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## **“Where are all the Action Men?”**

**- Launch of Men’s Health Week 2013 in Ireland**

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**There is clear evidence<sup>1</sup> that men, on the island of Ireland (and further afield), experience a disproportionate burden of ill-health and die too young. International Men’s Health Week - which launches on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013 - seeks to challenge this situation. It calls upon everyone to do something practical to make a difference to the health and wellbeing of local men and boys.**

Men’s Health Week always begins on the Monday before Father's Day and ends on Father's Day itself. This year, it will run from Monday 10th until Sunday 16th June 2013. It is celebrated in most European countries, as well as in the USA, Australia, New Zealand and a number of other places worldwide. The theme for Men’s Health Week 2013 in Ireland is: *‘Action Men - Turning Words into Actions!’*

But, why should we focus upon men’s health? Well ...

- Local men die, on average, almost five years younger than women do.
- Males have higher death rates than women for all of the leading causes of death and at all ages.
- Poor lifestyles are responsible for a high proportion of chronic diseases.
- Late presentation to health services leads to a large number of problems becoming untreatable ...

Michael Lynch, Chairperson of the Men’s Health Forum in Ireland (which coordinates Men’s Health Week on the island of Ireland), comments:

*“Not too long ago, we were unaware of the full extent of men’s poor health status and the specific health issues that they face. However, this is no longer the case. Therefore, we cannot ignore the needs of almost half of the population of the island of Ireland”.*



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<sup>1</sup> Men’s Health in Ireland ([www.mhfi.org/fullreport.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/fullreport.pdf)); Getting Inside Men’s Health ([www.mhfi.org/gettinginsidemenshealth.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/gettinginsidemenshealth.pdf)); Men’s Health in Northern Ireland: Tackling the Root Causes of Men’s [ill] Health ([www.mhfi.org/manmattersbriefing1.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/manmattersbriefing1.pdf)); A Report on the all-Ireland Young Men and Suicide Project ([www.mhfi.org/ymspfullreport.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/ymspfullreport.pdf)); Facing the Challenge - The Impact of Recession and Unemployment on Men’s Health in Ireland ([www.mhfi.org/IPHreport2011.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/IPHreport2011.pdf)); The State of Men’s Health in Europe ([www.mhfi.org/menshealtheurope.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/menshealtheurope.pdf)) ...

There is, also, evidence which clearly shows that men's health could be improved in many significant ways. However, men require support, encouragement and opportunities to help them to take control of their own health.

As Michael Lynch adds:

*“The high level of premature mortality and illness amongst men in Ireland has far-reaching repercussions. It has an impact upon men's friends and relations; the economy; the social and financial positions of families; men's sense of self-worth ... However, this is not a 'lost cause' - research shows that preventable risk factors account for a high proportion of male illnesses. Therefore, we can all take positive and practical action to do something about this situation”.*

While it is crucial for men to take responsibility for looking after themselves, their health can often be determined by other factors outside of their personal control. Frequently, we simply blame men for their own state of health, and focus upon the shortcomings of individuals without recognising that there are also wider social determinants of health.

During Men's Health Week 2013, everyone (health professionals, service providers, youth groups, sporting bodies, community organisations, employers, Churches, policy makers, family workers, parents, individuals ...) is asked to do something practical to improve the health of men and boys, and to start 'turning words into actions'.

Many organisations across the island of Ireland have risen to this challenge, and details of some of their initiatives can be viewed at: [www.mhfi.org/mhw2013events.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw2013events.pdf)

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## **Editor's Notes:**

- The core aims of Men's Health Week each year are to:
  - Heighten awareness of preventable health problems for males of all ages.
  - Support men and boys to engage in healthier lifestyle choices / activities.
  - Encourage the early detection and treatment of health difficulties in males.
  
- Each year, individual countries focus upon a specific theme. The theme for 2013 in Ireland is: *'Action Men - Turning Words into Action!'*
  
- The Men's Health Forum in Ireland ([www.mhfi.org](http://www.mhfi.org)) is a charity which works on an all-Ireland basis to enhance the health of men and boys. It is a voluntary network of individuals and organisations, men and women, which seeks to identify the key concerns relating to male health and to increase understanding of these issues. Every year, the Forum coordinates Men's Health Week activity on the island of Ireland.
  
- Men's Health Week 2013 in Ireland has been planned by a broad range of partners who contributed to an inter-agency, all-island Planning Group.
  
- Key information on Men's Health Week on the island of Ireland is available online ...
  - Full overview of Men's Health Week 2013: [www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2013.html](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2013.html)
  - Briefing paper which answers all the most common questions: [www.mhfi.org/mhw2013briefing.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw2013briefing.pdf)
  - Men's Health Week posters and images: [www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-image-pack.html](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-image-pack.html)
  - Practical suggestions for organisations on how they can get involved: [www.mhfi.org/mhw2013celebrateit.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw2013celebrateit.pdf)
  - Events list: [www.mhfi.org/mhw2013events.pdf](http://www.mhfi.org/mhw2013events.pdf)
  - Latest developments: [www.facebook.com/MensHealthForumIreland](http://www.facebook.com/MensHealthForumIreland) and [www.twitter.com/MensHealthIRL](http://www.twitter.com/MensHealthIRL)

