Welcome to our March newsletter - Eamonn Swanton, Managing Director

Whiplash

Whiplash has been a cause of concern since so many people claim to suffer from it after an accident. There were 554,000 claims last year – double the 2006 rate. In reality, whilst people may have a stiff neck after an accident this fades after a few days and can be easily treated – and diagnosed. Heales Medical is able to undertake objective musculoskeletal assessments using sophisticated tools to assess the level of injury/capability following any musculoskeletal injury, including absence due to whiplash.

Source: www.dwp.gov.uk/other-specialists/compensation-recovery-unit/

Obesity

One in 30 people in the UK are now classed as morbidly obese. More than 50% of the population is too fat but one in four are not aware. WHO figures show that British men are the fattest in Europe and as a nation we are less fit than any other country. The fight against this epidemic is not helped by the fact that 60% of NHS staff are overweight.


Norovirus (vomiting disease) Vaccine

A vaccine against norovirus (vomiting disease) could be available within 5 years. Doctors have approached government funders to begin clinical trials. Whilst this is a mild illness and clears up in two to three days people can remain infectious for more than three weeks so it has the potential to cause problems in the workplace through absence.

Source: Banner Sun Health Research Institute, Arizona (in story)
http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2012/feb/17/vaccine-norovirus-winter-vomiting-bug

Early signs of Alzheimer's test

Doctors from the Banner Sun Health research Institute, Arizona have developed a 21 point questionnaire for the early signs of Alzheimer's which is claimed to be 90% accurate. The questionnaire is intended to be completed by a loved one. Scientists are also working on a blood test to spot the disease. The questionnaire can be found at the Telegraph website under 'Health'.

Source: American Association for the Advancement of Science in Vancouver
http://www.aaas.org/meetings/2012/
Heales Updates

We have completed moving our backend servers to a new cloud provider. This provides greater security and continuity. Server backups are taken hourly.

The look of the management system has been updated. Over the coming months we will be working on an improved user interface and usability.

The management system database has been updated to improve security and confidentiality. Clients may now be designated as ‘provider clients’ and use the system to provide their own services. The HR and H&S modules have been updated to enable online management of HR and H&S cases. We are now working in an improved administration module and billing.

Work continues on a simplified case referral process for schools/non regular users.

If you would like further information about anything contained in the newsletter please contact your contract manager, e-mail info@heales.com or call 0844 842 1755 and ask for James Stirling.

Average retirement age increases

**Men now retire at 64.5 on average.**

People are delaying their retirement from the workforce until later as they grapple with financial worries and providing for their later years, figures have shown.

Men now retire at 64.6 years old on average, up from 63.8 years in 2004, while women are retiring at the age of 62.3, up from 61.2 in the same period, the Office for National Statistics revealed.

The findings reflect increased longevity, with more people deciding to work longer to compensate for the reduced value of the pension savings they have built up, experts said. Increases in the state retirement age – which is due to go up to 68 by 2046 – are expected to reinforce the trend.

http://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/pm/articles/2012/02/average-retirement-age-rises.htm

Wellbeing

Rosemary aroma ‘may boost brain performance’

People exposed to the scent of rosemary (Rosmarinus officinalis) may benefit from improved brain performance, new research suggests.

Scientists at Northumbria University’s Brain, Performance and Nutrition Research Centre carried out tests using a chemical called 1,8-cineole, which is one of the main chemicals in rosemary.

They tested the cognitive performance and mood of 20 volunteers, all of whom were exposed to varying levels of rosemary oil aroma. Participants also provided blood samples so the researchers could measure the amount of 1,8-cineole they had absorbed.

Publishing their findings in the journal Therapeutic Advances in Psychopharmacology, the study authors revealed that blood levels of the chemical were associated with cognitive performance.

Lower Back Pain - What you need to know?

