Director’s news

As Director of the SWPHO, and reporting to the Regional Director of Public Health, the close working relationship that SWPHO has enjoyed with the Regional Public Health Group and Government Office has always been important both to me personally and for the organisation.

I am delighted to say that this relationship has recently been strengthened with my appointment as Deputy Regional Director of Public Health – a role that I will be fulfilling alongside and complementary to that of SWPHO Director.

Not only will this new appointment enable me to work more effectively with partners to promote public health initiatives in the region, but it will ensure that the work of the SWPHO is more closely aligned with the aims and priorities of the Strategic Health Authority and other stakeholders.

I would like to thank everyone who took part in the SWPHO stakeholder survey carried out in March, and I am pleased to announce publication of the summary report (see opposite). Useful lessons have been learned and we will be taking the recommendations forward over the coming months.

There is also news of change in the organisation of the Cancer Intelligence Service, which we hope will result in a more streamlined delivery of cancer information outputs (see below).

Dr Julia Verne
Deputy Regional Director of Public Health (GOSW) and Director of the SWPHO

Cancer Intelligence Service reorganisation

The Cancer Information and Audit teams have merged into one Cancer Analysis Team. The team comprises Sean McPhail as Head of Analysis, Diana Bailey, Veronique Poirier, and Andy Pring as Senior Analysts, and Kate Ruth as Information Analyst. The merged team will continue the work of the information team in the analysis and reporting of large cancer datasets and the development of a national urological database. A regional audit function will be retained, as will the successful cancer study days and strong links with clinical tumour panels. The new team will seek to combine the strengths in these areas to improve its contribution to public health and clinical excellence in the South West.

SWPHO Stakeholder Survey report

We had an excellent response to our recent survey, with 325 completed online questionnaires. Thanks to all those who responded. A summary report of the results, conclusions and recommendations is available now at http://www.swpho.nhs.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=31506

What we found:
- Most respondents worked in Acute Hospital Trusts, Primary Care Trusts and Local Authorities.
- ‘Providing information and intelligence’ was considered our most important function.
- Almost three-quarters of those who responded used our website and most found it easy to use.
- Three-quarters of those who responded used our publications, which were highly rated for accuracy, and being informative, relevant and easy to understand. They were less highly rated for timeliness and degree of usefulness as evidence for decision-making.
- 60% of respondents rated SWPHO information as good or very good compared with other regional sources.
- But fewer than half of respondents said they had a good understanding of what the SWPHO does.

Recommendations include:
- More effective promotion of the SWPHO, its products and services.
- Improve timeliness of publications.
- Strengthen links with PCTs and Local Authorities.
Regional news

State of the South West 2007
This report was launched by the South West Observatory (SWO) at their annual conference in Bristol on 27 March. It provides a comprehensive review of the South West’s economic, social, environmental and cultural life. SWPHO contributed the public health chapter, which describes key issues and priorities and provides information on the wider determinants of health. The report is available from: http://www.swo.org.uk

Some key health facts for the South West:
- The South West has the highest life expectancy of all the English regions for women (80.9 years) and men (77.8 years).
- Although mortality from all causes and the major disease types is generally lower than England, malignant melanoma and prostate cancer are significantly high.
- Approximately one in five men and one in ten women in the South West drink heavily.
- Death rates from suicide and undetermined injury are rising in young males.
- Young females are showing increasing tendency to abuse alcohol and teenage pregnancy rates in some of the South West’s Local Authorities are very high.

Public Health South West E-bulletin and Food and Health Update

The Regional Public Health Group produces these two e-publications monthly. Both are posted on the SWPHO website. They are designed to keep readers up-to-date with developments locally, regionally and nationally. If you would like to sign up to receive them, please contact:

Public Health E-bulletin matthew.lenny@gosw.gsi.gov.uk
Food and Health Update Lucinda.eastment@gosw.gsi.gov.uk

South West support network for work-related cancer victims

The Roger Lowe Asbestos Mesothelioma Campaign has been set up in memory of a former electrical fitter who lost his battle against the asbestos-related cancer in December 2005. A website to support the campaign will go live on 27 April at http://www.prospect.org.uk/rogerlowecampaign

New publications

SWPHO Cancer Factsheet 18: Cancer clusters
This factsheet has been updated and is available on the SWPHO website at http://www.swpho.nhs.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=9108. It explains what cancer clusters are, how they are investigated, and the difficulty of providing proof of a link with environmental factors. As with all the factsheets in this series, it has been written with non-expert audiences in mind.

