



# Newsletter

2017

## Welcome to the 2017 Hertfordshire Cohort Study Newsletter!

### Message from Professor Cyrus Cooper, Unit Director



2017 was another successful year for the MRC LEU and Hertfordshire Cohorts.

Exciting times lie ahead for the cohort with the extension of the study to the children and grandchildren of the original participants. In this latest newsletter we reflect on the impact that research from the Hertfordshire Cohort

Study has had. I am delighted that data from this study are still contributing to international and national research collaborations, it really shows how valuable the Hertfordshire Cohort is.

As always, I would like to take this opportunity to whole-heartedly thank you for your continued support over the years, and I wish you all the best for 2018.



The Hertfordshire Cohort Study Team

## 20 years of scientific discovery thanks to the 1931-1939 Hertfordshire birth cohort

It is 20 years since we first contacted Hertfordshire Cohort Study participants who were born between 1931 and 1939. Since then, HCS has helped scientists and doctors to better understand the causes of poor health in later life.

Research from this cohort was first published in 2004 and showed that low birth weight and poor growth during infancy are related to weaker muscle strength and poorer bone health in later life. Since then, over 200 scientific papers have been published; these have shown that factors collect together across our lives to affect our chance of ageing healthily. HCS research has improved our understanding of what causes conditions such as osteoporosis, osteoarthritis and

sarcopenia (the loss of muscle bulk and strength with age).

HCS plays an important part in many national and international research collaborations which combine data from different studies to further knowledge. In the UK, the importance of cohort studies for research is promoted by the CLOSER group of 9 "national treasure" cohorts; HCS is one of these! Internationally, HCS contributes to the World Health Organization's Global Burden of Disease Report; this huge study describes rates and causes of death and illness in different parts of the world and provides an important source of information for healthcare planners.

Research from HCS has influenced public health policy makers in the

UK and internationally. For example, the 2015 Report of the Chief Medical Officer recognised the importance of early intervention when it compared the health of the 'Baby Boomers' with the HCS generation and recognised the importance of acting early in life to prevent disease in later life. Recently we have analysed Hertfordshire data for the World Health Organization as part of a project that is trying to identify ways to help older people stay independent in later life.

We hope this article has given you an idea of the research that you have made possible by taking part in HCS. As ever, we are very grateful to you and hope that you are as proud of your study as we are.

### Save the date!

We are planning an opportunity for you to come along to meet some of the researchers involved in the HCS and hear more about findings from the study – and plan for the future. This is planned for Saturday 23 June 2018 at Harpenden Public Halls. To register your interest, please email [hcs@mrc.soton.ac.uk](mailto:hcs@mrc.soton.ac.uk).

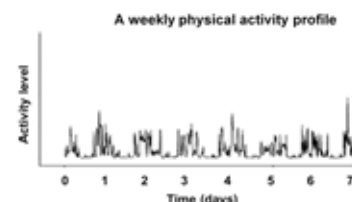
## The East Hertfordshire Bone and Physical Function Study



Over 215 of you have been back to Cambridge for follow-up measurements of your bones using the state-of-the-art methods at the Elsie Widdowson Laboratory.

The main aims of the study are to understand changes in bone later in life and how maintaining physical function might improve bone health. This year, we also took measures of physical function such as timed walking and chair rises. These replaced the popular jumping tests from 2012 when we last saw you in Cambridge. The measurement methods allow us to look in detail at the structure and makeup of your bones in much more detail than is

usual. We are currently analysing all the images and are starting to process the questionnaire data. The bone data will form the basis of the new, exciting work on Herts 3G. We would like to thank all those who were able to come to Cambridge to take part.



## Looking towards the future: The Hertfordshire 3rd Generation Study (Herts 3G)



Some of you have received information from us this summer regarding our exciting new 3rd generation study, known as "Herts 3G". The aim of this study is to collect health and lifestyle information from your children and/or grandchildren, in order to find out about health and disease patterns across generations. Specifically, we are interested in whether your early life has had an influence on your offspring's health. With the help of you and your family, this will be a unique project.

The Herts 3G study will primarily focus on your children or grandchildren, who are over the age of 16 years, living in the UK and wish to take part. Initially we plan to do a short questionnaire-based study in early 2018, with the potential for a more detailed study involving a bone scan. As ever, there is no obligation to take part in any part of the study.

Thank you so much to those of you who have passed on information about Herts 3G to your children and grandchildren so far and to those who have provided their contact information. To date we have had

more than 900 replies, which is fantastic; however, we would love to increase this number to 1000!

If you have not received any information about the Herts 3G study and would like to find out more, please contact Kate Maslin, Research Fellow on 02380 777 624 or by email: [hcs@mrc.soton.ac.uk](mailto:hcs@mrc.soton.ac.uk). We will be very happy to discuss the project or to send you an information pack for your family to read. If your children have ever wondered about your involvement in the Hertfordshire Cohort study, now is the time to get them involved!



[www.mrc.soton.ac.uk/herts](http://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!

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