

BULLETIN



EVENTS

Drop-In:-

Greens Lane Methodist Church, Hartburn. We meet here 1pm to 4pm on a Tuesday. Alternative therapy is available for those who enjoy or would like to try Shiatsu.

Social Evenings:

These are held at the Orthoptic Supplies, 176 Belasis Avenue, Billingham, TS23 1EY, on the last Wednesday of every month at 7pm.

Shopping Online????

Buy items or book holidays through the Stockton MS Group web site and we will receive a donation. There are over 100 top retailers to choose from. It all helps raise funds for the group.

Monthly Bulletin

"If you would like to receive this bulletin by email, then just send a request to news@stocktonmsgroup.org.uk.

Please remember if you change your email address to let us know by sending a message to news@stocktonmsgroup.org.uk"

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www.standard.co.uk 2 November 2017

Could running be the 'miracle cure' to Britain's mental health problem?

Approximately one in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year and while the benefits of exercise on our mental well-being have been well publicised, people are still questioning which form is the best.

However, a report released today into the benefits of running is threatening to blow that question out of the water. England Athletics surveyed 13,200 people over 12 months between September 2016 and August 2017, and found that 74 percent of runners felt running was good for their mental wellbeing. Add to that the fact that researchers found running to be the best calorie burning exercise at a rate of 861 to 1,074 per hour depending on your weight and it seems like we have a winner when it comes to the exercise sweepstakes.

Dr Averil McClelland, GP and an elite Masters Athlete supports the findings saying: "Physical exercise improves a person's well-being by releasing endorphins, the body's 'feel good' hormones. Studies show that in mild to moderate depression patients who exercise regularly do as well as those prescribed antidepressant medications or talking therapies."

One such person who has seen the life-changing effects of running first hand is Sue Bennett, a nurse and running leader for RunTogether Monday Motivators, a group running programme tailored towards those wanting to improve their mental health. Bennett was diagnosed with the neurological disease Multiple Sclerosis in 1997, which resulted in high-levels of fatigue and low-levels of motivation. Bennett admits that her diagnosis made her feel low. "I did feel down for a long time," she says. "I wasn't very well to start with but gradually as the years went on I started to accept my illness and for me running has been hugely helpful to where I am now. "After working as a Games Maker for the 2012 London Olympics, Bennett felt inspired to re-start her passion for running, that was founded while she was at school. Bennett had tried tap-dancing and amateur dramatics, which she credits for helping build her confidence but neither took over her life to the extent of running. But what is it about running that inspires such astonishing levels of mental and physical well-being?

"It's accessible, mostly free and, perhaps as you're getting older, a positive thing to channel your energies into. Running makes you feel very present. It boosts your confidence like nothing else and overcoming the challenge of running, even just a 5k, improves your self-esteem and makes it easier to overcome other challenges in your life."

And it gets even better as Bennett explains that running in a group can add an extra layer of emotional support to the myriad of benefits of solo exercise. "There is something quite unique about running in a group and that peer support. If someone is feeling down the group comes round and helps rally that person through."

The rapid growth in running groups across the country is significant for England Athletics as it works towards its goal of getting one million people into athletics and running by 2021. Bennett's running group train four to five times a week and although she doesn't always get to run with them she tries to keep up with that amount herself. Last weekend Bennett completed the Snowdonia marathon - a 42km run made even more difficult for those tricky climbs - to add to her impressive record of twelve completed marathons. "When you cross that finish line there's no feeling like it. You absolutely feel like you've just won an Olympic gold medal."

Charlatans threaten stem cell research with unproven cures, say experts

The credibility of stem cell research is at risk because of charlatans and dodgy clinics peddling unproven cures for diseases, according to a group of eminent scientists in the field.

Stem cell research, or regenerative medicine, has great potential and has already delivered some breakthroughs, but its future is threatened by poor science, unrealistic hopes, unclear funding models and unscrupulous private clinics, they say in the *Lancet* medical journal.

A special Lancet commission made up of leading experts has reviewed the progress to date in a field that was once thought to offer answers potentially to all forms of disease and disability. If it is ever to move from small-scale experimental treatments into mainstream medicine, “substantial rethinking of the social contract that supports such research and clinical practice in the public arena will be required,” they say.

Huge excitement about possible treatments for incurable diseases like multiple sclerosis and Parkinson’s disease, inflated by media reports, has led desperate patients and families to a proliferating number of poorly regulated clinics peddling “untested and potentially ineffective therapies”.

“The great risk of the current situation is highlighted by the case of Vannoni in Italy, in which the Stamina Foundation initially succeeded in obtaining direct authorisation from the Italian government to administer an unproven therapy to patients, thus bypassing the country’s regulatory authorities,” says the report.

In March 2015, David Vannoni was convicted of conspiracy and fraud for administering unproven stem cell therapies to patients at his Stamina Foundation. Vannoni, who was not trained as a scientist or doctor, claimed that bone marrow cells could be converted to neural cells to cure diseases such as Parkinson’s disease, muscular dystrophy and spinal muscular atrophy.

