may impact on community pharmacy. They build on the Health & Care Review articles which are published on the PSNC website every week.

### In and out of hospital: how to stop avoidable admissions

The British Red Cross has published a [report](#) focussing on avoidable hospital admissions among vulnerable patients. The report is the culmination of a programme of research undertaken by the charity to highlight the stress the health and social care system is under.

The charity has tried to identify some relatively simple steps it believes could improve patient flow. The recommendations made in the report relate to helping people feel safe at home, avoiding unnecessary hospital admission, and helping people home from hospital.

The recommendations include:

- automatic home assessments should be triggered for people who have come in and out of hospital several times within a few months;
- establish more multidisciplinary teams who work with people at risk of being admitted into hospital;
- all discharge 'checklists' must include an assessment of equipment and medication needs, from wheelchairs to blister packs, arranged before the patient leaves the hospital;
- transport home from hospital should be offered to all those living alone and have poor mobility;
- frail patients whose transfer back to the community has been delayed should be encouraged and assisted to get dressed and walk around every day they are in hospital so that their condition does not deteriorate; and
- those who live alone, have poor mobility and who have been in and out of hospital due to falls should automatically have their home assessed for falls hazards before discharge.

### Uptake for routine breast screening falls

NHS Digital has published a [report](#) relating to the breast screening programme which highlights that uptake is at the lowest rate over the ten-year period.

Under the NHS Breast Screening Programme, eligible women will usually receive their first routine invitation for breast cancer screening between the ages of 50 and 53 and will normally be invited every three years until they are 70.

The report shows that the proportion of women aged 50-70 taking up routine breast screening invitations fell to 71.1% in 2016/17 down from 72.1% in 2015/16 and 73.6% in 2006/07.

## New figures show larger proportion of strokes in the middle aged

Public Health England (PHE) has re-launched its Act FAST [stroke campaign](#), which urges people to call 999 if they notice any of the signs in themselves or others.

New [statistics](#) from PHE relating to stroke include:

- approximately 57,000 people in England experienced a stroke for the first time in 2016;
- stroke incidence increases with age; 3% of the total estimated stroke incidence occurred in people aged under 40, 38% in people aged 40 to 69 and 59% in people aged over 70;
- strokes are occurring at an earlier age; age at onset fell from 70.5 to 68.2 in males and 74.5 to 73 in females between 2007 and 2016;
- incidence of stroke appears to be highest in the most deprived population, although the difference between the most and least deprived is not significant.

## Prescribed medicines that may cause dependence or withdrawal

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health and Primary Care has [commissioned](#) PHE to review the evidence for dependence on, and withdrawal from, prescribed medicines.

The review will bring together the best available evidence on:

- prevalence and prescribing patterns;
- the nature and likely causes of dependence or discontinuation syndrome among some people who take these medicines; and
- effective prevention and treatment of dependence and discontinuation syndrome for each drug category.

The review was launched on 24th January 2018 and is due to report in early 2019.

## How have public attitudes to the NHS changed over the past three decades?

The King's Fund has published an [article](#) on the public's view of health care, based on the British Social Attitudes survey (conducted by NatCen Social Research) undertaken every year since 1983.

Key facts include:

- the public wants the government to spend more on health care, putting it first in line for any extra government spending;
- when people have been asked, 'Which, if any, area of public spending would be your highest priority for extra spending, and which next?', health has always been placed at the top of the list, with education a close second;
- most people want the government to be responsible for providing health care;
- most people responding to the survey have supported the concept of a health service that is not means-tested; and
- levels of public satisfaction with the NHS have fluctuated over the past 34 years, but in 2016 the public reported high levels of satisfaction with the NHS.

## Brexit could disrupt supply of medicines, Brexit Health Alliance warns

NHS Confederation has published a [paper](#) by the Brexit Health Alliance which warns that patients could face disruption to the supply of their medicines when the UK leaves the European Union (EU).

The report describes how EU regulation on medicines and medical technologies has benefited patients and includes case studies relating to different medicines.

The report makes a series of calls, which include ensuring no negative impact on patients, guaranteed patient safety and public health, pragmatic solutions, a cooperation agreement between the UK and the EU on regulation of medicines and medical devices and an implementation period beyond the two years of Article 50 negotiations.

