Probus talk 24 October 2024

# The NHS – improving performance

## Professor Robin Leake

Using relevant data, Professor Robin explained ways to prevent or delay the onset of diseases that cause issues to the NHS, and that can be avoided by individuals making sensible choices. He was in Glasgow University looking at treatments for breast cancer, and his team found cancers could be prevented using appropriate drugs and diet. The talk was developed from this research, showing how to prevent other cancers and diseases occurring.

The newspapers are full of the chronic diseases from which we can all suffer, from cardiovascular to diabetes and so on and so forth. They typically go on to say that by moderating our diet, we could help to eliminate or reduce exposure to these diseases. Clearly if we all gave up smoking the incidence of lung cancer will be reduced. The overall objective is to reduce the number of people going into hospital and therefore lower the overall costs to the NHS. A further objective is to continue to reduce the diseases. This would naturally help ourselves to be healthier, than others who have not helped themselves.

By 2030 one billion people worldwide will have diabetes in one form of another, and most of these will be suffering from type 2 **diabetes.** In nine out of 10 UK cases are indeed type 2 diabetes; this condition is now affecting people under 40. Robin moved on to **obesity.** An obese patient costs the NHS twice as much as a normal weight person ( £1375 vs £750 pa). Very concerning is that 90% of the parents of obese children do not realise their children are obese.

Robin continued to illustrate the huge costs to the NHS of preventable diseases:– from **Cancers** (184,000 preventable in 2023); **Smoking** (35,000 die each year from lung cancer and smokers are more than twice as likely to need treatment for mental disorders); **illegal drugs** which if taken at an early age, 13-18, lead to much higher chance of developing mental health problems. Up to three-quarters of **Cardiovascular** disease and 80% of **strokes** are thought to be preventable.

So how do we prevent these causes of bad health?

**The Down Side of Prevention**

Problems arise if authorities ban anything! Cigarette smuggling is already significant and would rise quickly if tax levels are further increased. Warning teenagers to avoid any drugs might have the reverse effect and encourage exploration of existing and new drugs.

**Bribery**

Some Insurance companies already reward clients who take a certain amount of exercise every day. Giving tax breaks to firms to reduce the amount of highly processed foods in their products may work. Make 70% cocoa solids chocolate cheaper than milk chocolate. Continue the push for lower sugar contents in soft drinks.

**Long Term Objectives**

Helping **everyone stay well** for as long as possible whatever their current state of health. In particular, increasing the number of years in good health for our poorest citizens.

Addressing recent trends in **over-consumption, inactivity and obesity** which have the potential to overturn recent gains in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy. NHS could save £14 billion per year if everyone was a healthy weight (European Congress on Obesity).

Giving attention to **mental health and wellbeing** which can affect life chances and often coexist with physical health problems.

Continuing to address Scotland's challenge with harmful **alcohol consumption** and continuing our efforts on tobacco control to **reduce smoking further.**

**Ensuring collective, cross-government and cross-sector effort focussed on prevention, is why the NHS needs Politicians!**