

AGE WATCH ANNUAL REVIEW 2013/2014

1. Our Aim

To help people help themselves to live longer, in good health.

2. Why this matters

Around 80% of deaths from major diseases in the UK are attributable to lifestyle risk factors.

All Party Parliamentary Group on Primary Care and Public Health

Medical science is keeping more people alive longer – but often in poor health.

Global Burden of Disease Study 2010

3. What we do to promote health

- Provide health information
- Undertake health related research
- Work in partnership with other organisations committed to improving health and well being

4. Who we are

A voluntary organisation, launched in 2011, and recognised as a charity by HMRC.

We bring together a wide range of experience, knowledge and skills - and share a commitment to provide reliable health information.

5. Getting things right

Our User Group Advisory Panel reviews each article ahead of publication.

We have Information Standard accreditation. This is a quality mark commissioned by NHS England. It is awarded to organisations whose health information is clear, accurate, balanced, evidence based and up to date.

Each summer an independent Information Systems auditor checks that we are following our own policies and guidelines.

6. Vitamin D Research

The sun is the main natural source of Vitamin D, which is known to strengthen our immune system and (in combination with calcium) is good for our bones.

How many people know what their Vitamin D level is? How many people consciously avoid the sun – and if so, how and why? For those who know their Vitamin D level, how many are deficient? Does age, gender or ethnic origin make a difference?

You can find the answers to these questions on our website. They are the findings from our recent pilot survey of a sample of 270 adults.

7. Health Information provided

Over the last year we have added 28 new health information articles to our website. These covered different aspects of Diet, Illness, Longevity and Mind Body connection.

We have also reported findings from conferences on how ageing is portrayed, the immunology of ageing, dementias, the science of digestion and Vitamin D and human health.

And we have published interviews with experts like Dr Charles Alessi (Chair of the National Association of Primary Care) and Dr Louise Allan (Dementia Lead for the British Geriatrics Society).

This helped www.agewatch.org.uk achieve 271,698 hits from April 2013 to March 2014 (up from 107,161 hits in the previous 12 months)

8. Health Behaviour Change

Knowing what is good for our health isn't enough. We need to act on what we know.

That's why we have been exploring different approaches to health behaviour change, including:

The Biopsychosocial model (the interaction of what is going on in our body, our mind and our place in society).

The Health Belief Model (including how we assess the risks and consequences of ill health).

Self Efficacy (our belief in our ability to succeed).

Normative Beliefs (including the influence of social/peer pressure).

Stages of Change (as people don't usually make dramatic overnight changes).

Behavioural Economics (e.g. we tend to be more motivated by losing something we value than by potential future gain).

Marketing (e.g. who is more influenced by statistics and who by case studies).

We hope to apply what we have learned increasingly in the years ahead.

9. Research Council Project

We are a partner in a Research Council project, where we are leading on Knowledge Transfer.

The project explores the potential of art to help people with dementia. As there is currently no cure for dementia, initiatives to maintain quality of life are particularly important.

As part of our contribution we've developed the project website –

www.dementiaandimagination.org.uk

This 3 year project started in summer 2014 with:

- Care homes in the North East
- NHS assessment units in Derbyshire
- People with dementia living in the community in North Wales.

10. Dementia Action Alliance

As a national member of the Dementia Action Alliance we have:

- Signposted users of our website to a range of services to support aspects of daily living for people with dementia and their carers.
- Provided information on developments in dementia research – including evidence that physical and mental activity can delay the onset of symptoms.
- Helped break down negative stereotypes by developing an online gallery of art work by people with dementia.

11. Welcome

Welcome to the following new members of the Age Watch team:

Emma Juhasz (Associate Editor)

Nadine Richards (Diet & Nutrition Adviser)

Ellie Gifford (Research Officer).

Thank you to Judith Barnes, Peter Clarke and Jo Shock who leave us after making a valuable contribution to our research and development.

12. The Next Steps

Over the year ahead we aim to:

- Continue to develop www.agewatch.org.uk – in particular by applying more of what we have learnt about health behaviour change to make it easier for people to act on what they know.
- Promote the website more actively and start to build an online health community, with a particular focus on encouraging more two way communication.
- Develop a complementary health role, to increase our effectiveness.

We hope to be able to report on progress on each of these aims in next year's Annual Review.