## Expand the nursing workforce at scale and pace, says the Health Committee

The House of Commons Health Committee has published a report, [The nursing workforce](#), which states that too little attention has been given to retaining nurses in the NHS, causing more nurses to leave than join the profession.

Key facts in the report include:

- over 29,000 UK nurses and midwives left the Nursing and Midwifery Council register in 2016/17, 9% more than the previous year;
- there are almost 5,000 fewer nurses working in community settings since 2010; and
- the UK has fewer nurses relative to the population than the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development average, and it is also below many EU countries and traditional comparator countries.

The authors of the report are calling on the Government to:

- expand the nursing workforce at scale and pace and pay more attention to retaining the existing workforce;
- increase the opportunities for nurses to access high quality continuing professional development and improve their working conditions;
- monitor the impact of removing nursing bursaries, especially on mature students taking nursing degrees; and
- make sure that Nursing Associates have a clear professional identity, which is explained to the public.

## Patient safety review and response: October 2016 to March 2017

NHS Improvement has published a [report](#) to provide a summary of how it has reviewed and responded to the patient safety issues reported to the National Reporting and Learning System (NRLS).

Key facts highlighted in this report, which covers the past six months, include:

- 9,769 incidents were reported to the NRLS with an outcome of death or severe harm;
- 43 incidents were reported by patients of the public; and
- 3 letters were received from coroners where they have identified a need for action to prevent further deaths.

The report also discusses when various alerts are issued and specific actions are taken.

## Lawyers who target the NHS banned from advertising or setting up shop in hospitals

NHS England has [announced](#) that NHS hospitals will no longer provide office or advertising space for law firms or claims management companies who encourage patients or their families to take the NHS to court.

Following a consultation exercise, the new rules have been introduced through changes to the NHS Standard Contract under which NHS Trusts and Foundation Trusts operate. The new ban came into effect on 1st February 2018.

## NHS England sets out plans to be first in the world to eliminate Hepatitis C

NHS leaders have [called](#) on the pharmaceutical industry to work with them to provide best value for money for treatments so that in its 70th year, the NHS can commit to eliminating Hepatitis C in England at least five years earlier than the World Health Organization goal of 2030.

Identifying more people living with Hepatitis C who need to be treated is part of a new agreement between NHS England and drug companies; it is expected that this approach combined with existing approaches could lead to the infection being eradicated as a public health concern in the very near future.

## Refreshing NHS Plans for 2018/19

NHS England and NHS Improvement have published joint [guidance](#) aimed at commissioners and providers in updating their 2018/19 operational plans. The guidance aims to enable organisations to continue to work together through [Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships](#) (STPs) to develop system-wide plans to improve services and manage within collective budgets.

The guidance covers the financial framework; planning assumptions for emergency care and Referral to Treatment Times; delivery of [Next Steps](#) priorities; and integrated system working.

## Adult social care workforce statistics released by NHS Digital

NHS Digital has published new [statistics](#) relating to adult social care staff who work for local authorities (LAs) in England.

Key statistics include:

- as of September 2017, there were 109,300 adult social services jobs in LAs (held by around 105,300 people), a decrease of 50,100 LA jobs since 2011;
- the most commonly cited reasons for these decreases were restructures and service closures; and
- between 2016 and 2017, the 3% decrease in adult social services jobs in LAs has been the lowest year on year change since 2011.

## The adult social care workforce in England

The National Audit Office has published a [report](#) which considers the role of the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) in overseeing the adult social care workforce. It also assesses whether the size and structure of the care workforce are adequate to meet the needs of users in the face of financial challenges and a competitive labour market.

Key problems identified in the report include:

- turnover and vacancy rates: two roles in particular – care workers and registered nurses – have high vacancy and turnover rates compared with other roles within social care. High vacancy rates and turnover can disrupt the continuity and quality of care for service users and also mean providers incur regular recruitment and induction costs;
- care work is viewed by the public as low skilled and offering limited opportunities for career progression;
- the vacancy rate for nurses more than doubled between 2012/13 and 2016/17; and
- DSHS does not have an up-to-date care workforce strategy and roles and responsibilities of the bodies involved in delivering care are not clear.