Josh Catlett - BSc[Hons] MCSP SRP
Heales Physiotherapist

Low back pain is very common. In the UK, it affects around 4 in 5 adults (80%) at some stage in their life and frequently recurring episodes are not uncommon.

The most common type of back pain typically affects the lower region of the back, buttocks and thighs, pain levels are affected by activity and generally the patient is well. This is not due to any serious cause and is known as simple low back pain. A full recovery is expected and the condition is typically self limiting.

If you are suffering from simple low back pain, staying active and returning to normal activities as soon as possible significantly increases the speed at which you will recover. Most workers continue to work or return to work within a few days after an episode of low back pain. It is important to remember that you do not have to be completely pain free.

Does work cause low back pain?

Often, physical demands at work, such as lifting, bending and twisting are thought to be the cause of episodes of low back pain, however this is rarely the case. Although they may be an influencing factor, evidence shows they are not the most important. In fact, in most cases, returning to work sooner will enhance your recovery.

Other factors influencing back pain include:

- Smoking
- Obesity
- Depression
- Stress and anxiety
- Job satisfaction
- Previous history of back pain

When should you seek advice from a healthcare practitioner?

If any of the following applies, consult your healthcare practitioner:

- Your back pain was preceded by a violent trauma such as a fall from a height or road traffic collision
- Pain is constant, progressive, unrelated to movement and uncontrolled by pain medication
- You are generally unwell, have experienced unexplained weight loss of are having night pain with associated fever
- You have neurological symptoms such as paraesthesia, pins and needles or numbness affecting both lower limbs or abnormal bladder or bowel function
- You have a past history of cancer, systemic steroid use, drug abuse or HIV
- There has been NO change in your back pain in the last 10 days despite following the advice above

5 top tips to combat low back pain

1. Continue normal activities
2. Remain in work (seek adjustments if necessary)
3. Ensure you have adequate pain relief
4. Actively engage in a rehabilitation program and increase physical activity
5. Remain positive and communicate openly with your employer and occupational health

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changing the shape of Occupational Health

e: info@heales.com
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Heales runs a number of Health and Lifestyle Improvement Programmes.

If you have any queries or are interested in having an event, please contact a Heales Occupational Health Advisor or Contract Manager for further information.

Health Promotion News

Sleeping pills may be as dangerous as smoking cigarettes, says lead author of new report

The Telegraph reported on a story saying hundreds of thousands of people who take sleeping pills just twice a month are nearly four times more likely to die prematurely, according to new research.

The study, published in the Journal BMJ Open, analysed 10,500 people taking a wide-range of sleeping pills, including temazepam and diazepam. They compared people taking sleeping tablets with those who were not using the drugs but had a similar lifestyle and health conditions.

People taking higher doses of temazepam pills, were six times more likely to die in the next two-and-a-half years.

For the drug zolpidem, the risk of death was 5.7 times higher for those taking them most frequently.

The drug zopiclone, was included in the full analysis but not calculated separately.

Lead author Dr Daniel Kripke, of the Scripps Clinic, wrote in the British Medical Journal Open: “The meagre benefits of hypnotics [sleeping pills], as critically reviewed by groups without financial interest, would not justify substantial risks.”


Upcoming Health Promotion Dates

Health Promotion Dates for April 2012

Bowel Cancer Awareness Month
http://www.boweicanceruk.org.uk

Parkinson’s Awareness Week
http://www.parkinsons.org.uk

MS Week
http://www.mstrust.org.uk/msawareness/

Health Promotion Dates for May 2012

World Asthma Day
http://worldasthmaday.org/

National Walking Month
http://www.walking.org/fitness-walking/national-walking-month/

Save Lives: Clean your hands
http://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/en/

National Smile Month
http://www.nationalsmilemonth.org/

Health Promotion Dates for June 2012

Everyman Male Cancer Awareness Month
http://everyman-campaign.org/index.shtml

Cervical Screening Awareness Week

National Food Safety Week
http://www.food.gov.uk/safereating/hyg/germwatch/