Cancer in Plymouth: 2007 follow-up report

This report has been produced by the SWPHO Cancer Analysis team in response to concerns expressed by the Campaign Against Nuclear Storage and Radiation (CANSAR). The report provides information about the incidence of cancer in Plymouth compared with other cities in England and shows that, while cancer incidence is higher overall in Plymouth compared to the England average, it is not significantly different from rates in comparable areas. As stated in previous reports, the excess rate is most likely to be attributable to socio-economic deprivation and smoking. There is no evidence of a link with radiation from man-made sources. The report is available on the SWPHO website at http://www.swpho.nhs.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=31564

National Drug Treatment Monitoring System South West (NDTMS-SW) Third quarter report

The third report for this financial year summarising data quality and performance indicators by Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) for the South West. The report can be viewed at http://www.swpho.nhs.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=30527
Children in the South West series: Bulletin 4: Too much, too young: Smoking and young people in the South West
This bulletin shows that, based on recent estimates, there are still large numbers of young people smoking, and exposed to second-hand smoke in the South West. It highlights both the immediate impact that smoking has on young people’s health as well as the future long-term consequences. While it confirms the link between smoking and deprivation, it also shows that many children in affluent areas are affected. Perhaps surprisingly, it shows that siblings and close friends who smoke have a greater influence on a young person taking up smoking than parents who smoke. There are also some interesting gender differences throughout. You can download the bulletin from http://www.swpho.nhs.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=30804

Indications of Public Health in the English Regions: 5: Child health: South West Regional Summary
This summary highlights the key findings for the South West from the Association of Public Health Observatory’s (APHO) national report. Overall it shows that the South West performs well across most indicators compared with the England average. There are concerns about levels of MMR immunisation, incidences of long bone fractures, the consumption of fruit and vegetables and lower educational attainment of looked-after children, though recent interventions in some of these areas suggest that progress is being made. To view the summary, see http://www.swpho.nhs.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=30528 The national report can be downloaded from the APHO website at http://www.apho.org.uk

Clinical audit reports
Because audit reports frequently include small numbers data, they are only available to NHS staff on request. However, abstracts are posted on the SWPHO website as each report is published. The following reports have recently been published:

Head and neck gastrostomy audit http://www.swpho.nhs.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=30261

Online tools

Journal articles
What can be gained from comprehensive disaggregate surveillance? The Avon Surveillance System for Sexually Transmitted Infections Wendi Slater¹, Katherine Sadler², Jackie A Cassell³, Paddy Horner⁴ and Nicola Low⁵ ¹South West Public Health Observatory; ²Royal Free and University College London Medical School; ³Mortimer Market Centre; ⁴United Bristol Healthcare Trust; ⁵University of Bern, Switzerland. This article describes the model for a promising new tool for planning and measuring sexual health services. It was published in Sexually Transmitted Infections on 7 March 2007. To see the abstract, go to http://sti.bmj.com/cgi/content/abstract/sti.2006.023440v2

National news
Commissioning framework for health and wellbeing consultation
The Department of Health is consulting with all providers and commissioners on this framework until 29 May 2007. The framework is part of implementing the White Paper ‘Our health our care our say’ and focuses, through improved commissioning, on prevention, independence and tackling inequalities in health and social care. It calls for greater joint working between health and local authorities and it applies to people of all ages and in all care groups. For further information and to take part, visit the consultation website at http://www.commissioning.csip.org.uk You will need to register on the site to view all the materials. This simply involves clicking ‘register’ and supplying your name and email address to gain instant access to all of the site.

Register on the SWPHO website at http://www.swpho.nhs.uk/secure/logon.aspx to sign up for automatic monthly email alerts as new resources are added.
Monitoring the impact of new smoke-free workplace legislation

There was a workshop to discuss the role of Public Health Observatories (PHOs) in monitoring smoke-free workplace legislation on 13 February. It was co-hosted by the London Health Observatory, which leads nationally on tobacco and health. There were three main objectives:

- to learn lessons from the Scottish and Irish experience of monitoring and evaluating their smokefree legislation;
- to define the distinctive roles of the Public Health Observatories (PHOs) in monitoring the effects and to develop a plan for a monitoring strategy for the rest of the UK;
- to explore how PHOs, researchers and practitioners might collaborate effectively to support evaluation priorities.