The report also makes recommendations to ensure there is a care workforce that is suitably planned, supported and resourced to improve the quality of care and alleviate pressures on the health service.

## NHS Health Check: stocktake and action plan

PHE has published a [stocktake and action plan](#) to set out the main areas for development for PHE, LAs and NHS England gain maximum benefit from the NHS Health Check programme.

This set of slides reviews the programme as the first five-year cycle ends and outlines an action plan for the next cycle focusing on:

- delivering a high-quality programme;
- encouraging the development of evidence and research;
- providing strong leadership; and
- maximising access to and utility of intelligence.

## Using digital technology to improve the public's health: a guide for LAs

The Local Government Association (LGA) has published a [guide](#) on how digital technology can be used to improve the public's health. The guide provides an overview of what is happening locally and features case studies of how local areas have implemented digital approaches to public health. These include in Hertfordshire, wearable sensors worn during an exercise class have allowed for a quick and accurate assessment of an individual's fall risk instead of a half hour assessment taking place. In North East London, a pilot where pharmacies used a handheld mobile device to test for irregular heartbeats has reduced the time from testing to treatment from 12 weeks to under three.

## Commissioner Sustainability Fund and financial control totals for 2018/19: guidance

NHS England has published a [guidance document](#) which outlines details of a targeted Commissioner Sustainability Fund (CSF) to support CCGs that would otherwise be unable to live within their means for 2018/19. The CSF is designed to help certain CCGs to return to in-year financial balance, whilst supporting and incentivising CCGs to deliver against their financial control totals.

CSF funding totalling up to £400 million will be allocated to fund in-year CCG deficits in 2018/19. If the amount required to fund CCG deficits is less than £400 million, the balance will be held in reserve by NHS England to cover any further pressures arising during the year.

## Tackle falling nursing applications now, urges RCN

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) has published a new report, [Left to chance: the health and care nursing workforce supply in England](#) which looks at nursing application figures from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).

The report warns that according to UCAS data, the current number of applications for the next academic year has fallen by a third since the same point in 2016, and by 13% since last year.

As a result, the RCN says urgent action is needed to prevent the staffing crisis from getting even worse.

## Statistics on Drug Misuse: England, 2018

NHS Digital has published a [statistical report](#) relating to drug use in children and adults in England.

Key statistics highlighted include:

- there were 7,545 hospital admissions with a primary diagnosis of drug-related mental health and behavioural disorders. This is 12% lower than 2015/16 but 12% higher than 2006/07;
- in 2016 there were 2,593 registered deaths in England and Wales related to drug misuse. This is an increase of 5% on 2015 and 58% higher than 2006;
- in 2016/17, 8.5% of adults aged 16 to 59 in England and Wales had taken an illicit drug in the last year; and
- in 2016, 24% of pupils reported they had ever taken drugs. This compares to 15% in 2014.

## Suicide Prevention: Policy and Strategy

The House of Commons Library has published a [briefing](#) which looks at suicides in the UK, and also discusses current suicide prevention policies and strategies. These include health services; education; employment and social security; railways and media.

Key facts include:

- suicide prevention policy in the UK has, in recent decades, developed and expanded considerably as concerns around suicide rates have intensified;
- in Great Britain in 2016, there were 5,668 deaths where the cause was identified as suicide; and

- men are three times more likely than women to take their own lives, and this gender gap has grown in the past 35 years.

While this paper focuses heavily on policies relating to England, it also considers suicide prevention strategies developed and implemented by the governments of Scotland and Wales, as well as the Northern Ireland Executive.

### Homeless adults with complex needs: evidence review

PHE has published an [evidence review](#) on adults with complex needs, with a particular focus on people begging or living on the streets.

The purpose of the review is to provide an overview of the national picture in relation to homelessness and provide insights into the current evidence base to support action for prevention. It is aimed at LAs and other stakeholders who are developing strategies and interventions to prevent homelessness and support adults with complex needs.