The Italian Medicines Agency tried to shut down Vannoni’s operation in Brescia hospital in 2012, but parents of sick children with devastating and terminal illnesses went to court demanding stem cell treatments and hundreds of them won. The Italian government agreed in 2013 to fund a \$3.9m clinical trial of the therapy. It took years of campaigning and investigation by scientists to expose Vannoni’s claims. He was sentenced to 22 months in prison, suspended on the condition he ceased treating patients.

“It happens all over the world, including the United States,” said cell biologist Prof Giulio Cossu from the University of Manchester, who led the commission. “It is no longer the case that you go to India or China.”

It is hard for patients and parents to know whether a stem cell treatment that is being offered has any validity but, said Cossu, there are a few simple rules. “Firstly, is the website showing any publication? Is there any scientific documentation of the work they are offering as a basis for the therapy? If not, that is a matter for concern.

“Second, they should give information on the cell type. They often say ‘stem cells’ with no information if they come from a donor or the patient or a bank. And you need a specific cell type for a specific disease.

“Thirdly, is there follow-up? How are patients doing after five years? What proportion of their patients are responding?”

Unfortunately, he said, many of the websites are selling hopes, not drugs.

There have been some real successes, such as bone marrow transplants for babies born with damaged immune systems who would otherwise have died. There are two areas in which stem cell treatments work well – in diseases of the blood and the epithelia, or skin. The reason is that it is possible to remove all the diseased cells first.

“As soon as you move to diseases that affect the muscles, the brain and the heart, you can’t remove the diseased tissue. You add your healthy or cured cell to 95 that have not been cured. You can’t simply transplant the cells and hope that it will work. This has been the lesson we have learned over 20 years,” he said.

Although it is dangerous to predict the future, he says there are some important trials coming up that he thinks will work: two of them in Parkinson’s disease. Parkinson’s is not like some other neurological diseases, such as MS, because it is very localised. The other promising therapy on the horizon is for the blood disorder thalassemia.

The commission says the research is important and must continue. “To realise the potential of this diverse field and improve wellbeing for all, it is clear that we must unite to address the ethical and governance issues, while supporting multifaceted research that brings together scientists, clinicians and engineers from academia and industry,” said another of the authors, Prof David Price, vice-provost for research at University College London.

www.bbc.co.uk 18 November 2017

Universal credit: Households to miss out on benefits over festive season

Thousands of people on universal credit may not be paid over the festive season or may get a reduced payment, the BBC Money Box show has highlighted.

Those hit will be some of the 67,000 people who claim the benefit while working and who are paid weekly.

This is because there are five paydays in December, so their monthly income will be too high to get any or some of the benefit. Some will have to reapply.

The government defended the system, saying the majority were unaffected.

Universal credit merges six benefits for working-age people into one new payment, which is reduced gradually as you earn more.

The Department for Work and Pensions warns on its website that people who are paid five times in a month may have an income that is too high to qualify for the benefit in that period. It says people will be notified if this happens and told to reapply for the benefit the following month.

Other people who are paid five times in a month but do not earn enough for universal credit to end will have their benefit reduced.

Kayley Hignell, from Citizens Advice, said the way universal credit was calculated brought some benefits but also "significant budget challenges".

She said: "The key thing here is about communication.

"People need to know that if they're getting extra income in one month... it may stop their universal credit payment, and that they then subsequently need to put in a new claim to make sure that they continue to get those payments.

"If you've got extra money in the month, don't necessarily bank on the fact that your universal credit is going to stay the same, because it could change it either in this month or the next."

Rolled out

The Department for Work and Pensions said not all those paid weekly would get a reduced payment in December because it would depend on the date on which a claimant's universal credit was paid.

It also said the payments balanced out, because claimants entitled to more would receive it in the following month.

It said those who reapplied for the benefits would not have to submit new forms and would have their current claims restarted.

The DWP said: "For the vast majority of people in work, they will continue to get paid universal credit in a five-week month.

"Universal credit adjusts automatically to people's wages.

"When someone's wages take them over the UC threshold, they can get universal credit the next month, and this process is working."

Universal credit is being rolled out across the UK in stages, but its implementation, particularly the six-week wait to receive the benefit, has caused controversy.

This week Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn told Prime Minister's Questions that hundreds of families have been issued with eviction notices by a landlord concerned about the impact of universal credit.

www.bbc.co.uk 17 November 2017

Mistakes in benefits claims could cost up to £500m

Mistakes in paying out benefits claims could cost up to £500m to put right, the BBC has learned. The errors identified by the Department for Work and Pensions affect the main sickness benefit, the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

The BBC understands that assessors wrongly calculated the income of around 75,000 claimants.

Ministers say that they are aware of the problem and that repayments have begun to be made. The department, which says it discovered the mistakes last December, is understood to have contacted about 1,000 people so far.

