

European Men's Health Forum (EMHF)

Introduction

The state of men's health in Europe is unacceptably poor. The projected male life expectancy in 2020 will remain below that of women's in the 1980's. The incidence of prostate cancer is overtaking that of lung cancer in many countries, and one in three men will soon be obese if nothing is done. The high but still growing incidence of male suicide is only the tip of mental wellbeing issues.

Some factors common to all European countries emerge that may contribute to this situation. Men are often under or misinformed about health matters, and have a natural tendency to take excessive risks with their health. They are often reluctant to seek professional help and delay diagnosis and treatment. Even when public health services are not always adapted to meet the respective needs of each gender, it fuels a public and professional belief that men don't care for their health.

Mission

The European men's health forum aims to improve men's health across all countries in Europe by promoting collaboration between interested organisations and individuals on the development and application of health-related policies, research, education and prevention programmes.

The EMHF fully supports equal opportunities in all its work and is committed to the improvement of the health of women and children as well as men. It partners with the European Institute of Women's Health on the promotion of greater gender equity in health policy.

Objectives

- Raising the profile of men's health at the Europe-wide level and within individual states.
- Encouraging Europe-wide, national, regional and local organisations (both governmental and non-governmental) to include men's issues in their policies and practices.
- Improving the delivery of health services to men, including primary care and health promotion information.
- Increasing men's awareness of their own health and their treatment options.
- Increasing the awareness of health professionals of men's health issues and their ability to work effectively with male patients and men generally.
- Changing men's health-related behaviour, not least in terms of increasing their willingness to access health care and reducing the risks they take with their health.
- Providing opportunities for organisations and individuals across Europe with an interest in men's health to network and collaborate.

Activities

In January 2005, EMHF organised a first European Network Building meeting in Brussels. 13 organisations representing 11 countries unanimously decided on the formal establishment of a network of men's health organisations and the organisation of a conference in September.

'The EMHF network is a formal coalition of organisations actively contributing to the improvement of men's health in Europe. Network participants are full members of EMHF. They work together to share best practice, establish a common agenda and, where appropriate, carry out joint actions. The network aims to provide a stronger voice for each of its members and for men's health as a whole. It also aims to facilitate collaboration with other international networks and institutions sharing the same goals.'



In 2003, the EMHF launched the *first ever report on men's health in Europe* that analyses health-related statistics across a wide range of conditions and lifestyles determinants to illustrate the magnitude of men's health-related issues at national level.

EMHF also recently published the result of its *pan-European survey of the quality of life of people living with HIV in Europe*. Presenting at the 3rd International AIDS Association conference in Rio this month, it concluded that policy considerations based on gender have now become essential to effectively improve reported levels of dissatisfaction.

EMHF also recognises the effectiveness of health communications is crucial to men's health improvement. The Forum has contributed to the development of a series of *best selling health manuals* inspired from the famous Haynes car manuals. Translated in several languages, these books explain various areas of men's health, such as cancer or obesity, using a language and presentation that appeal to men. Sections of these books have also been published in mini-manual forms so as to target specific groups of men or aspects of a disease area. The 2006 edition will focus on mental wellbeing.

EMHF is a well-recognised organisation on the European scene. It works with the *EU Parliament*, the *Commission* and a great number of EU-level organisations of patients and health professionals. Each year, the Forum actively participates in a number of international professional and public health events.

Over the years, EMHF has contributed to the development of an international community with its online *International Men's Health Database*, a free resource facilitating collaboration between academics, policy makers and health professionals (www.imhd.info).

The formal membership of national and regional men's health organisations across 14 European countries has led to the formalisation of EMHF's network and to the organisation of a first *Network Conference in Vienna (Sep 29-Oct 01)* with the signing of a European declaration on men's health.

The state of men's health across 17 European countries

Commissioned by the European Men's Health Forum to Leeds Metropolitan University (Dr A.White, Prof. K. Cash), this 130-page report brings together for the first time the latest mortality and morbidity figures. Health issues covered include men's perception of their health, life expectancy, cause of death due to specific diseases states, and lifestyle issues.

Worrying health inequalities among men, as well as between men and women are revealed that call for health policy, health research and health care to relate more closely to the needs of both men and women.



Additional information about EMHF and its activities can be found online at www.emhf.org. Alternatively, we encourage you to contact us directly at:

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Registered international not-for-profit organisation 15747/2002