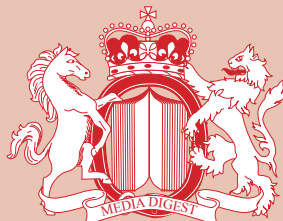


# Media Digest



## Proposal for heart tests in people over 40 aims to cut CVD burden

A scheme to provide check-ups for heart disease and stroke once a decade for people aged over 40 years has been proposed by the National Screening Committee.

Tests for cholesterol and blood pressure, as well as blood glucose, would be carried out at general practices. To lessen the impact on workload for GPs, extra staff would be employed, including pharmacists and practice nurses.

While the potential cost of the scheme has not been calculated yet, it is hoped that it will result in cost savings for the health service in the long term by reducing the burden of treating cardiovascular disease (CVD) events later in people's lives.

Recommendations for the scheme will probably be sent to the Department of Health later this year,

*The Times, 9 March 2006*

## Newly identified compound blocks tissue damage caused by CRP

A study led by University College London (UCL) scientists has designed a new drug that inhibits the adverse effects of C-reactive protein (CRP), a contributor to tissue damage in heart attacks and strokes. The findings, published in *Nature*, suggest that targeting CRP may produce both immediate and long-term clinical benefits following a heart attack.

The new compound, bis(phosphocholine)-hexane, is bound by CRP, inhibits all CRP functions in the test tube, and blocks the tissue-damaging effect of CRP in an experimental heart attack model.

Professor Mark Pepys, of the UCL Centre for Amyloidosis and Acute Phase Proteins, whose work on CRP has been supported by the Medical Research Council since 1979, says: 'Although heart attacks are responsible for about one third of all deaths in developed countries, most patients survive a first heart attack. However, if they have a large scar, patients go on to develop heart failure which is eventually fatal. Reducing the immediate damage is thus critically important.'

*The Times, 27 April 2006*

## Food Standards Agency accused of watering down salt targets

Campaigners have accused the Food Standards Agency of not going far enough with its targets for cutting salt levels in food products. These targets have been amended from levels proposed in August last year, following a consultation period.

Professor Graham MacGregor, Chairman of Consensus Action on Salt and Health (CASH),

commented that 'the power of the food industry is once again in evidence, and the purely commercial interests of food companies have been allowed to prevail.'

He predicted that 30 000 more strokes and heart attacks will occur unnecessarily each year as a result.

*BBC News, 22 March 2006*

## Laser therapy enters the realm of arterial heart disease

Scientists from the US Department of Energy have developed a laser technique that could reduce the lipid build-up linked to arterial heart disease.

The team used a free-electron laser, which is more powerful than a conventional laser, and found particular wavelengths (915 µm, 1210 µm and 1720 µm) that would heat up fat much more than water and hence avoid damaging other body tissue. Once heated, the fat is broken down and excreted by the body.

The free-electron laser is especially suited to a task like this because, with its electrons being free, its delivery device is able to absorb and release energy at any wavelength.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the 4th Generation Light Source (4GLS) at Daresbury Laboratory, near Warrington in Cheshire, will feature free-electron laser technology to enable a broad range of science programmes to be carried out in the UK.

*The Times, 10 April 2006*

## CARDIO LITE

### Preposterous, my dear Watson

When the English ban on smoking in public places comes into effect next Summer, Sherlock Holmes may be deprived of the ultimate crime-cracking accessory, his pipe.

The ex-denizen of Baker Street would be among many famous characters to be forced to kick their habit, if actors are

no longer allowed to light up on stage.

Following discussions with fuming campaigners, politicians are considering an exemption to the ban for theatrical performances. Sherlock will surely be hoping that this idea does not go up in smoke.

*The Times, 27 April 2006*

### Professor chances on novel substitute for a defibrillator

When Professor Ronald Mann had a heart attack at the wheel of his car, the Grim Reaper could be forgiven for counting his proverbial eggs. As the car careered into a tree, however, the unconscious Ronald was thrust into his steering wheel, which had the effect of a defibrillator and bump-started his heart.

Reflecting on the incident, Ronald said: 'I am certainly

thanking my lucky stars.' He has now had a real defibrillator fitted.

*Daily Mail, 24 March 2006*