It says it is still trying to understand the scale of the problems with ESA, which is paid to about 2.5 million people, and will contact anyone affected.

Frank Field, chairman of the Commons work and pensions select committee, said the problem was on a scale of "historic proportions".

He said: "I'm still gobsmacked at the size and the nature and the extent and the coverage of people that have been wrongly impoverished by the department getting it wrong."

The BBC understands that the errors affected people who applied for ESA between 2011/12 and 2014/15 - claimants after that date are understood to have had their benefit correctly assessed.

On top of money to be paid back, the Treasury will have to pay for the staffing and processing of repayments.

Analysis: Little has changed

This extraordinary error is the latest problem to beset a troubled benefit.

When Labour introduced ESA in 2008, they claimed the change would move a million people off sickness benefit and save the Treasury £7bn.

The coalition embraced the benefit with open arms, again hoping to save money by moving people off incapacity benefit and onto ESA faster than planned.

Little has changed. Back in 2006/07, 2.7 million people were receiving the main sickness benefit at a cost of £12bn. In this financial year, ministers estimate 2.4 million people will get ESA - at a cost of £15bn.

For claimants, the changes have meant undergoing health assessments to prove their illnesses, which some say has created stress and anxiety.

Mistakes began in 2011 when the government started moving benefits recipients onto ESA - which is paid to those with long-term health conditions that are not going to improve. ESA was **introduced by the Labour government in 2008** to replace incapacity benefit. At the time of that migration, an independent expert working for the Department for Work and Pensions, Professor Malcolm Harrington, urged ministers not to proceed until he was certain the system was robust. The department said it only became aware of the problem in December 2016 after the Office for National Statistics published fraud and error figures for the social security system.

Heating or food?

Peter Cartwright, who was one of those moved from incapacity benefit to ESA due to mental and physical health problems, said the errors were "disgusting".

"People need this money to live," said Mr Cartwright, who does not yet know if he was underpaid.

"It's not as if you can go and get loads of luxuries when you're on this benefit."

The 54-year-old from County Durham said people on benefits often had to make the choice between food and heating, adding: "If people are getting underpaid that means they're not getting through."

Many of those eligible for ESA may also need to apply for universal credit - a benefit for people with a health condition or disability which prevents them from working.

Universal credit is already **experiencing its own problems** - with reports of IT issues, overspending and administrative errors.

Successful applicants for ESA are paid the benefit either on the basis of having made enough National Insurance claims, or because they are on a low income.

In calculating how much income a claimant is entitled to, benefit assessors have to work through a variety of factors, such as what other benefits someone might be on, how much they earn from any work or whether there is any other income coming into the household.

In a statement, the Department for Work and Pensions, said it was aware of the issue and "currently reviewing the historical benefit payments of claimants".

YOUR JOKES

Little Johnnie was sitting on the Footpath with a bottle of Turpentine.

He was shaking it up and watching all the bubbles.

A Priest came along and asked him what he had.

Little Johnnie said, 'This is the most powerful liquid in the world; it's called Turpentine.'

The Priest said, 'Oh no, the most powerful liquid in the world is Holy Water. If you rub it on a pregnant woman's belly, she'll pass a healthy baby.'

Little Johnnie replied, "Well, if you rub turpentine on a cat's ass, He'll pass a Harley Davidson"

DISCLAIMER

Articles in this Bulletin are meant for the sole purpose of information only and do not necessarily reflect the views of the committee.

MEMBERS COMPETITION

A £5 prize will be given to the member whose entry has the most correct answers. Even if you do not answer all the questions, send in those you have answered – you could still win!

- 1/ The Shard is the tallest building in the UK, but which is second tallest?
- 2/ Which of London's theatres is the oldest to still be operating on its original site, despite being rebuilt four times?
- 3/ What is the capital of the Seychelles?
- 4/ In which year was Halley's Comet last visible from Earth?
- 5/ What colour is a New York City taxi?
- 6/ In which year did Yuri Gagarin become the first human to travel into outer space?
- 7/ Which country does the racing driver Jacques Villeneuve come from?
- 8/ Which actress played Mrs Featherstone in 'Open All Hours'?
- 9/ Which actor played Christian Grey in the film 'Fifty Shades of Grey'?
- 10/ What was the name of the charlatan psychic played by Whoopi Goldberg in the hit 1990 film 'Ghost'?

Name:

Address:

Send Completed Forms To:
Mr D Henderson
74 Windermere Road
Stockton-on-Tees
Cleveland TS18 4LY

All entries to be received by the next social. The winner will be drawn from entries received with the highest number of correct answers.

Answers to last quiz:

1/ 8 2/ Clyde 3/ Dog 4/ Australia 5/ David Soul 6/ Swiss Roll 7/ A herb flavoured with olive oil
8/ Juventus 9/ Cronos 10/ Danube