

Good Questions

Issue 24

December 2008



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

from all of us at
AHP Research

In this issue:

Can we have a happy credit crunch Christmas?	1
News from ISPOR Europe 2008	2
Health awareness – dates for your diary	2
In the journals	3
Making the headlines	4
Christmas crackers!	4
In the news	4
Forthcoming events	4

Can we have a happy credit crunch Christmas?

With news of recession, subdued economies, and cutbacks dominating the headlines, Christmas if not the New Year is looking a little bleak. Financial scrimping is fast becoming the norm and Scrooge and the Grinch look set to succeed in stealing all the festive cheer that is usually so plentiful at this time of year. So, should we expect this to be a not-so-happy Christmas?

As it stands, we might be forgiven for assuming that the cumulative result of this financial gloom would be compromised wellbeing and happiness. Research published recently by our colleagues at the New Economics Foundation (nef) suggests that this does not have to be the case. The Mental Capital and Well-being report (produced by over 400 scientists working together), suggests that spending and consuming more does not equal happiness or improved well-being. The report, commissioned by the government, reveals evidence that once basic needs are met there are very simple steps (see Fig 1) that people can take to positively improve their well-being at an individual level and that these steps are not dependent on a large purse.

Nic Marks, founder of the centre for well-being at nef even went so far as to suggest that “For too long we have measured the health of the nation by how much we are consuming rather than the things that really matter, which is how things are really going for people”. Highlighting the current relevance of the findings he added: “building social networks and investing our time and effort in things that we can do for ourselves are just as important, if not more so, when times are hard.”

... continued on page 3

Connect...

Connect with the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

Be active...

Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

Take notice...

Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

Keep learning...

Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

Give...

Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

Figure 1: nef's five ways to well-being

...because good questions outrank easy answers...



News from ISPOR Europe Congress: Athens, 8-11 Nov 2008

Ba Luong beats the odds!

We had a very enjoyable and interesting couple of days meeting many new people and attending the outcomes research sessions. Our conference theme, "Why gamble?", was a gentle reminder that its best to have a sound strategy when including patient-reported outcomes (PROs) in clinical trials – there is no point gambling with the evaluation and future marketability of a drug that has cost \$1.5 billion to bring to market.

It was also exciting couple of days with many delegates trying their luck with our dice game to win an iPod Touch. Against all the odds, Ba Luong of Solvay Pharmaceuticals (winner of last year's competition) rolled six sixes and claimed his prize. Ba couldn't believe it (and nor could we!). After the congress, Ba wrote to us: *"When the six sixes were rolled, and seeing the amazement in all your (and probably my) faces, it was an incredible high. You wouldn't believe how shocked my friends are at hearing that I've won twice. ☺ I guess I'm an outlier though ... it can be really disappointing to lose. It's only fun to gamble when fun things are at stake -- an iPod Touch yes, but not a house, your life savings, or a PRO!"*

Patient-reported outcomes (PROs): value beyond the label claim

Many pharmaceutical companies that have taken an interest in patient-reported outcomes (PROs) have focused on the pursuit of label claims, an exercise which can be very expensive, time-consuming

and not without its risks. Although the FDA's draft guidance places much emphasis on the effects of drugs in terms of health-related quality of life (HRQoL) and other PROs, successful PRO-based claims have been rare in recent years.

In order to capitalise on the benefits of PROs, it has been acknowledged that PROs need to have a place in industry beyond the label claim. A number of speakers at the recent ISPOR congress discussed the growing importance of the 'patient's voice' for the clinician's understanding of disease severity and the impact of both the condition and its treatment on QoL. Suggestions about how to extend the use of PRO data from clinical trials were also discussed in terms of using data to explore the key demographic and clinical factors that may influence disease severity and QoL and using data for core targeted value messages such as developing utility values for PRO scales.

If you would like to know more about the value of PROs beyond the label claim, you may like to join our training workshop *Be PRO-active in 2009!* on 16-17 or 22-23 January. [Contact us](#) for further information and to secure your booking.

AHP Workshops

Thanks to all those who attended our workshops, which stimulated lively debate on the topics of maximizing recruitment to clinical trials, strategies to minimize and handle missing data, and the role of health beliefs in outcomes research.




"Its only fun to gamble when fun things are at stake ... not a PRO!"

Health Awareness - dates for your diary

- Drunk and Drugged Driving (3D) Prevention Month
- Children's Cancer Awareness Month
- World AID Day (1 Dec)
- Carer's Rights Day (5 Dec)
- Hand-washing Awareness Week (7-13 Dec)
- Aplastic Anaemic Awareness Week (1-7 Dec)





