

Newsletter - February 2003

First major publication from the Million Women Study: Use of hormone replacement therapy is influenced more strongly by medical factors than by lifestyle

The first major paper from the Million Women Study collaborators was published in December 2002 and is being distributed to each screening centre. It is based on data from over 1,000,000 women across Britain and demonstrates that use of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is common among women aged 50-64 nationwide (see map below). Overall, 33% of women in the study were currently using HRT and a further 17% had used it in the past. Use varied markedly according to a woman's medical history. For example, 66% of women who had had both ovaries removed were currently using HRT, compared to 6% current use among women with breast cancer and 24% use among women who had had a stroke. There was considerably less variation in use according to factors such as deprivation, education, exercise or alcohol consumption. This in-depth understanding of patterns of use of HRT will inform future analyses of the effect of HRT on the risk of disease.

We're still collecting information!

The Million Women Study is still collecting information from NHS Breast Screening Units about breast cancers diagnosed in participants. Moya Simmonds, Elizabeth Hilton and Barbara Crossley are visiting collaborating screening centres around the country to ensure that high quality follow-up data continues to be obtained. Thanks are due to all screening centre staff for their fantastic ongoing cooperation with the project!

Alcohol, tobacco and breast cancer

Reliable evidence about how alcohol and tobacco affect a woman's risk of breast cancer was published in December 2002 (Collaborative Group on Hormonal Factors in Breast Cancer. British Journal of Cancer 2002; 87:1234-1245). The Collaborative Group on Hormonal Factors presented data on over 58,000 women with breast cancer and over 95,000 controls and found that the risk of breast cancer increases by 7% for every unit of alcohol consumed per day. Cigarette smoking had no significant effect on risk.

June 2003: Fifth annual meeting of the Million Women Study collaborators

The fifth annual meeting of the Million Women Study collaborators will take place on June 16th 2003, from 11.00am to 3.30pm, at 44 Lincoln's Inn Fields, in London. There will be talks about the progress of the study, and some recent findings from the Million Women Study will be presented. Topics will include breast cancer, family history, cervix cancer, alcohol and tobacco.

There is an invitation and acceptance form attached to this newsletter. We very much hope that you can make it to London for the meeting.