The report concludes that although there are a number of interventions which are promising in terms of reducing and preventing homelessness, there is no single intervention that will solve the complex issues surrounding homelessness. There needs to be a whole system approach to ensure services developed meet the needs of those who require them.

### HPV vaccination for men who have sex with men: year 1 pilot

PHE has published an [evaluation](#) of the first year of the human papillomavirus vaccination programme pilot for men who have sex with men (MSM). The pilot used data from clinical recording systems and a survey of individuals receiving the vaccine, together with feedback from clinics and sexual health commissioners in 2016 to 2017.

The first review of the pilot demonstrated that such a programme can be delivered opportunistically in an acceptable and, as far as can be evaluated, equitable manner, without major disruption to Genito-Urinary Medicine and Human Immunodeficiency Virus clinics.

### PHE launches opioid treatment quality improvement programme

PHE has [announced](#) that it will be launching a new opioid substitution treatment (OST) programme to support services to improve the quality of treatment and increase chances of recovery. The programme will include a focus on psychosocial interventions as well as enhance wider recovery support such as employment, living arrangements, family relationships, trauma and abuse.

### PHE urges vigilance about spotting signs of scarlet fever

PHE has published a [news article](#) to raise awareness on the signs and symptoms of scarlet fever among parents of children. This follows reports of a substantial increase in cases across England in 2017 to 2018.

The latest [Health Protection Report](#) showed 6,225 cases of scarlet fever had been reported since mid-September 2017, compared to 3,764 for the same period last season. There were 719 cases reported for 22-28th January 2018.

### Health charge for temporary migrants will increase to £400 a year

DHSC has [announced](#) plans to increase the immigration health surcharge paid by temporary migrants in the UK from £200 to £400 per year. The discounted rate for students and those on the Youth Mobility Scheme will increase from £150 to £300.

Health Minister James O'Shaughnessy said: "By increasing the surcharge so that it better reflects the actual costs of using health services, this Government is providing an extra £220 million a year to support the NHS."

## Funding boost for new mums' mental health

NHS England has [announced](#) that funding worth £23 million will be made available to improve the mental health of at least 3,000 pregnant women and those who have recently given birth.

The funding is part of the [perinatal mental health community services development fund](#) which will see a total of 30,000 additional women getting specialist mental health care, in person and through online consultations.

## Public can expect 'gold standard' protection against flu next year

PHE has published an [article](#) aimed at patients to highlight that it has published guidance for GPs and pharmacists on influenza vaccine orders for 2018/19.

It states that given the evidence, following the guidance is in the best interest of patients, particularly given the association of flu with increased mortality and it will ensure the most vulnerable people get the best available protection.

## Sexual and reproductive health in England: local and national data

PHE has issued a [guide](#) to provide health professionals, including local government service providers and commissioners, with key information they require to understand the available data relating to sexual and reproductive health. This includes data collated by PHE as well as other organisations.

The guide covers various sexual and reproductive health topics and provides a description of the topic, where to find local information and a list of national resources.

## Integrated care: what does it mean for commissioning?

The Nuffield Trust has published a [blog post](#) which considers which risks and opportunities integrated care could have for commissioning. The post highlights that debates around new organisational structures relate more to privatisation within the NHS and less about NHS commissioning.

It discusses the differences between Accountable Care Systems and Accountable Care Organisations (ACOs), NHS commissioning, setting standards and effective strategic commissioning.

## New research into options for funding social care published

The Health Foundation and the King's Fund have published a [working paper](#) setting out interim findings from their project looking at funding options for social care in England.

The paper looks at the following options:

- improving the current system;
- the Conservative Party's proposals at the time of the 2017 general election (a revised means test and a cap on care costs);
- a single budget for health and social care;
- free personal care; and
- a hypothecated tax for social care.

After a review of relevant literature and engagement with two stakeholder groups, a framework was developed for exploring these options, and to identify the key strengths and weakness of each.

The conclusions of the paper include:

- there is scope for making small improvements within the current system, however it would not address many of the fundamental problems within the current system, including the downward trend in the numbers receiving publicly funded care;
- a joint health and social care budget might support progress towards more integrated care, but it will not in itself address the differences in eligibility between the two systems or generate additional revenue for health or care;
- free personal care would mean increasing the government's 'offer' on social care. However, given this would require an increase in public spending, there is a question as to whether this would be the best use of additional funding for social care; and
- a hypothecated tax may help gain public support for raising additional funding for social care, however, this would represent a significant shift from the existing system and could exacerbate the lack of alignment between the health and social care.