	<h2 style="margin: 0;">In the Journals</h2>
<h3 style="margin: 0;"><i>Experiencing physical warmth promotes interpersonal warmth</i></h3>	
<h1 style="font-size: 2em; color: #00AEEF;">1</h1>	<p>'Warmth' is a personality trait thought to have a powerful influence on social judgment.</p>
<h1 style="font-size: 2em; color: #00AEEF;">2</h1>	<p>Research has indicated that the insula in the brain is responsible for processing both information about interpersonal warmth (trust) and physical temperature.</p>
<h1 style="font-size: 2em; color: #00AEEF;">3</h1>	<p>The hypothesis underlying two studies was that experiencing physical warmth (or coldness) would lead to a similar increase in feelings of interpersonal warmth (or coldness).</p>
<h1 style="font-size: 2em; color: #00AEEF;">4</h1>	<p>In the 1st study, participants were asked to judge a 'target' person's personality while holding a hot or iced coffee. In the 2nd, participants were asked to choose gifts for themselves or their friend while holding a hot or cold therapeutic pad.</p>
<h1 style="font-size: 2em; color: #00AEEF;">5</h1>	<p>Participants holding something hot (drink or pad) were more likely to judge a person as 'warmer' (i.e. generous, caring) or choose a gift for a friend rather than themselves. Other personality ratings unrelated to warmth/cold were unaffected, suggesting this was not a non-specific effect on mood.</p>
<h1 style="font-size: 2em; color: #00AEEF;">6</h1>	<p>"Experiences of physical temperature per se affect one's impressions of a prosocial behaviour toward other people, without one's awareness of such influences," the researchers said.</p>
<p>Williams LE, Bargh JA (2008). Experiencing physical warmth promotes interpersonal warmth. <i>Science</i>, 322(5901); 606-607</p>	

... continued from page 1

easily adapted into everyday life to improve well-being and happiness during discouraging times such as the current credit crunch. These are based around the concepts of connecting, giving, being active, learning and taking notice (maintaining curiosity). Each has economical, budget-friendly options and, very importantly, each is rooted in strong scientific evidence backing these simple actions as five ways to well-being:

- **Connect...** emphasis on the benefits and importance of social interaction is supported by evidence that one of the major differences between those with and without mental health problems are that those with such problems lack social connectedness.
- **Be active...** longitudinal studies have shown how increased physical activity is effective in combating cognitive decline, depression and anxiety.
- **Taking notice...** is about being aware of what is taking place and being felt in the present. It encourages increased mental well-being, as future worries can be buffered temporarily and a more balanced perspective can be regained.
- **Learning...** or having a thirst for new knowledge / challenges is a strong predictor of mental well-being.
- **Giving...** is particularly apt at this time of year. Although it can involve expensive gifts, it is the act and the thought (not the material gift) that is important; just a simple kind gesture to someone can really make a difference. Studies have shown that committing only one act of kindness a day for less than three months is effective in increased well-being.

If followed as prescribed, this 5-a-day recipe for happiness means that, despite the credit crunch, a Merry Christmas may well be within everyone's budget.

Reference

1. [New Economics Foundation \(2008\) Five ways to well-being. The evidence.](#)

Connect...
Be active...
Take notice...
Keep learning...
Give...

This festive season, you may be perceived more warmly by people drinking mulled wine than those drinking champagne

Why? See "In the Journals"

Making the headlines

- [DH reports mixed results on patient experience](#)
- [Brown shelves change in organ donor law](#)
- [Hospitals making progress on blood clot risk assessments](#)
- [Government targets are distorting patient-doctor relationships](#)
- ['Old treatments' better for IBS](#)
- [Fresh look at arthritis drug use](#)
- [UK will introduce generic substitution of drugs in 2010](#)

Christmas crackers!

What disease can you catch from putting up too many Christmas decorations? Tinsillitis

What does Father Christmas suffer from if he gets stuck in a chimney? Claustrophobia!

How many psychologists does it take to change a light bulb? One - but it has to really want to change.

What's the difference between God and a Doctor? God doesn't think he is a Doctor.

In the news

- [Psychological therapy 'improves cancer survival'](#)

New research has demonstrated that psychological interventions may help to improve outcomes for patients with breast cancer. Researchers at Ohio State University followed 227 women who were being treated for breast cancer over an average of 11 years. It was found that patients who participated in group therapy sessions (aimed to reduce distress and teach participants how to relax) were 56% less likely to die of breast cancer. In addition to this, the risk of the cancer returning was reduced by 45%. It is suggested that the improved survival rates may be related to improved immune function resulting from the stress reduction the therapy provides.

- [Heavy drinkers underplay drinking levels to GPs](#)

Heavy drinkers lie about their level of alcohol consumption to doctors and also conceal it from partners, friends and colleagues with men more likely to lie than women. The poll of nearly 2,000 people showed that 39% of high risk drinkers underplayed their level of alcohol consumption, and 19% were found to be in denial about their actual consumption levels.

Health professionals need information about consumption levels to advise on health risks and encourage high-risk drinkers to reduce their intake. PRO measures are an un-obtrusive way of obtaining information about the factors that may promote or prevent excessive drinking and its impact on HRQoL. For more information on PROs in alcoholism, see a recent [review](#) conducted by AHP.

- [Calls for more mental health funding as economic worries increase](#)

The recent economic climate appears to have impacted people's mental as well as financial wellbeing. Following health secretary Andrew Lansley's prediction that the number of people with mental health problems will rise by 26% by 2010, the mental health charity 'Mind' has requested more investment in services to help it cope with the expected surge in demand caused by the economic crisis. Prominent issues such as job insecurity, debt and financial problems are known to contribute to mental distress. In response to this, the Royal College of Psychiatrists announced that 100,000 health professionals would be sent special guidance on supporting patients with debt and mental health problems.

Forthcoming events

6-7 January 2009

UK Society for Behavioural
Medicine
Exeter, UK

16-17 January 2009 &
22-23 January 2009

Be PRO-active in 2009!
Windsor, UK

22-25 April 2009

Society for Behavioural
Medicine
Montréal, Canada