



Since January 2020 Elsevier has created a COVID-19 resource centre with free information in English and Mandarin on the novel coronavirus COVID-19. The COVID-19 resource centre is hosted on Elsevier Connect, the company's public news and information website.

Elsevier hereby grants permission to make all its COVID-19-related research that is available on the COVID-19 resource centre - including this research content - immediately available in PubMed Central and other publicly funded repositories, such as the WHO COVID database with rights for unrestricted research re-use and analyses in any form or by any means with acknowledgement of the original source. These permissions are granted for free by Elsevier for as long as the COVID-19 resource centre remains active.

BMA says smoking harms reproductive capability

Smoking causes erectile dysfunction in more than 100 000 British men, according to a new report from the British Medical Association (BMA). It shows that tobacco has a harmful effect on virtually every aspect of sexual and reproductive health.

The report *Smoking and Reproductive Life* is the first publication to bring together the evidence of tobacco's damage to sexual, reproductive, and child health. Its authors say that many of the harmful effects are still poorly understood by the general public.

In the past couple of years, new evidence has emerged about the extent of damage tobacco smoking causes, and says report author Sinead Jones, director of the BMA's Tobacco Control Resource Centre, "some of these effects are not well known at all."

The level of public awareness is particularly low when it comes to cervical cancer, she said. New estimates printed in the report

indicate that smoking has a role in 1200 cases of cervical cancer in British women each year, but only about one in ten know that smoking increases their risk.

The report also points out that smoking is linked to around 3000–5000 miscarriages every year, and that women who smoke take longer to conceive because their chance of conception is reduced by up to 40%.

The effect of smoking on sperm quality is well known, but there is also substantial evidence that it can lead to erectile dysfunction, Jones said. "We're estimating that 120 000 young men in the UK are impotent because of smoking."

In the report, the BMA calls on the government to give pregnant workers the right to leave on full pay for the duration of their pregnancy if they cannot be ensured protection from second-hand smoke. It also wants pictorial health warnings on tobacco packaging that reflect risks to reproductive life, and the

Rights were not granted to include this image in electronic media. Please refer to the printed journal.

Adapted from Science Photo Library

Many Britons are unaware of the effects of smoking on sexual health

introduction of legislation to make public places smoke-free.

"Tobacco has a profound impact, all the way from puberty to the childbearing

years and beyond, and affects almost aspect of your health", Jones said, adding: "We're not doing enough in this country."

Stephen Pincock

Canada strengthens pandemic plan in wake of SARS

Nine months after a SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) outbreak killed 44 in Toronto, Canadian health officials released a detailed Pandemic Influenza Plan last week aimed at learning from the SARS experience.

Canada's new plan maps out methods for intensive surveillance, massive vaccination programs, and emergency responses. These include a call for airborne medical teams and supply chains to cope with as many as 138 000 patients in hospital, and a plan to use hockey rinks as mass morgues. Klaus Stöhr, head of the World Health Organization's Global Influenza Programme, described the US\$500 000 Canadian effort as "the most comprehensive pandemic preparedness plan we have seen".

The aim, officials say, is to help health workers and managers respond to a crisis far more extensive than SARS, which quickly overwhelmed

health care in Ontario, Canada's largest province, last year. "We've strengthened our surveillance systems in the wake of SARS, and now we're clarifying roles and responsibilities", says Arlene King, Canada's director of immunisation and respiratory infections. Citing the SARS experience, the Pandemic Influenza Plan specifically suggests intensified hospital-based surveillance for "unexplained clusters of severe respiratory illness", along with bolstered surveillance for individual cases of such illnesses "in travellers recently returning from a potential zone of emergence of novel influenza strains."

Under the new plan, health staff and officials are expected to rely on detailed "pandemic planning checklists" drawn up by the government to offer guidance for surveillance, vaccine programs, antiviral distribution, emergency health services and public communications. Under the scheme, the Canadian

government is poised to intervene immediately to identify the emergence of a new influenza strain and expedite vaccine production and distribution nationwide within four months. Under a US\$300 million arrangement, King says, Quebec-base Shire Biologics is responsible for rapid vaccine development. The plan also calls for massive stockpiling of antibiotics to fight secondary infections. "It's unknown when the next pandemic could occur", says King. "But we do know it will occur, and we're watching very carefully."

The new plan is a step in the right direction says Paul Caulford, Family Medicine and Community Services director at the Scarborough Hospital in Toronto, but, he says, he would be "pleasantly surprised" to see the government allocate sufficient resources to see it fully implemented.

Paul Webster