

Is World Cup Fever a Medical Condition?

Challenges, Choices and Celebrations: Launch of Men's Health Week 2014 in Ireland

Men in Ireland are often accused of being forgetful - especially when it comes to remembering significant dates such as birthdays and anniversaries. However, while this might sometimes be true, there's a date that all men need to know about - as it could help to save their life! This date is Monday 9th - Sunday 15th June 2014, also known as International Men's Health Week (or, to some, the week in which the long awaited World Cup starts).

2014 FIFA World Cup Fever is in the air. Men across the country are planning their viewing schedules (possibly even their working hours), stockpiling enough refreshments to see them through a nuclear winter, and making arrangements with their friends for the common sharing of this four-yearly experience.

Many men are knowledgeable about what lies ahead. They know which teams have got through to this stage; who is in each group; what days and times countries will be playing; what the bookies' odds are for each team to win; and which players are likely to be the stars of the competition.



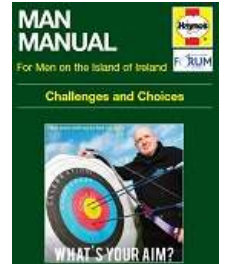
The World Cup has created a common bond among many men. They have a reason to be in each other's company. They are well informed by the media about what lies ahead. They are prepared to give their opinions and stand out from the crowd. They are motivated and excited. They are enthusiastic and want to be involved. They are likely to show more emotion than usual ... They've obviously 'caught a bug'. Maybe World Cup Fever is a medical condition after all.

Michael Lynch, Chairperson of the Men's Health Forum in Ireland, comments:

"These are traits that we don't often associate with males on the island of Ireland, and we need to harness this energy. Like a common cold, the World Cup will come and go in a matter of weeks, but men's health issues will remain long into the future. There is clear evidence that men in Ireland experience a disproportionate burden of ill-health and die too young. Men's Health Week seeks to challenge this situation".

So, why should we focus upon men's health? Well, the reasons are both clear and stark ...

- Men in Ireland die, on average, almost four and a half years younger than women do.
- Males have higher death rates than women for all of the leading causes of death and at all ages.
- 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 ...



This high level of premature mortality amongst men in Ireland has far-reaching repercussions - far beyond the life satisfaction of men themselves. It affects not only industry and commerce, but also impacts upon the social and financial positions of families. However, this is not a lost cause. That is why we need Men's Health Week which, this year, focuses upon the theme of 'Challenges, Choices and Celebrations - What's Your Aim?'

While the evidence clearly shows that there are many CHALLENGES to be faced when seeking to improve the health of men, it also highlights that men's health can be improved in many significant ways - if we make the right CHOICES. Men, themselves, have a key role to play in this process, but they require support, encouragement and opportunities to succeed.

As Michael Lynch adds:

"Men's health is not just an issue for individual men. It is everyone's business. While it is crucial for men to take responsibility for looking after themselves, their health can often be determined by other factors outside of their personal control. That's why Men's Health Week this year asks everyone: 'WHAT'S YOUR AIM?'"

To support Men's Health Week 2014, the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (www.mhfi.org) has produced a new, free, 32 page mini-manual for men. This booklet - titled 'Challenges and Choices' - opens with the statement: 'Warning ... Reading this manual can seriously improve your health', and goes on to issue a series of ten simple, practical challenges to local men:

1. Order a soft drink the next time you're in the pub.
2. Try some fruit or vegetables you've never tasted before or think you don't like.
3. Make at least one journey by foot or bicycle instead of going by car.
4. If you're under 25 and sexually active, get yourself checked for chlamydia.
5. Stressed out? ... Walk away from tense situations before you blow up.

6. Find out about the opening hours at your local GP's surgery.
7. Get your blood pressure checked within the next two weeks.
8. Get a mate to quit smoking with you - and get advice on how to stop.
9. Show a doctor that lump, strange-shaped mole, or rash that's bothering you.
10. If you get backache, don't let it become a pain in the ass. Get it sorted.

Each challenge is accompanied by a reason why it is important to take action, a menu of possible choices available, and where to find help. Most importantly, it provides this information in a straightforward, step-by-step, humorous and commonsense way.

Michael Lynch sums up:

"Frequently, we simply blame men for their own state of health, focus upon the shortcomings of individuals, and concentrate upon the negative behaviours of males. Our local football teams may not be through to the final stages of the 2014 FIFA World Cup, but Men's Health Week 2014 calls upon everyone on the island of Ireland to CELEBRATE the important contributions that males make to our society, and to do their bit to improve the lot of men and boys".

Many organisations across the island of Ireland have risen to this challenge, and details of some of their initiatives can be viewed online at: www.mhfi.org/mhw2014events.pdf

Further information on Men's Health Week can be obtained by contacting ...

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Editor's Notes:

- Men's Health Week always begins on the Monday before Father's Day and ends on Father's Day itself. This year, it will run from Monday 9th until Sunday 15th June 2014. It is celebrated in most European countries, as well as in the USA, Australia, New Zealand and a number of other places worldwide.
- The core aims of Men's Health Week 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.
- Each year, individual countries focus upon a specific theme. The theme for 2014 in Ireland is: *'Challenges, Choices and Celebrations - What's Your Aim?'*
- The Men's Health Forum in Ireland (www.mhfi.org) is a charity which works on an all-Ireland basis to enhance the health of men and boys. It is a voluntary network of individuals and organisations, men and women, which seeks to identify the key concerns relating to male health and to increase understanding of these issues. Every year, the Forum coordinates Men's Health Week activity on the island of Ireland.
- Men's Health Week 2014 in Ireland has been planned by a broad range of partners who contributed to an inter-agency, all-island Planning Group.
- Key information on Men's Health Week on the island of Ireland is available online ...
 - Full overview of Men's Health Week 2014: www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2014.html
 - Briefing paper which answers all the most common questions: www.mhfi.org/mhw2014toolbox.pdf
 - Men's Health Week posters and images: www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-image-pack.html
 - Practical suggestions for organisations on how they can get involved: www.mhfi.org/mhw2014celebrateit.pdf
 - Latest developments: www.facebook.com/MensHealthWeek and www.twitter.com/MensHealthIRL
- The 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manual issues ten simple and practical challenges to men. After each challenge, there is a reason why it is important to think about this issue. It then offers three choices for action (Do Nothing, DIY, Find an Expert), and explains the consequences of each option.



Men's Health Week 2014
Monday 9th - Sunday 15th June 2014