Notes and presentations are available on the London Health Observatory website at http://www.lho.org.uk/events/LHOevents.aspx

Up-to-date summaries of the legislation, regulations and initiatives in the run-up to the English Legislation (which comes into being July 1st 2007) can be found at http://www.smokefreeengland.org.uk, and a summary of current and planned work on tobacco and health being undertaken by the PHOs can be found at http://www.lho.org.uk/Events/LHOEvents.aspx

Improved Methods for Population Statistics Revisions in 2007

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is undertaking a long-term programme of work to improve population statistics. Improvements for 2007 relate to ‘usually resident’ populations and the international migration component of these figures. For more information visit http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=14834

Social Trends

Social Trends 37 has been published by the Office for National Statistics. The underlying theme of this issue is children and young people. It shows that family structures are changing and looks at how children and young people interact with modern society, both with the education system and today’s digital age of mobile phones and the Internet. http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_social/Social_Trends37/Social_Trends_37.pdf


Department of Health Business Plan 2007–08

The Department of Health Business Plan 2007–08 has been published. The plan outlines what the Department will do to lead and support the Government's objectives for health and social care, and to support Ministers in their accountability to the public and Parliament over the coming year. See http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PolicyAndGuidance/DH_073546

Information Centre – new website planned

The Information Centre is a Special Health Authority with a statutory duty to collect, analyse and disseminate data for the NHS in the fields of health and social care. For more information, see http://www.ic.nhs.uk/

The IC is currently improving and expanding its website to make information more accessible and effective, in a format users can understand and adapt for their purposes. As the planned changes come into effect, users should notice easier access to the raw data and to draw comparisons between data from other publications on each topic. Upgrading the website for 2007 includes:

- improving navigation and site architecture;
- increasing interactivity;
- introducing a structured and searchable document store;
- improving the search function.

The IC is working closely with the Department of Health and other arm’s length bodies on a number of high-profile national projects relating to information delivery. These include case-mix and the Secondary Uses Service (SUS) project. See http://live.theic.precedenthost.co.uk/
Drug misuse statistics

The Information Centre has published statistics on drug misuse among both adults and children. The topics covered include: prevalence of drug misuse, including the types of drugs used, trends in drug misuse over recent years, patterns of drug misuse among different groups of the population, including 'vulnerable groups', European comparisons of drug misuse, drugs and crime and health outcomes related to drug misuse including hospital admissions, drug treatment and deaths related to drug misuse. See http://www.ic.nhs.uk/pubs/drugmisuse07

Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2006

The Information Centre has published Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2006. This report contains results from an annual survey of secondary school pupils aged 11 to 15. The main report on the survey will be published in August. 8,200 pupils in 290 schools in England completed questionnaires in the autumn term of 2006 and this report includes the latest information on the prevalence of smoking among this age group; pupils reporting having drunk alcohol in the last week; and information on pupils reporting taking drugs within the last month or year.

Breast cancer screening programme

More cases of breast cancer were detected in 2005–06 by the NHS Breast Screening Programme than in any previous year, according to a report by the Information Centre. Over 13,500 cases were diagnosed in women aged 50 and over, equating to 8.3 per 1,000 women screened. This was an increase of 13% over the previous year. The NHS Breast Screening Programme has been running since 1988–89, and in 2001, the screening programme was extended to include women aged 65–70. For more information visit http://www.ic.nhs.uk/default.asp?sID=1175069203478

Cancer survival lower in the ‘Spearhead’ Primary Care Trust areas

Cancer survival rates for most common cancers are lower in Spearhead PCT areas than in the rest of England, according to recent analysis by the Office for National Statistics in collaboration with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Survival was significantly lower up to one year after diagnosis for 15 of the 16 sex and cancer combinations examined, and up to five years after diagnosis for 14 of the 16. The cancers measured were bladder, breast, cervix, colon, lung, oesophagus, ovary, prostate, rectum and stomach. Note: There are no Spearhead PCTs in the South West. To view the report go to http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=14821

Colorectal cancer

The Cancer Specialist Library, part of the National Library for Health, has launched its National Knowledge Week on colorectal cancer. The library has brought together evidence-based guidelines, systematic reviews, primary research, service development literature and patient information about colorectal cancer.

Health survey for England: older people

Latest statistics published by the Information Centre focused on the physical and mental well-being of 4,300 people over the age of 65 who live in private households. More than half considered their health was ‘good’ or ‘very good’. However, 28% of women and 24% of men were found to be obese. Certain chronic diseases such as diabetes and arthritis were more common in people who were overweight or obese and in those with a raised waist circumference. Overweight or obese men also had a higher prevalence of stroke compared with those who were not. Nearly two out of three adults aged 65 and over suffer from high blood pressure, and of those living with the condition, three in five are receiving treatment to reduce their blood pressure, yet fewer than half of those have well-controlled blood pressure.