## Smarter homes for older people could save NHS and social care system over £2.5 billion a year

The Institution of Mechanical Engineers has published a report, [Healthy Homes: Accommodating an Ageing Population](#), which calls on the Government to offer financial incentives for construction companies to build more modified homes for older living.

Recommendations in the report include:

- the Government must change its existing policy on house building and incentivise construction companies to build for older living. A house that enables people to age well will reduce long-term costs;
- the Government should commit to modernising the UK building design and construction regulations, and create a 'kitemark' for agile/cognitive housing and its associated technology; and
- DHSC to invest in nationwide "healthy living for life" technology programmes and collaborate with the Academic Health Science Networks to invest in national programmes that focus on technology for prevention of ill health in old age.

## Learning from the vanguards: New publications launched

NHS Clinical Commissioners have published a [series of briefings](#) in partnership with NHS Providers, the LGA and the NHS Confederation to explore learning from a number of [vanguard sites](#).

The resources include briefings on:

- **Learning from the vanguard: supporting people and communities**

This briefing looks at what the vanguards set out to achieve when it comes to supporting people and communities to stay well.

- **Learning from vanguards: staff at the heart of new care models**

This briefing looks at what the vanguards set out to achieve when it comes to involving and engaging staff in the new care models.

- **Learning from vanguards: spreading and scaling up change.**

This briefing looks at what can be learned from the vanguards' efforts to design, test and deliver a variety of scalable and replicable new care models.

It is hoped that these briefings present an opportunity for STPs and Accountable Care Organisations to build on the vanguards' understanding of what has and has not worked.

## Communities and health

The King's Fund has published an [article](#) on the role of communities in improving health with a particular focus on moving to population health systems. It covers health policy in relation to the role of communities in health as well as examples of community involvement through commissioning, service design and care pathways.

## Review launched to respond to patient concerns about NHS treatments

DHSC has [announced](#) a review which will focus on three NHS treatments: Primodos (a hormone pregnancy test used up until 1978), vaginal mesh implants and sodium valproate.

The review will look at whether further action is needed and how the health system responds to reports from patients about side effects from treatments.

Health and Social Care Secretary Jeremy Hunt said "Over the years, there have been significant concerns raised by individuals and campaign groups about the potentially harmful effects of 3 products used by the NHS. The response they have received from those in positions of authority has not always been good enough."

## PRAC recommends new measures to avoid valproate exposure in pregnancy

The European Medicines Agency's Pharmacovigilance Risk Assessment Committee has issued [recommendations](#) on new measures to avoid valproate exposure in pregnancy.

The recommendations include the implementation of a new pregnancy prevention programme, which involves:

- assessing patients for the potential of becoming pregnant and involving the patient in evaluating her individual circumstances and supporting informed decision making;
- pregnancy tests before starting and during treatment;
- counselling patients about the risks;
- explaining the need for effective contraception throughout treatment;
- carrying out reviews of treatment by a specialist at least annually; and
- introduction of a new risk acknowledgement form that patients and prescribers go through at each such review to confirm that appropriate advice has been given and understood.

## Making sense of integrated care systems, integrated care partnerships and accountable care organisations in the NHS in England

The King's Fund has updated an [article](#) it had previously published, in light of NHS England's decision to change the name of ACOs to integrated care systems (ICSs). The updated article looks at work underway in these systems and at NHS England's proposals for an ACO contract.

The briefing provides a definition of the three main forms of integrated care, what is happening with new models of care, what they have achieved and what it means for commissioning.

The article concludes that:

- developments will not deliver results quickly which is why national and local leaders need to make a long-term commitment to developing integrated care as the main way of providing and funding care in the future.
- integrated care is not a panacea and unless implemented with skill it will not deliver the improvements in health and care envisaged in the Forward View; and
- operational pressures cannot be managed simply by working harder; they require the development of new care models better able to meet rising demand for care in the community as well as hospitals.

