

## Seven days in medicine: 4-10 April 2018

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### New "one stop shops" aim to save lives

GPs in 10 areas in England who suspect that patients may have cancer can refer them to a rapid diagnostic and assessment centre being piloted as part of NHS England's drive to speed up cancer diagnoses. The centres aim to end the repeated referrals and tests that people with non-"alarm" symptoms often undergo. The centres are at North Middlesex University Hospital, University College London Hospital, Southend University Hospital, Queen's Hospital, the Royal Free Hospital, St James's University Hospital, Airedale General Hospital, University Hospital South Manchester, the Royal Oldham Hospital, and Churchill Hospital.

### Obesity

#### Soft drinks levy is "not enough" to tackle obesity

Parveen Kumar, chair of the BMA's board of science, said that the soft drinks levy, introduced on 6 April, was "long overdue" and would go "some way towards reducing the prevalence of obesity in the UK." But more needed to be done, she said, as "Tougher rules on junk food marketing aimed at children would begin to create a healthier environment for all." Helen Stokes-Lampard, chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners, said that "a society-wide approach [was needed] with schools, workplaces, local authorities, food and drinks manufacturers and public health bodies all playing a part."

### Drug misuse

#### Six in 10 drug death hotspots are coastal

Blackpool has had the highest death rate from heroin/morphine in England and Wales since 2010-12, with 14.0 deaths per 100 000 people in 2016, the Office for National Statistics found. This compares with a national average of 1.7 in England and 2.3 in Wales and is almost twice as high as the next highest area, Burnley, which had a rate of 7.6 per 100 000. The other seaside locations with the highest rates were Bournemouth, Portsmouth, Hastings, Thanet, and Swansea. The remaining areas were Burnley, Reading, Hyndburn, and Neath Port Talbot.

### Regulation

#### Doctor with firearms and hit list of "bad guys" is jailed

Martin Watt, 62, a former NHS emergency department consultant at Monklands Hospital in Airdrie, North Lanarkshire, was jailed for 12 years for possessing firearms with intent to endanger life. He had been sacked from his job in 2012 after disciplinary proceedings. Police raided his home in 2015 after a tip-off and found three submachine guns, two pistols, ammunition, a silencer, and homemade gunpowder, along with an envelope labelled "bad guys," with names, addresses, and car registration numbers of former colleagues and NHS managers he blamed for his dismissal. (Full story doi: [10.1136/bmj.k1555](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.k1555) )

### RNIB is investigated by Charity Commission

The Charity Commission for England and Wales opened an inquiry into the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and its subsidiary charity, RNIB Charity, over concerns about the safeguarding of vulnerable children. The inquiry opened on 29 March and was triggered by concerns about the management of the Pears Centre for Specialist Learning, a school and children's home in Coventry run by RNIB Charity. Shortly afterwards Sally Harvey stepped down as RNIB chief executive. In a statement, Eleanor Southwood, chair of the charity, said, "We are now doing absolutely everything we can to put things right and make sure the young people at Pears Centre receive the very best care and support."

### Biobank

#### Full genomes of 50 000 UK participants will be sequenced

The Medical Research Council has made £30m (£34.4m; \$42.5m) available for sequencing the genome of 50 000 people registered with UK Biobank, to establish the world's most detailed whole genome database and accelerate research into disability and premature death. Rory Collins, UK Biobank principal investigator, said that sequenced data were a vital piece of the health jigsaw that scientists had not expected so quickly. "This development is transforming in many ways," he said. "It massively extends the sorts of questions that scientists can ask and the speed at which they will get results."

### Sure Start

#### Review of children's centres is urged

Some 1000 centres set up by the Labour government from 1998 to deal with social inequalities and give children in England "the best start in life" have closed, the [Sutton Trust](#) said. The social mobility charity urged the current government to complete the long promised r

review of the children's centre programme "to confirm its national importance and overall purpose with national guidelines." This, it said, could stop the piecemeal local closures that were creating a postcode lottery of the centres, which bring together services for young children and their families.

#### Assisted dying

Hawaii is latest US state to allow aid in dying with terminal illness

Hawaii became the seventh US state to allow assisted dying as an option for terminally ill people, after a new measure was passed into law on 6 April that allows doctors to prescribe life ending medication. Oregon was the first state to pass such legislation in 1997 and was followed by Colorado, California, Washington, Montana, and Vermont. Canada legalised medical aid in dying in June 2016, and Victoria, Australia, legalised assisted dying in November 2017. Guernsey's parliament is set to debate a bill on assisted dying in the next few months.

#### Online consultations

Guidance on online providers is issued

Whether an online provider of GP consultations has been inspected by a regulator such as the Care Quality Commission, whether it has access to patient records and stores personal information securely, and the cost of the service are some questions that patients, GPs, and clinical commissioning groups should ask when choosing an online provider of GP consultations, says guidance from the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP). More services are offering consultations online, mainly through smartphone apps. Martin Marshall, RCGP vice chair, said, "Online consultations should be provided in addition to traditional services, not instead of them."

#### Research news

Taxes on harmful products are found effective

Taxes on alcohol, tobacco, and soft drinks offer an effective strategy for reducing chronic disease among the poorest people in society who are disproportionately affected by unhealthy products, a review published in the

Lancet found. A second study showed that increasing taxation of potentially unhealthy products was likely to bring the greatest benefits for people on low incomes because they generally had the strongest response to price changes. (Full story doi: 10.1136/bmj.k1524 )

Opioid prescriptions fell in US states with legal marijuana

US states that permitted legal access to marijuana through medical cannabis laws or legalised its adult recreational use saw a significant 14.4% average reduction in opioid prescriptions from 2010 to 2015, a study published in JAMA Internal Medicine found. The effect was particularly pronounced in hydrocodone and morphine use. Prescribing of non-opioid pain medicines also fell after the passage of laws on the medical use (down 8.36%) and adult use (down 8.69%) of marijuana. (Full story doi: 10.1136/bmj.k1514 )

Stop prioritising cars, doctors urge policy makers

UK governments must ditch a decades old trend and stop prioritising the car if they are serious about tackling childhood obesity, clinicians insisted in the British Journal of Sports Medicine. Investment in road building far exceeds that for active travel—public transport, footpaths, and cycle lanes—"resulting in an environment that often feels too risky for walking or cycling," they wrote. In a letter to UK transport ministers the authors cited significant savings to the NHS, reductions in pollution levels, and ingraining sustainable travel behaviours among future generations if active travel is prioritised.

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