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## First Meeting of MHFI Men's Health Week 2014 Sub-Group

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**Date:** Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2013  
**Time:** 1.30pm - 3.30pm  
**Venue:** Room H306, School of Nursing, Dublin City University  
**Present:** Lorcan Brennan, Colin Fowler, Michael McKeon, Finian Murray and Eamonn O'Reilly  
**Apologies:** Michael Lynch  
**Minute Taker:** Colin Fowler

## Agenda Items

### Introductions

The meeting began with a quick round of introductions, and a brief overview of Men's Health Week (MHW) in Ireland by Colin.

### Date of Men's Health Week 2014

MHW always begins on the Monday before Father's Day, and Father's Day is always the third Sunday in June. In 2014, MHW will run from Monday 9<sup>th</sup> June - Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> June.

### Theme for 2014

Previous MHWs have focused upon ...

- 2005 - Obesity
- 2006 - Mental Wellbeing
- 2007 - Long-term Conditions
- 2008 - Workplace Health
- 2009 - Access to Services
- 2010 - Physical Activity
- 2011 - Health and Well-Being During Challenging Times
- 2012 - Men's Health: What's Your First Instinct ... Fight? Flight? Find Out?
- 2013 - Action Man: Turning Words into Actions

In the first years of MHW celebrations in Ireland, the tendency was to follow the lead of England, and to adopt a theme which focused upon a specific medical condition or circumstance. However, more recently, Ireland has set its own much broader themes.

There are both positive and negative aspects to this broad approach ...

- Negative - it is more difficult to get TV coverage for something which is not very specific and which lacks a 'shock horror' headline statistic that the media can latch on to.
- Positive - this model has managed to engage the interest and support of a much wider range of organisations than might be possible with a single issue theme.

On balance, it was felt that we should, in 2014, pursue the more inclusive approach. It was also acknowledged that the benefits of getting widespread local activity - as well as radio / newsprint coverage - more than compensates for missing a few seconds slot on TV squashed in between bigger headlines.

A number of options for themes were discussed. It was unanimously agreed that we should adopt '*Challenges and Choices*' as the focus for MHW 2014. This is also the title of the Haynes mini-manual that the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) hopes to have ready for dissemination during MHW. It will, therefore, ensure that we have a tangible product to hang our media releases on.

The 'Challenges and Choices' booklet is a male-friendly 32 page publication which will be given free to men throughout Ireland. We hope to get up to 10,000 copies of it produced - budget permitting. It highlights key challenges to men's health (i.e. alcohol, diet, exercise, sexually transmitted diseases, blood pressure, mental health, smoking, skin cancers, back care and help-seeking behaviour) and offers three choices for dealing with each condition.

The original template for this publication still has to be 'Irishised' by MHFI. Colin is coordinating this process. It was also suggested that we should include more health related humour (jokes-with-a-jag) in the Irish version. For example ... Two men are talking and one says: '*the problem with me is that obesity runs in my family*', to which the other replies: '*the problem with you is that no one runs in your family!*' Finian will look into this.

It was suggested that the cover of the booklet could also be used as one of the graphics for MHW 2014 - possibly, even for the poster image.

## **Engagement with Younger Men**

For a number of years, MHFI has recognised that younger men are not as engaged with MHW as older men. One of the main reasons for this is that MHW falls at a time when most universities, colleges and schools are closed.

As a first attempt to try to remedy this situation, MHFI will seek to encourage the Student Unions in third level institutions throughout Ireland to ...

- Recognise that younger men face a range of health issues and have particular needs which are largely unmet.
- Meet with / talk with each other about the possibility of agreeing a suitable fixed day or week or month to nationally celebrate young men's health in Ireland.
- Think creatively about how the resources available within their institutions can be used to highlight and promote young men's health issues.

Colin will try to identify a mechanism to contact and engage the Student Unions to begin this discussion. Michael Mc offered the meeting facilities in DCU's School of Nursing to enable a gathering to take place. Although discussions could begin in the New Year, it's likely to be late 2014 / early 2015 before anything can be rolled out (given the flow of the academic year).

## **Role of the MHFI Sub-Group in MHW 2014**

In previous years, the role of the MHFI Sub-Group involved ...

- Proposing appropriate aims and objectives for MHFI's involvement in MHW.
- Identifying potential members for an all-island, inter-agency Planning Group.
- Working with the inter-agency Planning Group to further develop the overarching theme for MHW in Ireland.
- Participating in, inputting to, and acting as the executive of, the all-island MHW Planning Group.
- Designing and delivering realistic actions on behalf of MHFI to support the celebration of MHW.
- Overseeing and steering developments on behalf of MHFI.
- Reporting back to the MHFI Board of Trustees.