## Life Expectancy: Is the socio-economic gap narrowing?

The Longevity Science Panel has published a [report](#) based on the findings of a review it conducted on mortality trends of people between different socio-economic circumstances in England.

Key findings include:

- differences in life-expectancy between the rich and poor in England have widened between 2001 and 2015;
- death rates have fallen faster for the richer between 2001 and 2015; and
- income deprivation, as estimated from state benefits and largely associated with unemployment, is the strongest independent predictor of mortality rates in a neighbourhood.

## A Royal Commission on the NHS: The remit

The Centre for Policy Studies has published a [report](#) based on Lord Saatchi's proposal for a Royal Commission to safeguard the NHS.

The report, by Lord Saatchi and Dominic Nutt sets out the remit and priorities that such a commission should adopt in order to address the NHS's most pressing issues. It sets out how a Royal Commission can ensure the NHS delivers the best outcomes on a sustainable financial basis over the coming decades.

## Quarterly performance of the NHS provider sector: Quarter 3, 2017/18

NHS Improvement has published a [report](#) which describes the performance of the NHS provider sector for the month ending 31st December 2017.

Key facts include:

- rising demand and high levels of bed occupancy have affected providers' ability to admit patient who require planned care; during Quarter 3 there were around 470,000 bed days across acute, community and mental health providers occupied by delayed discharge patients (accounting for 4.6% of all beds);
- agency costs have continued to decrease significantly and despite an increase in bank staff, the sector spent £108 million less than planned on agency staff and £441 million less than the same period last year, a fall of 20%; and
- included in the report for the first time is workforce data from providers, which shows that they employ 1.1 million whole time equivalent staff but that they have 100,000 vacancies.

## Mapping of specialist primary health care services in England for people who are homeless

King's College London has published a [report](#) detailing key findings from a systematic mapping exercise across England of specialist primary health care services for single people who are homeless.

The mapping exercise was part of a larger study in progress which is examining the integration, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of different models of delivering primary health care to people who are homeless (HEARTH study).

## Prevalence and economic burden of medication errors in the NHS in England

New research has been [published](#) which forms a rapid review to identify literature about the incidence and prevalence of medication errors in the UK, their associated costs and health burdens, and to provide a model on annual national estimates on NHS England.

This research was funded by the UK Department of Health Policy Research Programme through its Policy Research Unit in Economic Evaluation of Health & Care Interventions (EEPRU). EEPRU is a collaboration between researchers from two institutions (Centre for Health Economics, University of York and School of Health and Related Studies, University of Sheffield). This research also involved the University of Manchester.

Key facts include:

- there are an estimated 237 million medication errors that occur at some point in the medication process in England per year. It is likely that many errors are picked up before they reach the patient, but we do not know how many;
- the estimated NHS costs of definitely avoidable adverse drug reactions (ADRs) are £98.5 million per year, consuming 181,626 bed days, causing 712 deaths, and contributing to 1,708 deaths;
- error rates in the UK are similar to those in other comparable health settings such as the US and other countries in the EU;
- non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, anticoagulants and antiplatelets cause over a third of admissions due to avoidable ADRs and;
- future work should focus on improving routine collection of information about errors and patient harm, and supporting implementation of evidence-based interventions to reduce errors.

## Clearing up some myths around e-cigarettes

PHE has published an [article](#) which looks at some common myths around the use of e-cigarettes and provides the facts. PHE's latest comprehensive independent e-cigarette review looks at the up-to-date international data and peer-reviewed research.

The general conclusion is that while not without some risk, when compared to smoking e-cigarettes are far less harmful.

## Cancer Research UK to invest £45 million in clinical trials

Cancer Research UK has [announced](#) that £45 million will be invested into its network of clinical trials units across the UK, one of the charity's largest investments in clinical research to date.

The fund will be divided over five years across eight clinical trials units in Cardiff, Birmingham, Glasgow, Southampton, Leeds and London.

