

Welcome to Active Inform; a bimonthly research based physical activity newsletter targeting practitioners in the field. Active Inform aims to increase access to the evidence base for physical activity promotion. It will provide a snapshot of the latest physical activity research news, key documents, models and other tools to assist you to promote physical activity.

Feedback about this and future issues of Active Inform is welcome via email to twhalen@kinectaustralia.org.au.

Physical Activity: The evidence base for preventing and managing cancers and dementia

There is a vast amount of data currently available to help us make the case for physical activity health promotion across Victoria. The burden of diseases and conditions prevented and better managed by increasing physical activity is well documented. The Victorian Health Information Surveillance System (VHISS) recently released the report *Your health: A report on the health of Victorians*. The report utilises data from similar studies such as the Victorian burden of disease study¹, the Victorian population health survey², and the compilation of new data. The full report is available from the Department Human Services website.³ In addition, fact sheets are also available, presenting major findings from the 2003 Victorian Population Health Survey for physical activity, healthy eating and body mass index for persons aged 18 years or over, broken down by regions. Also available are fact sheets pertaining to patterns of health, well-being and community strength, and smoking and alcohol consumption across these areas². In addition, population health profiles are available by breakdown by General Practice Division,

1 Published by the Public Health Group, Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services Division. Victorian Government Department of Human Services. Melbourne Victoria. June 2005

www.health.vic.gov.au/healthstatus/bod/bod_vic.htm

2 Victorian Population Health Survey, Department of Human Services, Victoria 2004.

http://www.health.vic.gov.au/healthstatus/vphs_current.htm

3 <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/healthstatus/vhiss/index.htm> Published by the Victorian Government Department of Human, Services, Melbourne Victoria, December 2005.



from The Public Health Information Development Unit, a collaborating unit of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare .⁴

A recent edition of Active Inform⁵ addressed the case for exercise in the prevention and treatment of mental health problems, including depression. In this issue we will look at the case for two cancers (prostate and breast) and dementia, including Alzheimer's disease. According to the data from the Victorian Burden of Disease Study, dementias cause 8,470 years of life lost as a result of disability (YLD), 5% of the total, for males and 13,785 YLDs for females (7.9%), second only to depression for both genders. Prostate cancer is the 6th leading cause of years of life lost as a result of disability for males. It accounts for 5,748 years lost (3.4% of the the total), the most costly of cancers. For females, breast cancer accounts for 6,385 YLDs (3.7%). However, like depression (the most prevalent of YLDs for each gender), these are rarely mentioned in making the case for physical activity promotion, despite the mounting evidence available that physical activity both helps to prevent, delay and/or manage these conditions and diseases.

Dementia

Dementia is a general term for more than 70 conditions, (the most common is Alzheimer's) that cause progressive deterioration in thinking, memory and everyday abilities. There are an estimated 212,000 people in Australia with dementia. It is estimated that there will be 54,000 new cases in 2006, which equates to almost 148 new cases per day.⁶ In Australia, dementia costs \$6.6 billion - \$5.6bn in real economic costs and \$1bn in transfer costs.⁷ In Victoria, there are 52,535 people living with dementia in 2005 and the projected number for 2020 is 83,602. Victoria has a higher incidence and prevalence of dementia than most other states and territories, due to its older population, and this is expected to continue.⁸

The authors of a recent review article regarding evidence-based practices of lowering the risk of Alzheimer's disease state: "If onset or progression of disease could be delayed, even by a few years, the prevalence of Alzheimer's disease, along with the public health and economic burdens that accompany it, could be reduced dramatically."⁹ In the review, authors note a Canadian community-based prospective study that reported an association between physical activity and dementia. More intense and more frequent exercise was associated with a lower risk of Alzheimer's disease and dementia. This was more true for females than males. Similarly, women who were part of an osteoporotic study were found to have an association between physical activity (self-reported as distance walked and kilocalories used) and cognitive decline. Across quartiles, representing high to low activity levels for both physical activity and kilocalories expended, greater physical activity was strongly associated with less risk of cognitive decline. Importantly, the review also highlighted a meta-analysis study of 18 longitudinal studies that examined the relationship of exercise and cognitive improvement in

4 http://www.publichealth.gov.au/gp_divisions_vic.html

5 Active Inform, Issue 5, March 2006. Available from Kinect Australia by contacting: twhalen@kinectaustralia.org.au

6 Alzheimer's Australia data: www.alzheimers.org.au

7 The Dementia Epidemic: Economic Impact and positive solutions for Australia. Report prepared by Access Economics for Alzheimer's Australia, March 2003.

8 Information Sheet, Alzheimer's Australia, Victoria. Number 1, January 2006.

<http://www.alzheimers.org.au/upload/Information%20Sheet%201%20Prevalence%20of%20Dementia.pdf>

9 Jedrziewski, M.K., Lee, V.M.-Y., and Trojanowski, J.Q. Lowering the risk of Alzheimer's disease: Evidence-based practices emerge from new research. *Alzheimer's and Dementia*, 1. 152-160.