

Chief Executives of Health Trusts and the RQIA help to launch the final countdown to Men's Health Week 2018 - everyone is asked to do something out of this world

Chief Executives of Northern Ireland's Health Trusts and the RQIA posed for a picture in Belfast this week to show their support for Men's Health Week (MHW) 2018. Today, the 70+ organisations in the inter-agency all-island Planning Group for Men's Health Week officially start the countdown to this week. During MHW, local men, communities and service providers are encouraged to take 'one small step' to further improve the health and wellbeing of local men and boys.

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 11th until Sunday 17th June. It is celebrated in many European countries, as well as in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and a number of other places worldwide. It is coordinated on the island of Ireland by the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI), and supported by the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland and HSE Health Promotion and Improvement in the Republic of Ireland.

Research shows that men on the island of Ireland experience a disproportionate burden of ill-health and die too young. They ...

- Die, on average, four and a half years younger than women do.
- Have higher death rates than women for all of the leading causes of death.
- Adopt lifestyles that are responsible for a high proportion of chronic diseases.
- Present late to health services - which leads to a large number of problems becoming untreatable ...

This situation has wide-reaching repercussions which stretch far beyond the life satisfaction of men themselves, and impacts upon their families, friends, work colleagues, industry and the economy. Thus, improving the health of men has substantial gains for society as a whole. Men's Health Week offers an annual opportunity to heighten awareness of preventable health problems, support men and boys to engage in healthier lifestyles, and encourage the early detection and treatment of health difficulties.

Colin Fowler, Director of Operations for the Men's Health Forum in Ireland comments:

“Almost fifty years ago, Astronaut Neil Armstrong gave us the immortal phrase: ‘One small step for man. One giant leap for mankind’. During Men's Health Week, people in Ireland are also being asked to do something out of this world. Everyone is encouraged to take at least one small step to improve their own health and the health of males throughout the country. This will certainly lead to a giant leap for men's health”.

Even small, simple changes can result in significant health improvements for men, and to support the ‘small steps’ key message during Men's Health Week 2018, MHFI has produced a free 32 page Man Manual. Titled ‘Challenges and Choices’, this publication poses ten practical challenges to men, explains why action is needed in each area, and offers the reader a range of simple and realistic actions to improve their health. To date, over 100,000 hard copies of this booklet have been read by men on the island of Ireland.

Colin Fowler explains:

“Evidence clearly shows that men's health can be improved in many significant ways - if men are offered positive choices, and are given the support, encouragement and opportunities to succeed. This Man Manual provides the information and the tools, while Men's Health Week offers the opportunity and a launch pad to make a real change.”

Throughout the week, a number of themes (see Editor's Notes) will be highlighted each day, and a range of events will take place across the island organised by many of the 70 partner organisations and local groups. Two celebrity ‘Men's Health Ambassadors’ - ex-Rugby player / coach and TV commentator Brent Pope and former Clare hurling star and GAA commentator Jamesie O'Connor - are helping to raise awareness of Men's Health Week 2018 by drawing upon their own personal experiences of taking small steps to overcome health difficulties.

Jamesie O'Connor, former GAA All-Star player and current pundit:

“I am delighted to support Men's Health Week because as a teacher and a coach, I see the importance of challenging unhelpful stereotypes and supporting boys and

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young men to develop good habits in relation to their health early in life. When boys are encouraged and supported to mind their physical and mental wellbeing it then becomes normal to them throughout their lives. Parents, teachers and coaches all need to work together to set boys on the right track to good health.”

Brent Pope, rugby pundit and well known mental health advocate added:

As somebody that has suffered with severe anxiety most of my life, I want to see more men get a better understanding and awareness of their own mental health so they can live healthier lives and be able to maintain their health and wellbeing. I always felt less of a man for asking for help and I don't want others to feel that way, unlike in my day. Today, there are great organisations and resources out there that can help and who want to reach out specifically to men.”

Men's Health Week offers an opportunity for a broad range of health professionals, service providers, youth groups, sporting bodies, community organisations, employers, Churches, policy makers, family workers, pharmacists ... to do something practical to improve the health of local men and boys. During MHW, everyone is asked to be self-reflective and to answer the question: 'what's your small step going to be?'

ENDS - followed by Editor's Notes

Editor's Notes:

Further information on Men's Health Week 2018 can be obtained by contacting ...

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- 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 11th until Sunday 17th June. It is celebrated in many European countries, as well as in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and a number of other places worldwide. It is coordinated on the island of Ireland by the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI).
- The Men's Health Forum in Ireland (www.mhfi.org) is a charity which works on an all-island 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.
- 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 2018 on the island of Ireland is: *'One small step for man. One giant leap for men's health'*. Everyone is being asked the question: *'what's your small step going to be?'* and is invited to do something that will make a positive difference to the health of the men and boys that they have contact with and influence over.
- Men's Health Week 2018 in Ireland has been planned by a broad range of 70+ partners who contributed to an inter-agency, all-island Planning Group.
- The celebration of Men's Health Week is supported by the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland and the Health Service Executive's Health Promotion and Improvement Department in the Republic of Ireland.
- Key information on Men's Health Week on the island of Ireland is available online ...
 - Full overview of Men's Health Week 2018: www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2018.html
 - Briefing paper which answers all of the most common questions: www.mhfi.org/mhw2018toolbox.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/mhw2018celebrateit.pdf
 - Latest developments: www.facebook.com/MensHealthWeek and www.twitter.com/MensHealthIRL
 - Some events taking place: www.mhfi.org/mhw2018events.pdf
- Each day of / leading up to Men's Health Week 2018 will focus upon a specific issue:
 - Friday 8th June - Men's health week is coming! ... Here's what you need to know
 - Saturday 9th June - Men and healthy relationships
 - Sunday 10th June - We are what we eat
 - Monday 11th June - Top tips for men's mental fitness

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- Tuesday 12th June - Keeping your heart healthy
 - Wednesday 13th June - Men and cancer
 - Thursday 14th June - Trash the ash ... Men and smoking
 - Friday 15th June - One less today ... Men and alcohol
 - Saturday 16th June - Sports Saturday... Men, physical activity and sport
 - Sunday 17th June - The importance of fathers to children's outcomes
- To view the social media Posts and Tweets planned for #MensHealthWeek visit:
www.mhfi.org/Tweets2018.pdf
 - Copies of the 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manual have been given out to men across Ireland. This booklet 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.
 - A low resolution PDF preview copy of the 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manual can be accessed online at: www.mhfi.org/challenges2018.pdf
 - The total number of resources distributed throughout the island of Ireland for Men's Health Week 2018 was ...
 - 20,000 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manuals
 - 6,000 posters
 - 15,000 postcards
 - 4,000 branded pens
 - The Chief Executives in the photograph are, from left to right:
 - Michael Bloomfield - Chief Executive, NI Ambulance Service Health and Social Care Trust
 - Hugh McCaughey - Chief Executive, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
 - Olive MacLeod - Chief Executive, Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority
 - Tony Stevens - Chief Executive, Northern Health and Social Care Trust
 - Shane Devlin - Chief Executive, Southern Health and Social Care Trust
 - Martin Dillon - Chief Executive, Belfast Health and Social Care TrustDownload the photograph at: www.mhfi.org/ChiefExecutives2018.jpg