## Media monitoring

**On Friday 2nd February 2018, the following stories were published:**

- Health service leaders have warned the Justice Secretary that the rising cost of clinical negligence claims against the NHS is "unsustainable" and payouts to victims should be reduced otherwise they could bankrupt the NHS, says [The Guardian](#). This story was also covered by the [BBC](#), [Telegraph](#), [Times](#), [Daily Mail](#) and [Sun](#).
- A poll by [The Mirror](#) finds that 73% of the public would pay an extra £1 a week to provide further funding for the NHS.
- [The BBC](#) reports on new figures which show that deaths from prostate cancer have overtaken those by breast cancer for the first time. This makes prostate cancer the third biggest cancer killer in the UK.
- [The Independent](#) reveals that the NHS is reviewing the results of smear tests after thousands of women were found to have wrongly been given the all-clear. This story was also covered by the [Telegraph](#) and [Sun](#).

**On Monday 5th February 2018, the following stories were published:**

- The British Dental Association is warning that a recruitment crisis means patients are facing longer journeys to see an NHS dentist for treatment, reports [The Telegraph](#).
- [The Express](#) warns of an impending liver disease crisis as an investigation revealed a 52% jump in NHS diabetes medication prescriptions – a key cause of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease – since 2010/11.

**On Tuesday 6th February 2018, the following stories were published:**

- Public Health England (PHE) is calling for e-cigarettes to be available via NHS prescription and in hospitals to help more people to quit smoking, says [The Independent](#).
- PHE also wants the Government to make it easier for manufacturers to license e-cigarettes as medical devices. This story was also covered by the [BBC](#), [Times](#), [Telegraph](#), [Guardian](#), [Daily Mail](#), [Mirror](#) and [Sun](#).
- [The Express](#) reports that a daily dose of aspirin could cut your risk of getting certain types of cancer by 10%. Cancer Research UK has launched a study to find out how it prevents cancer, and what dose is needed to be most effective.

**On Wednesday 7th February 2018, the following stories were published:**

- [The Times](#) reports that Jeremy Hunt has announced a review of criminalising doctors.
- From April, gay men will be offered the HPV vaccine when they attend sexual health screenings, says [The Independent](#). It has previously only be offered to girls aged 11 to 13. This story was also covered by [The Mail](#).

**On Thursday 8th February 2018, the following stories were published:**

- Spending just 10 minutes a day talking to people with dementia about their interests or family could help improve their quality of life, according to a study reported by [iNews](#) and the [BBC](#).
- School programmes encouraging children to take more exercise and eat healthily are unlikely to have any real effect on childhood obesity, report [iNews](#), the [Times](#) and [BBC](#). On a similar topic, [the Guardian](#) reports that half of all the food bought by families in the UK is now “ultra-processed”.
- The [BBC](#) reports on growing evidence that diet could have an impact on the growth and spread of cancer. This was also reported by the [Sun](#), [Express](#), [Independent](#), [iNews](#) and the [Times](#).
- Ibuprofen taken by women in their first three months of pregnancy might reduce a daughter’s number of eggs, potentially affecting the child’s future fertility, according to [the Guardian](#).
- People who use electronic cigarettes are more vulnerable to pneumonia, warn the [Telegraph](#), [Mail](#) and the [Mirror](#). But PHE says hospitals should stock e-cigarettes for sale to patients, according to the [Independent](#).
- Low alcohol drinks could be encouraging people to drink more frequently, reports [the Telegraph](#).

**On Friday 9th February 2018, the following stories were published:**

- The [Guardian](#) reports on a study suggesting that there is no need for an upper limit to folic acid intake.
- A study has found significant associations between the increased walkability of a neighbourhood, lower blood pressure and reduced hypertension risk among its residents, the [Guardian](#) reports.
- [The Sun](#) warns of addiction dangers for young people after figures show that the UK is the second-largest black market for Xanax in the world, after the US. The [Guardian](#) also reported on this, citing online pharmacies as a possible source of the medicines.

**On Monday 12th February 2018, the following stories were published:**

- [The Independent](#) reports a 13% rise in hospital admissions over the past four years as spending on drug and alcohol support services has reduced.
- Digital health trackers will be offered by the NHS as part of its ‘healthy towns’ initiative, reports [the Telegraph](#). These tackers will help check up on the elderly and encourage families to live healthier lives, saving the NHS money in the long run. This story has also been covered by the [Express](#) and [Sun](#).