Guidance on the National Child Measurement Programme

This new guidance from the Department of Health provides advice to Primary Care Trusts on how to measure the height and weight of children in primary schools as part of the National Child Measurement Programme. It also explains how to enter this information on to the National Child Measurement Database. 2006/07 Guidance: http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PolicyAndGuidance/DH_073786

Evidence of savings, improved outcomes, and good practice attributed to Local Area Agreements

This report sets out the results of a short piece of fieldwork that was commissioned by the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (and now Communities and Local Government) to identify examples of the early impact of Local Area Agreements (LAAs).

http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1506298

Fall in suicide rates

A report by the National Institute for Mental Health in England shows that good progress is being made towards meeting the Government target to reduce suicide by 20% by 2010, but more can be done to bring the suicide rate down further. The report sets out the achievements of the last 12 months and shows:
- the lowest overall rate of suicide amongst the general population on record;
- a 17% reduction compared with last year and a fall in the number of suicides amongst mental health in-patients from 217 in 1997 to 154 in 2004;
- a fall in suicide rates amongst young men, a fall in the rate of self-inflicted deaths in prisons to 70 in 2005/06.

To view the report go to: http://kc.csip.org.uk/viewdocument.php?action=viewdox&pid=0&doc=33988&grp=1

New Health Poverty Index data release

The Health Poverty Index (HPI) is a web-based tool to help tackle inequalities by illustrating measures of health poverty in England. By looking at geographical, social, health and economic as well as cultural factors, the HPI tool can be used to support and guide local action aimed at addressing health inequalities and their causes. An updated version, including data for 2003 and by ethnicity, was launched on the 22nd of March 2007. The HPI can be accessed at http://www.hpi.org.uk

Cancer Information Service

The Cancer Information Service (CIS) is a web-based tool for analysing cancer information, developed for and used by NHS organisations. It is especially useful for answering basic queries on incidence and mortality, and for analysis involving areas that cross cancer registry boundaries.

The SWPHO Cancer Intelligence Service has been involved in testing a new release of the system that will contain all England data. In particular, we have been involved in testing reported statistics for geographic areas split between registries to ensure that they are correct. Other registries have done more concentrated testing of incidence, survival and mortality statistics, and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) have compared the national CIS statistics with their own data. It is hoped that the new system will be ready to launch over the summer.

For more information or to access the CIS, please contact andy.pring@swpho.nhs.uk. Alternatively, you can download an application form to access the CIS from the SWPHO website at http://www.swpho.nhs.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=9102

Prostate cancer

As well as leading on the development of a national Urological Observatory, the Cancer Analysis Team has undertaken a significant amount of work on prostate cancer over the last year. Latest figures for the South West show a significant rise in the number of prostate cancer cases in the South West, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Over the last ten years the number of new cases in the region has risen by 64% (from 3,300 to 5,400 new cases per year). The increase has been greatest in men aged under 75 – 210% as compared with 24% for men of 75 and over. There are also significant differences across the region. Dorset and Wiltshire generally have the highest rates, while Cornwall and Somerset have the lowest.
At the same time the number of radical prostatectomies (surgery to remove all of the prostate) has increased from about 50 to about 500 between 1995 and 2004. The most dramatic increase in surgery has been among younger men. In 2004, 37% of under-60s underwent surgery, compared to 20% of 60 to 69 year olds and 2% of those over 70. Between 1995 and 2004 there was between a three- and four-fold increase in surgery rates for under 60s and a rough doubling for those aged 60 to 69.

Child mortality and morbidity

The Public Health Intelligence and Hospital Episode Statistics Teams are currently preparing a report that will provide an overview of the leading causes of death and ill health in children and young people in the South West. It looks at rates of death and illness in different age groups, primary care and hospital attendance rates, emergency hospital admissions and referrals, hospital admissions and deprivation, and attendances at A&E. The report is due to be published later this year.

For more information, please contact helen.cooke@swpho.nhs.uk

You can also find a range of related resources on our website http://www.swpho.nhs.uk

Older people

Another joint project between the Public Health Intelligence and Hospital Episode Statistics Teams, this project involves reviewing older people’s mortality and morbidity in the South West. Similar to the childhood mortality and morbidity report, the aim is for the work to cover the causes of mortality, hospital admissions, referrals, unmet need, GP attendance and to include information on informal care as well as the likely future burden of disease.

