

## MED-CHI

### NEWS AT MID-MAY 2008

#### Deaths

- Colin Davidson, Consultant Surgeon, at Frenchay Hospital, died on 30 January 2008. An appreciation by Roy May is published elsewhere in this issue of the website.
- Peter Baskett died in April. He was a distinguished anaesthetist based at Frenchay. We hope to publish an obituary in a later issue.
- Dr Chandra De Fonseka died aged 88 on 5 April 2008. He was a keen supporter of, and contributor to, the Med-Chi.

#### Public Health

- During the last two years a number of patients being seen for emergency treatment due to alcohol related conditions has gone up by 45% at the UBHT and 35% at the North Bristol NHS Trust. The national increase was 26%.
- A study based on NHS data of hospital admissions shows that children from deprived areas are four times more likely to be seriously injured as pedestrians and three times more likely when cycling. However, child deaths from injuries have declined over the last 20 years from about 11 deaths per 100,000 children aged up to 15 in 1981 to 4 deaths per 100,000 in 2001.
- Cases of tuberculosis in Bristol have risen. In the Bristol City Council area there were 79 cases in 2006 and 87 cases in 2007.
- A noise map has been created as part of a 12.5 million European project called 'SILENCE'. The project began in 2006 and is aimed at working out how to cut environmental/traffic noise. The Bristol Noise Map cost £30,000 to produce. Most noisy areas were alongside the M32 in Eastville and Easton and near the M5 at Avonmouth, Lawrence Weston, and Shirehampton. Some details were published in the Evening Post of 6 May 2008. Further information can be obtained from: [www.bristol.gov.uk/noisemap](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/noisemap).
- Angela Raffle has published a book entitled 'Screening, Evidence and Practice'. She raises questions about the use of cancer screening. In some cases – cancer screening could diagnose disease where the patient may not have been affected by it in their natural life time – meaning that they undergo treatment that they may not have needed.

#### Developments

- Southmead Hospital has acquired robotic equipment costing £1.5million. This will initially be used for prostate cancer operations, but it is hoped to use it in other fields later. Robotic technology is said to be the next generation advance beyond key-hole surgery.
- The government has developed a scheme to offer health checks to people aged between 40 and 74. However, some General Practitioners already provide reasonably comprehensive health checks for patients and there is doubt about the value of this project.

- Bristol and North Somerset are said to have too few doctors. The Health Secretary has announced that the Government will provide funding to create extra services. Each PCT will apparently get at least one new GP-led health centre which will be open from 8am-8pm, seven days a week.
- A primary care resource centre is being built in Portishead. The centre will include 12 consulting and examination rooms, two treatment rooms, and other accommodation.
- A Bristol firm, Micrima, is developing radio wave technology to improve the detection of breast cancer. It captures high resolution 3-D images through the use of radio waves. The work is being undertaken by a private company – in association with the University of Bristol.
- There has been much anxiety about the way in which breast care services in Bristol are to be organised. Professor Robert Mansel will be chairman of a group that will draw up options to be considered in a public consultation. The review was brought about after members of the Frenchay support group 'BUST' (Breast Unit Support Trust) challenged plans to centralise all of the city's breast cancer services at St Michael's Hospital. The group felt that the public had not been appropriately consulted on the move.
- A review of maternity services in Bristol will not lead to any change in the type of care offered by hospitals in the area. One of the options was that the services offered at Southmead Hospital will be scaled down and all care for high risk births will be concentrated at St Michael's Hospital. However, there has been an unprecedented rise in the birth rates in Bristol during the last year and this means that it would not be feasible to have more than 9,000 mothers a year giving birth in the one centralised hospital. Combining the two maternity services would have formed the largest unit in the country.
- Work on constructing the world's largest blood processing centre is drawing to an end at Filton. The new National Blood Service centre will deal with 600,000 units of blood per year from its site in the North Bristol Business Park. It will process blood from Birmingham, Southampton, Oxford, and the South-West. It will be open seven days a week, operating 24 hours a day. Work is due to finish on the £60m centre next month.

### **Operation Darzi**

- The basic structure of the NHS is not up for debate. However, further changes are likely. Working groups in each of the nine Strategic Health Authorities (SHA's) in England are examining 8 areas – maternity and newborn, staying health, children's services, acute care, planned care, long term conditions, mental health, and end of life care. Each SHA is to submit a report prior to production of the main Darzi report.

### **Audit/standards**

- An article in the British Journal of Urology claims that patients are being put at risk by surgeons who lack regular practice and expertise. Many surgeons perform only a small number of key-hole operations a year – leaving patients vulnerable to complications, such as incontinence and impotence. Claims are backed up by NICE which says that radical prostatectomy should not be done by teams which carry out fewer than 50 cases per year. Surgeons who do further than 5 cases a year should stop altogether. NICE reported in February that this key recommendation was frequently ignored (Ed. How does this work apply to Bristol?)
- Weston Area Health NHS Trust has been named in a list of the UK's 40 top hospitals for the fourth consecutive year. The list is compiled by Comparative Health Knowledge Systems (CHKS) - a company which works with trusts to improve the service that they provide. Trusts are rated

after data is collected on deaths, MRSA levels, the number of cancelled operations, the number of re-admissions, together with other criteria. The award winners were announced at a ceremony in London and presentations made by the Chief Executive of the King's Fund. Weston was one of only three Trusts in the South-West to be included amongst the top 40 – the others being Plymouth and Poole.

- Police officers, fire fighters, and ambulance workers have joined together to call for more ambulances in Bristol. Emergency crews say that they are being forced to stay at incidents for up to 2½ hours because there are not enough ambulances to take patients to hospital.
- Ash Pawade, a former Paediatric Cardiac Surgeon at the BRI, claims that there is a need to re-focus attention on the Cardiac Unit in order to stop standards slipping. A recent independent report was said to have found that too many operations were being cancelled and theatre time was not being organised properly. Staff morale was said to be low. Graham Rich, CEO of the UBHT, stated that the service will always be important and that there were plans in place to improve the areas of concern highlighted in the report.
- The Health Care Commission published a survey of patients who were admitted overnight to a large number of hospitals in 2007. Patients were asked 70 questions about their stay. 1,493 patients were surveyed in the Bristol and Weston Areas – 93%-94% rated the hospitals as excellent, very good, or good. However, they were all below the national average for the number of patients who were sharing wards with members of the opposite sex.

### **Miscellaneous**

- The Strategic Health Authority has agreed a plan that will ensure that North Bristol NHS Trust has no historical financial deficit by 31 March 2013. However, over the next 5 years the Trust will have to make surpluses averaging £4m each year. Planned sales of assets, such as spare land on the site of Frenchay Hospital, will allow the Trust to deal with this debt.
- The Jessie May Trust supports families of severely disabled children. It is aiming to raise £1.4m so that its work can be continued and expanded. The Charity is based in Kingswood and supports terminally ill children by helping to care for them in their own homes – giving the family a much needed break.