**On Tuesday 13th February 2018, the following stories were published:**

- Age UK has found that people with dementia are not receiving the care they need, reports [the Guardian](#). The charity claims that out of the 458,461 people with a recorded diagnosis of dementia, only 282,573 had an up-to-date care plan.

- [The Times](#) reports on a trial in which up to 15 patients with the same long-term condition take part in 'shared consultations' with a GP. This story has also been covered by [the Daily Mail](#), which highlights concerns from patient groups.

**On Wednesday 14th February 2018, the following story was published:**

- [The Mail](#) reports that adopting a vegan diet can help reduce the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes if you're overweight, whilst [the Express](#) reports on the development of a supplement drink which could help people who are living with diabetes to better manage their condition.

**On Thursday 15th February 2018, the following stories were published:**

- [The BBC](#) reports that the gap in life expectancy between the rich and the poor has widened. It's up 7.2 years since 2001, and those from the least advantaged fifth of the population are now about 80% more likely to die than those from the most advantaged fifth.
- [ITV News](#) reports that an estimated 10,000 Alzheimer's patients a year have become stuck in the healthcare system. They are medically fit to leave hospital but are unable to do so because of a lack of available community care.
- Research has revealed that eating highly-processed foods could increase the risk of cancer, reports [the Telegraph](#). However, there is a note of caution because it is possible that those who eat a lot of ultra-processed foods may also be more likely to have a less healthy lifestyle overall. This story was also covered by the [BBC](#), [Guardian](#), [iNews](#), [Mirror](#), [Express](#), [Daily Mail](#), [Sun](#) and [Sky News](#).

**On Friday 16th February 2018, the following story was published:**

- [The Independent](#) reports that as many as 61% of us would put off going to the GP for fear of finding out it's a serious condition. This story was also covered by the [Telegraph](#) and [Mirror](#).

**On Tuesday 20th February 2018, the following stories were published:**

- [The Times](#) reports that parents who refuse to vaccinate their children led to cases of measles increased by 300% across Europe last year. But all of the 282 reported cases in Britain were caused by people arriving from affected countries. The story was also covered by [the Guardian](#), who put the increase in cases of measles in Europe at 400%.
- [The Independent](#) reports that only 34% of women would visit their GP about unexplained bloating, with many instead simply changing their diet. The research was run by the charity Target Ovarian Cancer which is concerned about a lack of awareness of the key warning signs. This story was also covered by the [Times](#), [Express](#), [Mirror](#) and the [BBC](#).
- A third of Brits are significantly underestimating the number of calories they consume each day, reports the [BBC](#). This story was also covered by [iNews](#), the [Guardian](#), [Daily Mail](#), [Sun](#) and [Sky News](#).

**On Wednesday 21st February 2018, the following stories were published:**

- Chronic heavy drinking may be a major risk factor for early-onset dementia, reports [iNews](#), the [Sun](#), [Daily Mail](#), [Telegraph](#), and [Times](#).
- A study looking at the impact of low carb and low fat diets has found that both can work and that weight loss is influenced by healthy eating rather than genetic factors. This was reported in the [Guardian](#), [iNews](#) and [Telegraph](#).
- The [Daily Mail](#) reports on a study which suggests that stress in early life could lead to inflammation that affects immunity and overall health in later life.

**On Thursday 22nd February 2018, the following stories were published:**

- The British Heart Foundation says that progress in reducing premature heart attack deaths has stalled, as reported in [iNews](#).

- A Lancet study which analysed data from 522 trials has concluded that 21 common anti-depressants are all more effective at reducing symptoms of acute depression than placebos. This was reported by the [BBC](#), [Guardian](#), [Telegraph](#), [Times](#) and the [Independent](#).

**On Friday 23rd February 2018, the following story was published:**

- Sipping fruit teas and hot water with lemon can leave people 11 times more likely to suffer tooth erosion, report the [Mirror](#), the [BBC](#) and the [Express](#).

If you have queries on this PSNC Briefing or you require more information please contact [Zainab Al-Kharsan, Service Development Pharmacist](#).