

Corporate Healthcare Bulletin

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Egg freezing for women high flyers

Almost half of women of reproductive age recently surveyed by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists said they would consider egg freezing to delay starting a family^{1,2}.

Apple, Facebook and Google have started offering it as an employee benefit. Richard Branson says Virgin will follow suit and UK fertility clinics say they have been consulted by other British employers considering the move. Fertility Network UK, a charity campaigning for childless couples, says its research shows supportive corporate fertility policy is good for companies and their staff.

*This issue is the subject of our next User Group clinical seminar for major enterprise customers on **25 April at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists**. We have limited availability: to secure a place, email charlie.macewan@wpa.org.uk*

¹ <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/news/confusing-fertility-advice-sparking-unnecessary-worry-among-uk-women/>

² <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/freeze-eggs-young-women-fertility-ivf-a8821351.html>

Challenging prostate surgery

Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust has developed a computer model to reduce the number of men who have unnecessary prostate surgery which can often leave them incontinent or impotent. Every year there are 47,000 prostate cancer diagnoses but the proportion of cases considered high risk and in need of urgent surgery varies widely between hospitals.

The new Predict Prostate programme was developed using data from 10,000 UK patients followed up for 10 years. Information from new patients can be fed into the model to give a read-out of individual risk, treatment options and survival estimate, by comparing their diagnosis with data from the group.

Studies of routine use of the algorithm in hospital clinics has shown that doctors without access to the statistics it provides, are far more likely to over-estimate risk of death from prostate cancer and prescribe unnecessary surgery.

As a result, there is a growing opinion that Predict should form part of pre-treatment protocols in the NHS and private sector.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/03/12/men-prostate-cancer-could-avoid-invasive-surgery-thanks-new/>

<https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/evidence-based-web-tool-aims-to-better-inform-and-refine-need-for-treatment-in-early-prostate-cancer>

<https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1002758>



Death is coming – sooner than it used to

Life expectancy – long regarded as a measure of national prosperity, has started to fall in Britain according to the Institute of Actuaries, which works out pension requirements for big companies. Average life expectancy for today's 65 year-old men is 86.9, a fall of 13 months since 2015. 65 year-old women can now expect to make it only to 89.2, a 14-month reduction over the same period. While some authorities have laid this decline squarely at the door of government cuts in health and social care spending, Public Health England, a government agency, argues that it is the consequence of an upward blip in deaths from heart disease and flu in recent years, plus a recent increase in fatalities caused by drug misuse among younger people.

<https://www.actuaries.org.uk/learn-and-develop/continuous-mortality-investigation/cmi-working-papers/mortality-projections/cmi-working-paper-119>

<https://www.bmj.com/content/364/bmj.l1123.full>

https://www.bmj.com/content/363/bmj.k5291?ijkey=cb14af1b9b677667ba74ebd73846c93cc2c4c81a&keytype=tf_ipsecsha

Addressing the sickie culture

A whole series of recent studies have highlighted the perennial headache for employers caused by workers taking days off because of real or fabricated health problems. One report suggested a third of employees took at least one sick day in the past year with hangovers the commonest cause. Other reports blamed sick days on back or neck pain caused by workers sitting for up to nine hours a day.

Suggested measures to combat this problem include a 30-minute pre-work workout, or cycles and treadmills at desks instead of chairs. For those with serious back injuries, there is now the possibility of an implant to block pain signals arriving at the brain.

In France, where the first three days of sick leave are unpaid, private sector workers still reportedly take an average 17 sick days a year. The human resources director of the Safran a multinational aircraft engine company, has suggested to the government that doctors be allowed to prescribe a day of télétravail, or homeworking for those who are only a bit ill...



<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/back-and-neck-pain-causes-a-third-to-take-a-sick-day/>

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-6724207/A-half-hour-workout-work-good-prescription-drugs-lowering-high-blood-pressure.html>

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-6718247/ME-OPERATION-New-implant-beat-pain-instant.html>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/02/21/france-may-encourage-sick-employees-work-home-anti-absenteeism/>

Operations that do no good

After a global study¹ indicated more than four million people die within a month of an operation, a flurry of questions have been asked about how many operations do not work at all. This has led to 5,500 UK patients who have received implanted plates to secure broken bones now being recalled² amid fears that flexible rather than rigid ones were used by mistake.

Meanwhile so-called decompression surgery for shoulder pain which is performed on 20,000 NHS patients a year, appears to be no better than paracetamol, according to a British Medical Journal study³, and another BMJ study warned that younger patients succumbing to the growing fashion for replacement shoulder joints were very likely to need major revision surgery⁴.

It has also emerged that 80% of ovarian cysts disappear within two years so surgery is unnecessary⁵, while warnings have been issued that replacement plastic lenses for short or long-sight may leave people with worse vision⁶.

¹ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)33139-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)33139-8/fulltext)

² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-47203055>

³ <https://bjsm.bmj.com/content/early/2019/01/15/bjsports-2018-100486.abstract>

⁴ <https://www.bmj.com/content/364/bmj.l298>

⁵ <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/news/190110/ovarian-cysts-should-watched-rather-than/>

⁶ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-6712361/Could-sight-restoring-lens-implants-leave-worse-vision.html>