

Lung cancer patients 'neglected'



A report by a lung cancer charity has found that many people suffering from lung cancer in the UK may not be getting the treatment they need.

According to the Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation, only 50% of patients are given "active" treatment and in some parts of the country only 10% of patients receive chemotherapy, radiotherapy or surgery.

Less than a third of people with the disease survive for longer than one year after being diagnosed and only 5% live for more than five years.

Around 39,500 people are diagnosed with lung cancer every year in Britain.

The UK Lung Cancer Care Coalition said that although the disease was often perceived as one which only affected smokers, one in eight people with lung cancer had never smoked.

The Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation

said it was "unacceptable" that survival rates for the disease had stayed at around the same level since the 1970s.

They also deemed research funding for the condition to be "woefully insufficient", and said patients in different areas of the country received different standards and types of treatment.

Dr Rosemary Gillespie, its chief executive, said: "For the third year running, the report has highlighted that lung cancer must remain a priority on the government's health agenda. While we are pleased to see some improvements in areas such as awareness raising, there is still much to be done."

"We understand the current financial pressures on the government but the scale of the problem merits a much greater investment in lung cancer for all patients and their families."

16832

Women unaware of heart attack symptoms



According to the results of a survey by the British Heart Foundation, many women in Britain do not recognise the symptoms of a heart attack.

A poll of 4,000 women showed that only 10% of the respondents had talked to their doctor about their danger of heart disease.

The BHF said doctors and women both needed to be more conscious of the dangers of heart disease.

Although heart disease causes fewer deaths in women than in men, 40,000 women in the UK are killed by the disease annually.

Another poll of 2,829 women showed that less than 50% of women would call an ambulance if they suffered classic symptoms of a heart attack.

The poll revealed 11% would lie down

in bed and 8% would try to disregard symptoms such as chest pain.

Dr Mike Knapton, a GP and associate medical director at the British Heart Foundation, said: "These results show serious gaps in the way women are thinking about heart health - they highlight the common myth that heart disease is a middle-aged male health problem which simply doesn't affect women in the same way."

He added that it was also important that doctors were aware of the issue: "It's vital that us GPs 'think heart' for our female patients. All women over 40 are entitled to a free health check which takes just a few minutes. The truth is that too many lives are lost each year to a killer which is largely preventable."

16861

Finger length clue to prostate cancer



Researchers have found that men with long index fingers have less likelihood of prostate cancer.

The British Journal of Cancer study said that men with longer index fingers than ring fingers had inbuilt protection against the disease.

Around 36,000 men in Britain are diagnosed with prostate cancer every year and it causes 10,000 deaths.

The researchers, from the University of Warwick and the Institute of Cancer Research, compared the hands of 1,500 men who had prostate cancer against the hands of 3,000 men who did not have the disease.

They said that finger length was determined before a baby is born, due to the levels of testosterone the foetus is exposed to in the womb.

Babies with longer index fingers had been exposed to lower levels of testosterone and could therefore have less risk of the disease.

One of the report authors, Professor Ros Eeles, said more research was necessary.

She added: "This exciting finding means that finger pattern could potentially be used to select at-risk men for ongoing screening, perhaps in combination with other factors such as family history or genetic testing."

Emma Halls, chief executive of Prostate Action, said: "This research brings us another step closer to helping determine risk factors for prostate cancer, which is possibly the biggest issue in current thinking about preventing and treating the disease."

Sharp rise in over-65s dying from skin cancer

Data collected by Cancer Research UK has found that the over-65s have triple the likelihood of dying from skin cancer than they did thirty years ago.

The research showed death rates for malignant melanoma in pensioners today were 11.4 deaths per 100,000 people, in comparison to 4 deaths in 1979. Caroline Cerny, campaign manager at Cancer Research UK said: "Skin cancer rates generally have dramatically increased in the last 30 years. During the 1970s package holidays to Spain, Greece and Portugal became increasingly popular. These short, sharp bursts of sun would have caused long-term damage to people's skin."

16855

Cloned beef is safe

Independent experts have said that people will not suffer harm if they consume meat and milk from cloned cattle.

The Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes said the products were "unlikely" to present a risk to health. The Food Standards Agency's chief scientist Andrew Wadge said: "The Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes has confirmed that meat and milk from cloned cattle and their offspring shows no substantial difference to conventionally produced meat and milk, and therefore is unlikely to present a food safety risk."

16859

Blood clot testing breakthrough

Scientists at the universities of Leicester and Cambridge have found a way of identifying which people could be in danger of suffering dangerous blood clots.

Professor William Ouwehand from the University of Cambridge said: "This type of study will help us to unravel the complex question of why some people have a higher risk of a heart attack than others. One day this type of research may lead to a new generation of drugs that can be used to reduce the risk of this devastating disease."

16865

UK

Blood clot testing breakthrough

A leading consultant plastic surgeon from the London Breast Institute and the city's St George's Hospital has said that all women should be screened for breast cancer from the age of 40.

Starting the routine x-rays ten years earlier than currently recommended would save thousands of lives a year and would also spare many women the trauma of having a diseased breast removed, said Professor Kefah Mokbel. Tumours in younger women are more likely to grow and spread quickly, making the disease the most common cause of death among women aged 35 to 54.

16891

Tax rise on strong lagers

The Treasury has announced that duties on super-strength beers and lagers are to rise next year.

Tax on beers and lager over 7.5% ABV (alcohol by volume) will increase from autumn 2011 although the exact amount will not be known until the March budget, though wine, cider and spirits will not be covered. The announcement coincided with the publication of the government's public health strategy, targeting preventable illnesses such as alcohol abuse, though health campaigners felt the threshold should be 5% not 7.5% ABV.

16879

Oily fish could stop blindness

Scientists say that a diet rich in oily fish could hold the key to preventing blindness among thousands of the elderly.

The study, published in the Ophthalmology journal suggested that the omega-3 group of fatty acids, found in oily fish such as salmon, mackerel and fresh tuna, may help protect against the most common form of sight loss among older people, it suggests. The scientists studied the diets of adults over the age of 65 found those who regularly ate seafood were far less likely to develop age-related macular degeneration.

16904