



## **The Healthcare System Has To Approach Men and Not Sit Back and Watch Them Die**

- **Lower life expectancy of men mainly due to insufficient availment of health care services and an unhealthy life style**
- **Low social status influences men's health much more than women's health**
- **Medical care must address men in the workplace, at sports grounds, etc.**

The lower life expectancy of men compared to that of women is only to a very limited extent a result of genetic determination. The main reasons for this are an unhealthy lifestyle and the fact that men make use of healthcare services too little and too late. "This is the bad news", says Ian Banks, spokesman from the British Medical Association for men's health issues and president of the European Men's Health Forum, which is featuring a "Men's Health" panel at the European Health Forum Gastein taking place in Bad Hofgastein, Austria, from 1 to 4 October. "The good news is: We can change this."

Banks demands a radical change in the attitude of health professionals and health systems towards men's obvious disregard of health issues. "As long as we sit around and wait for them it makes no sense to lament about men's neglect of their health needs and inadequate use of our great health system. If men do not come to us, we have to go to them."

Potential battlegrounds in the fight for better men's health are workplaces and sports grounds. When men are addressed with health issues in their working environment, where it becomes obvious that better health is linked with greater success and higher professional standing, they are more open to advice and changes in lifestyle. Information campaigns at football or rugby stadiums have also proven to be quite successful, says Banks. "It doesn't matter what someone may think about it. The only thing that matters is that it works." Banks also regrets the fact that there is too little political backing for men's health issues: "There were already two EU reports on women's health but we are still waiting for the first one on men's health."

There is little doubt about the urgency of the issue. A striking fact is that low social status affects the health situation of men far more than that of women. For instance, in socially deprived areas of Great Britain the life expectancy of men is as low as 54 years of age, whereas in other areas men's life expectancy is up to 80 years. There are no similar differences between women with low or high social status," Banks says. "Furthermore, we know the health of women and men is often inextricably linked. Whoever wants to seriously tackle the problem of inequalities in health has to deal with men's health issues."

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