

PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET

Health & Employment After Fifty (the HEAF Study)

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve.

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of the study is to find out how health affects people's ability to work in different types of job at older ages, and also whether continuing to work to older ages is good or bad for health, and how. Our aim is that the findings of the research (which will be published in the medical press) will influence planning of Government policy on employment at older ages, and help to ensure that older people will neither be denied opportunities to work where it would be good for them nor forced to work in jobs which are bad for their health.

Why have I been chosen?

We are inviting patients to join the study if they were born between 1948 and 1962, and are registered with selected general practices from across England. We need responses from as many as possible of the people we ask to take part so that the findings will be representative and reliable.

Do I have to take part?

This is not part of your normal clinical care, and you do not have to take part. Whether or not you decide to take part will not affect your care by the NHS in any way. You are free to decline or withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

What does taking part involve?

We would like you to help us by filling in the enclosed questionnaire and then returning it to us in the prepaid envelope provided. Answering the questionnaire should take 15-30 minutes at the most.

At the end of the questionnaire, we ask for your agreement that as the study progresses, the doctors in the study team can be given certain information from your medical records (the information will have been made anonymous, and they will not actually see your records). This information would concern consultations and treatments in hospital or in the GP surgery for various physical and mental health problems (such as diabetes, epilepsy, asthma, heart disease, depression and injury at work).

Also at the end of the questionnaire, we ask your agreement to be sent further, shorter questionnaires 12 months from now.

Will my details be kept confidential?

Yes. Your GP and practice will remain responsible for your medical care. Your medical data will be kept strictly confidential and will be protected. The researchers plan to track all the medical events using a process called record-linkage. This process will use the NHS electronic records of medical events that happen in the UK. The researchers will ensure that these health records will not be passed on to anyone outside the small study team and that you and your contact details will not be identifiable in any reports or publications. Nor will your identity be known to the members of the research team who work with the medical data. The study has been approved by the NHS National Research Ethics Service (North West - Liverpool East Committee).

Any questions or concerns?

If you have any further questions or concerns about the research, please contact Dr Clare Harris or Dr Cathy Linaker, who are based at Southampton General Hospital (02380 777624, email chl@mrc.soton.ac.uk or ech@mrc.soton.ac.uk).

What next?

If you are happy to take part, please fill in the enclosed questionnaire and return it in the prepaid envelope provided. If you have any difficulties understanding the questions (for example, if English is not your first or main language), please ask a friend or relative to help you.

Thank you for taking time to read this sheet.