
Men's Health Week 2011: Briefing Paper

Why do we need to focus upon men's health issues and needs?

Men, on the island of Ireland, experience a disproportionate burden of ill-health and die too young ...

- Local men die, on average, about five years younger than women do.
- Males have higher death rates than women for all of the leading causes of death.
- Poor lifestyles are responsible for a high proportion of chronic diseases.
- Late presentation to health services leads to a large number of problems becoming untreatable ...

Indeed, while many of these conditions are preventable, their prevalence among men may, in fact, rise in the future.

When is Men's Health Week (MHW)?

Men's Health Week (MHW) always begins on the Monday before Father's Day and ends on Father's Day itself. This year, it will run from Monday 13th until Sunday 19th June 2011.

Where is MHW celebrated?

MHW is celebrated in most European countries, as well as in the USA, Australia, New Zealand and a number of other places worldwide.

What are the aims of MHW?

Internationally, the core aims of MHW each year are to ...

- Heighten awareness of preventable health problems for males of all ages.
- Support men and boys to engage in healthier lifestyle choices / activities.
- Encourage the early detection and treatment of health difficulties in males.

Is there a specific theme this year?

Each year, individual countries focus upon a specific theme. The theme for 2011 in Ireland is: *"Promoting and Supporting the Health and Well-Being of Men and Boys during Challenging Times"*. This is different to the theme in Scotland (physical activity), and England and Wales (the use of Information Technology to promote men's health).

In Ireland, is there a key message for this year?

The key message is: *"These are challenging times. It's no joke. Let's talk!"*

What are the 'challenging times' facing men and boys?

The world of men, and the roles that they play in it, have changed dramatically in a very short period of time. All of these changes bring new challenges (both positive and negative). Therefore, the key message for MHW 2011 will be: "let's talk".

But what is there to talk about? ...

- The current economic recession has made a huge impact upon men's jobs, status, income, spending, lifestyle, debt, and sense of security. It has also made a major difference to their mental, physical and emotional health.
- On average, men are now living longer than at any time in history, but they are not, necessarily, healthier.
- Men face a range of acute and chronic illnesses, many of which are preventable.
- Father's roles / the expectations of fathers have expanded, and the number of disputed cases relating to access to children is rising.
- Obesity and sedentary lifestyles are on the increase, while healthy eating and exercise are decreasing.
- Depression in men is becoming more prevalent (or at least acknowledged) and the male suicide rate is still extremely high.
- Males are often not aware of where and how to find help and support.
- Young men (particularly) often engage in a range of high-risk activities.
- There is increasing recognition that males can be victims of domestic abuse.
- Many men have an interest in sport, but tend to drop away from active participation in it as they get older.
- We are still unsure about what 'effective practice' with men looks like.
- The Republic of Ireland has a Men's Health Policy, but is it making a difference? On the other hand, Northern Ireland does not even have a framework for evaluating if men's health needs are being met ...

What were the themes for MHW in previous years?

Previous MHWs in Ireland have focused upon ...

- 2005 - Obesity
- 2006 - Mental Well-Being
- 2007 - Long-term Conditions
- 2008 - Work
- 2009 - Access to Services
- 2010 - Physical Activity

Who is the target audience?

The purpose of MHW is to draw attention to the health and well-being issues affecting men and boys, and to encourage / promote personal, structural and systemic change where possible. This, therefore, implies that any messages and engagement needs to target:

- ❑ Males themselves
- ❑ Policy / decision-makers
- ❑ Service providers
- ❑ Public awareness and preconceptions

Who can be involved in this week?

MHW gives everyone (health professionals, service providers, youth groups, sporting bodies, community organisations, employers, policy makers, family workers, the media, parents, individuals ...) an opportunity to encourage men and boys to take better care of their health and to seek help or treatment at an early stage.

How can my organisation be involved?

Absolutely everyone can do something to support and celebrate MHW 2011. The focus for this year (i.e. let's talk about the challenging times that we are facing) lends itself to a wide range of ways to mark this occasion. However, anything which encourages men and boys to lead healthier lifestyles, to be more aware of preventable health problems, and to seek early detection and treatment for health difficulties is very welcome.

A broad range of practical ideas for how you or your organisation can be involved in MHW 2011 can be found online at: www.mhfi.org/mens-health-week-2011.html#Mark

Are there any ways that I can promote the week?

For the first time in Ireland, there is a common logo / image pack which can be used by everyone who wishes to raise awareness of the week. There is also a MHW 2011 poster. These are important promotional tools - as one of the key aims is to let as many people as possible know about the week. These are available, free, to anyone who wishes to use them. See www.mhfi.org/mens-health-week-image-pack.html for more details.

Promotion of MHW could take the form of: putting-up a poster; advertising MHW on your website; linking to the MHW 2011 website (www.mhfi.org/mens-health-week-2011.html); sending an email to everyone in your contacts list about Men's Health Week and asking them to forward the message; becoming a fan of the MHW 2011 Facebook site (www.facebook.com/MensHealthWeek) and sending the link to all your online friends; inserting the MHW logo into your emails; including information in your mailouts / newsletters; telling others about what is happening in your area during MHW by posting details on the MHW website; encouraging the men you know to get involved in some of the activities taking place ...

Who has planned Men's Health Week 2011 in Ireland?

MHW in Ireland has been planned by a broad range of partners who took part in an inter-agency Planning Group. This body met between February and May 2011, and was convened and coordinated by the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI). MHFI works alongside other Men's Health Fora worldwide to focus attention upon male health issues.

MHFI recognises that there are a lot of organisations and groups throughout Ireland who can contribute to the health and well-being of men and boys. This work is not solely applicable only to those who work directly in the health field. Indeed, the theme for this year's MHW (i.e. promoting and supporting the health and well-being of men and boys during challenging times) offers an opportunity for a very wide range of agencies to participate.

The planning process for 2011 drew upon the insight, expertise, support and contacts of individuals from ...

Aware	Men's Action Network
Belfast Community Sports Development Network	Men's Advisory Project
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	Men's Development Network
British Medical Association NI	Men's Health Forum in Ireland
Early Years - Toybox Project	Mental Health Ireland
Football Association of Ireland	Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health
Gaelic Athletic Association	Northern Ireland Chest, Heart and Stroke
Health Service Executive, Dublin / North East	NUI Maynooth
Irish Cancer Society	Older Men's Organisation in Ireland
Irish Football Association	Safefood
Irish Heart Foundation	Samaritans
Irish Men's Sheds Forum	Southern Health and Social Care Trust
Irish Rugby Football Union	Sport Northern Ireland
Irish Sports Council	Student Medical Council in Northern Ireland
Man Matters Project	Sure Start Fathers Network
Marie Keating Foundation	Ulster Cancer Foundation
Men Alone in No-mans-land	Western Health and Social Care Trust
Men Ending Domestic Abuse	YouthAction Northern Ireland

How can I find out more about MHW?

To find out more about MHW 2011, contact ...

Colin Fowler
Director of Operations
Men's Health Forum in Ireland
Email: colin@mhfi.org

or visit ...

Website: www.mhfi.org/mens-health-week-2011.html
Facebook: www.facebook.com/MensHealthWeek
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/#!/MensHealthIRL>

