



Newsletter

2014

Welcome to the 2014 version of the Hertfordshire Cohort Study Newsletter!

We hope we find you in good health. This year promises to be a busy and exciting time for all the researchers involved in HCS, with new projects beginning and previous studies continuing to gather data. We look forward to all the coming data collection and would like to

extend our thanks once again for your continued support of the Hertfordshire Cohort Studies.

May we take this opportunity to wish you a happy and healthy 2014 and we hope to be in contact with you all in the near future!

The Hertfordshire Cohort Study Team



Professor David Barker CBE

We're very sorry to have to start this edition of our newsletter with the sad news that Professor David Barker, founder of the Hertfordshire Cohort Study, died suddenly in August 2013 aged 75.



Although he retired as director of our MRC Unit in 2003, David continued to work actively as an emeritus professor into the last week of his life, both here and at the Oregon Health and Science University in the USA. The picture above shows him speaking at a public meeting to celebrate the centenary of the MRC in June last year.

David's family lived in Much Hadham, Hertfordshire during the war, and his younger sister was born there. The fact is recorded in the Health Visitors ledgers, and David always believed it was what persuaded the County Archivist to allow him to borrow the books. That trust led to the development of 'The Barker Hypothesis' through studies in Hertfordshire, followed

by a rapid expansion of the work into every continent. A Learned Society was founded to allow the large, international community of researchers to meet regularly. One person was universally recognised at those meetings: David Barker.

David loved research and inspired many of us to feel the same, his irreverent sense of humour making for a happy working environment. He was a family man, twice married, with eight children and 14 grandchildren.

We miss him, and will strive to continue the work he began. A full obituary can be found at www.mrc.soton.ac.uk/professor-david-barker-cbe-frs-in-memoriam/

Hertfordshire Shows its Muscle!

We are all aware of the changes in our muscles as we grow older. Our pioneering research has shown the links between early growth and muscle ageing (sarcopenia) in later life. This has been entirely down to the exceptional commitment and participation of members of the Hertfordshire Cohort Study – all of you!

We are taking this research forward and inviting men and women to take part in the Hertfordshire Sarcopenia Study. This study has been ongoing since 2007 and we have had an excellent response. It involves a day spent at University Hospital Southampton with all transport and meals provided.

Muscle performance is measured in greater detail including collection of a small piece of muscle tissue from the outer aspect of the thigh. The feedback from participants has been very positive and we hope to continue this study for the next couple of years. We are really grateful to everyone who is taking part. For more information, please contact Dr Harnish Patel, the study lead.

Exploring Lifestyle in Hertfordshire

We are interested in finding out more about influences on lifestyle and are pleased to announce that we will be running a series of small discussion groups in Hertfordshire in the coming months. We look forward to having a chat with you over a cup of coffee and to hearing about your views on diet, activity and ageing.

This is the first time that this information will be collected in Hertfordshire and hopefully it will provide us with a different insight into lifestyle. We have been sending out invitations to some of you over the past few weeks to come along and have a chat with us in your area.



Close to the Bone; The VIBE Study

The welcoming of a new year signals the beginning of an exciting new project opportunity for the Hertfordshire Cohort Study Team. Over the coming months we hope to increase our understanding of normal patterns of physical activity in older adults through 'The VIBE Study' which will take place in partnership with a number of Universities across the country. Previous work with the "Hertfordshire Babies" has revealed that smaller weight at birth can affect the size and strength of bones in later

life, which is important because it may affect the risk of breaking bones. It is also thought that certain types of physical activity can help to increase and maintain bone strength in later life and therefore help to prevent osteoporosis. We plan to measure this using a small device called an accelerometer and then see how it affects bone strength.

We are hoping to get in touch with all you regarding this study in the next year or so and will be beginning in the

east of the county from March 2014 - please look out for your information pack in the post! As always, we are extremely grateful for your continued support and the invaluable information which you have provided us, and would love your help and support in this next exciting project. We hope that the information gathered will improve our understanding of what influences bone health in the older population with the ultimate aim of helping to reduce the occurrence of broken bones in the future.

And finally, a few introductions...

Over the last couple of months, the Hertfordshire Cohort Study has welcomed some new faces to the research team. Leo Westbury, Charlotte Moss, Sarah Shaw and Ilse Bloom are all recent graduates, from a range of degree subjects, who have taken up various positions within the Unit.

With a Master's degree in Statistics, Leo will work with the Hertfordshire data to examine which factors are associated with healthy ageing.

As a research nutritionist, and with a Masters in Public Health Nutrition, Ilse

will spend her time at the Unit working towards her goal of helping older people to improve their diets.

Last October we said goodbye to the ever intrepid Hayley Denison, who has gone to New Zealand to study for a PhD. Her capable shoes have been filled by not one, but two new research assistants! They are Sarah and Charlotte, who will be supporting all areas of the day to day running of the Hertfordshire studies. Sarah has a degree in Nutrition and will be working with body composition data

already collected in Herts. Charlotte is a graduate in Biochemistry and her role will lie in projects which focus on changes to bone and joint health in ageing.



www.mrc.soton.ac.uk/herts



Visit the Hertfordshire Cohort Study website to read more about the study's findings-to-date, see staff profiles and download copies of past newsletters and booklets

If you have any questions or comments we would love to hear from you, and if you are moving house or changing your telephone number, please let us know so we can keep in touch!

Email: hcs@mrc.soton.ac.uk
www.mrc.soton.ac.uk/herts

MRC Lifecourse Epidemiology Unit
University of Southampton
Southampton General Hospital
Southampton SO16 6YD

Tel: 023 8077 7624