It was felt that this range of tasks are, once again, appropriate and realistic.

## **Role of MHFI in MHW 2014**

During 2013, MHFI acted as ...

- *Promoter* - raising awareness of what the week is and when it will happen.
- *Coordinator* - acting as the central contact point for and hub of activity in Ireland.
- *Educator* - making the case for MHW and men's health needs.
- *Animateur* - encouraging others to grasp the vision and do something about it.
- *Convenor* - bringing interested groups together to work in partnership.
- *Prompter* - reminding decision-makers / service providers about men's health needs.
- *Signposter* - offering direction to resources, research, support and activities.
- *Quartermaster* - supplying the basic information / resources / tools (e.g. facts, logos, posters, communication mechanisms) to support the celebration of MHW throughout Ireland.

These functions will also be adopted for MHW 2014.

## **Aims of MHW 2014**

The overall aims of MHW 2014 will be 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.
- Help men and boys to maintain good health and a sense of well-being.

However, all initiatives to celebrate MHW (in whatever form) will be encouraged - as the simple rationale behind this week is to highlight men's health and well-being needs.

## **Target Audience**

The purpose of MHW each year is to draw attention to the health and well-being issues affecting men and boys, and to encourage personal, structural and systemic change where possible. As in previous years, we will target ...

- Males themselves
- Policy / decision-makers
- Service providers
- Public awareness and preconceptions

## Key Deliverables

In the MHFI funding application to the HSE, the key deliverables named are ...

1. Establish, convene and administer an inter-agency, all-island, MHW Planning Group (consisting of health related organisations and other bodies who have contact with men) - to contribute to shaping MHW and to develop mutually beneficial partnership work with and between groups.
2. Design and produce promotional materials to add a common brand to this week - offered free to all organisations and groups (via online download) who wish to promote MHW.
3. Research, collate and disseminate a briefing paper which provides the context of MHW, the rationale for the theme selected in Ireland, and an overview of what is planned - in order to offer a core understanding of what MHW is / seeks to achieve, and to help to ensure a consistent approach across Ireland.
4. Collate a document on what can I do to mark this week? - to encourage individuals and groups to envisage realistic and practical ways that they can celebrate MHW.
5. Increase awareness amongst the general public, service providers, decision-makers and men, themselves, about MHW - especially through the media, and by circulating updates / materials to the MHFI mailing database.
6. Provide a free, easy to access, online information hub for MHW.
7. Promote the details of MHW activity and events on the MHFI website and in MHFI publications.
8. Offer a signposting service to other sources of support, information and resources - by telephone, email and online.
9. Support (where possible) other practical actions / projects which promote or add value to MHW.

The 'Challenges and Choices' booklet (funded by Man Matters) will be an additional output. This could be launched on an all-island basis a week or two before MHW - to avoid competition for media coverage from other MHW projects / events during the week itself. The President of Ireland / a government minister / the heads of political parties both North and South could be asked to officially launch this publication.

It was also felt that it would be useful to try to identify a lead organisation in each county in Ireland who could then launch the booklet locally during MHW itself. This would help to ensure that regional media have something of local relevance to focus upon and cover in-depth.

If possible, it would be useful to get a photo-shoot with key personalities such as the Irish Rugby team, GAA, soccer squads, boxers etc. Please send any contacts to Colin.

## All-Island MHW Planning Group

All members of the MHW 2013 Planning Group will be invited to participate in the forum which determines the roll-out of this year's MHW. In addition, Pieta House and Connect were proposed for inclusion this year. Sub-Group members were also asked to consider and research additional names of nominees, and to send these to Colin.

Given the feedback from members of last year's Planning Group, it was agreed that ...

- The first meeting should be face-to-face. It was felt that this helped to build / renew relationships between participants.
- Subsequent meetings will be held (if possible) by video-link between the Dublin and Belfast offices of the Institute of Public Health in Ireland.
- Interim business will be conducted by email / telephone.

The date agreed for the first meeting was Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2014, from 10.30am - 1.30pm. Colin will check if the Diocesan Centre in Dundalk is free on this date.

### **Wish List**

In an ideal world, it would be great to have a range of information about MHW available in video (or at least audio) format. This is especially important for people who can't read, or won't read, about the week.

If available, a range of 'video shorts' could be uploaded to a You Tube 'Men's Health Week Channel'. These could focus upon things such as: why do we need to focus upon men's health?; what is MHW?; what can I do to mark this week?; what is happening around the country? ... Lorcan, Finian and Colin will look into this a bit more.

### **Next Sub-Group Meeting**

The next meeting of the MHFI MHW 2014 Sub-Group will take place at 1.30pm on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2013 - just before the MHFI AGM. Colin will check with the Institute of Public Health if it is possible to use the same room that the AGM will be held in.