If you are interested in contributing or getting involved in this project, please contact mary.shaw@bristol.ac.uk

You may also be interested in SWPHO’s earlier report on older people, Second Blooming: Towards achieving a healthy and active mature population in the South West. Available from http://www.swpho.nhs.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=9114

Trends in drug treatment

Drawing on National Drug Treatment Monitoring System (NDTMS) data, the SWPHO will be producing a series of short reports on different aspects of trends in drug treatment in the South West. The first report will look at trends in clients leaving or dropping out of drug treatment and is due to be published in June. Specifically, it will look at the patient pathway and identify: at what point clients are likely to leave, their profiles (age, nationality, gender), and their reasons for leaving.

Please visit our website for more information about the work of the NDTMS-SW team http://www.swpho.nhs.uk/ndtms/default.aspx

Mental health

The Association of Public Health Observatories will shortly publish a report on mental health in the English regions. SWPHO will be following up with a South West regional summary highlighting key indicators for the region. Further information will be available on the SWPHO website shortly.

For more information about this work, please contact richard.hancock@swpho.nhs.uk or see http://www.swpho.nhs.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=31505

For more information about this work, please contact sean.mcphail@swpho.nhs.uk You can also find a range of related resources on our website http://www.swpho.nhs.uk

Occupation and cancer risk

SWPHO has recently undertaken a review of available information on occupation and cancer risk. By extrapolating from national data, incidence and mortality figures have been estimated for the South West. The biggest cause of occupation-related cancer death is lung cancer, while the highest incidence is of skin cancer. Causes of lung cancer include radon exposure combined with smoking and exposure to asbestos. Skin cancer has been linked to harmful levels of exposure to the sun and coal tar products. Overall, however, the estimated occupational risks of cancer are small compared with smoking risk.

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**STOP PRESS...**

Health in Strategic Environmental Assessment: South West Regional Consultation Event
8 June, 10.00 a.m. – 2.00 p.m., Government Office for the South West, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6EH

Directors of Public Health, Local Authority Planners and public health specialists in the South West region are invited to attend. The introduction of Strategic Environmental Assessment in England creates new opportunities to consider health issues in plans and programmes. In order to make the most of these opportunities, PCTS, Local Authorities and public health specialists need to understand the legislation and how it affects health. A consultation document has been published at [http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Liveconsultations/DH_073261](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Liveconsultations/DH_073261)

Further details will be posted on the SWPHO website shortly. To book a place, please contact jon.templeton@swpho.nhs.uk

1st Injury Prevention Conference for the UK and Ireland
Deadline for submission of abstracts extended
The deadline for abstracts for this conference has been extended to **Friday 4 May 2007**. Please send your abstract to Esther.Heijnens@bristol.ac.uk

There is some funding to support a limited number of reduced rate places at the conference.


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**Forthcoming conferences/events**

11 May – Launch of Bikeability in Bristol
Bikeability is the new national cycle training standard. This is a cross-government initiative, endorsed by the DfT, DH, DfES, Defra and DCMS. [http://www.bikeability.org.uk/](http://www.bikeability.org.uk/)

16–18 May – Public Health Ethics Conference, Birmingham University
A two-day conference to address this area of debate by bringing together philosophers and ethicists, public health practitioners, policy makers and social scientists. [http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/events/details/408](http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/events/details/408)

17 May – Moving forward: A workshop to support Health & Wellbeing Partnerships carry out their emerging roles and functions, Taunton
Directors of Public Health across the region have been invited to nominate a team of five to six people to attend this event, in discussion with Local Authority colleagues. For more information, contact becky.pollard@gosw.gsi.gov.uk

18 May – The British Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (BURISA) annual conference
Over the past few years there has been a huge growth in information systems at a number of levels of geography. This year’s BURISA conference, which is organised jointly with the Royal Statistical Society, addresses the issues of which is better – national or local; or which horse is better for which course! Further information is available at: [http://www.burisa.org/BURISA%20conf%202007.doc](http://www.burisa.org/BURISA%20conf%202007.doc)

24 May – Head & neck cancer study day, Bristol

12 June – SWINPHO Analysts meeting, Taunton
Quarterly meeting to provide peer support and CPD for analysts working in public health throughout the region. For more information, contact kate.lachowycz@swpho.nhs.uk

15 June – Gynaecology cancer study day, Taunton

20 June – Bike to Work Day, Bristol and 24 June – Bristol’s Biggest Bike Ride
[http://www.lifecycleuk.org.uk/contact.php](http://www.lifecycleuk.org.uk/contact.php)

26–28 June – Faculty of Public Health Annual Scientific Meeting
For more information, go to: [http://www.publichealthconferences.org.uk/annual/](http://www.publichealthconferences.org.uk/annual/)