

The European Brain Council's Weekly External Environment Update

Week of 7th November 2011

Quote of the week

“This research completely overturns the belief that the genetic make-up of brain cells remains static throughout life and provides us with new information about how the brain works.”

Dr Geoff Faulkner of The Roslin Institute, Edinburgh, commenting on the discovery of genes, called retrotransposons, responsible for tiny changes in the DNA of brain tissue; see articles of interest for further details

Agenda Watch

- i) Today (November 7th) the Polish presidency is holding a conference on **Solidarity in health - Closing the health gaps between European Union states**, in Poznan, please click [here](#) for further information
- ii) On November 23rd, the Polish presidency is holding a conference commemorating the fifth anniversary of **REACH - On the REACH road** in Warsaw. The conference will discuss issues related to EU legislation on chemicals, the trade in chemical products on the EU market, innovation in the chemical industry and related sectors and the connection between science and the production sector

Institution Watch

- i) On 1st November The Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland held its annual conference under the headline: **Ageing globally - ageing locally**, see further updates for more details
- ii) The **European Society of Paediatric and Neonatal Intensive Care** this week held its medical and nursing annual congress for four days in Hannover. Major topics addressed included heart surgery, pain control and sedation, monitoring and influencing the immune system and brain protection
- iii) An event entitled [New opportunities for drug research in Europe](#) will take place on 12th November in Krakow, Poland. Conference attendees will be able to learn how the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) works
- iv) The [Fourth International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation](#) will take place on 14th to 16th November in Madrid, Spain

Key updates this week

Ageing: study shows active life leads to more quality years

A new study from Swedish researchers has shown that regular physical activity is associated with a lower risk of suffering depression in old age. Writing in the journal *Health Psychology*, the team from the University of Gothenburg explains how their findings show that self-determined motivation and perceived competence are important factors in persuading elderly people to exercise more.

The findings are based on a study of 17,500 elderly people from across Europe, with an average age of sixty-four. The data comes from the large EU-funded population study SHARE ('Survey of health, ageing and retirement') which was initially funded under the **Quality of life and management of living resources** thematic area of the European Commission's Fifth Framework Programme (FP5).

Magnus Lindwall from the University of Gothenburg comments on his team's findings:

“We do not yet know for sure what the causal relationship between physical activity and depression is like. What is clear is that elderly people who are physically active are less depressed, but higher levels of depression can also lead to less exercise, and this suggests there is a mutual influence. This study is one of the first to look at both how physical activity affects future depression and vice versa, and how change in physical activity is associated with change in depression over time.”

Please click [here](#) for further reflections.

Assessment templates updated to include information on geriatric studies and new active substance claims

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) has revised its templates for assessment reports to now include information on how medicines are studied in the elderly.

The objective is to ensure that assessment reports include information on the volume of elderly people involved in a medicine's clinical trial programme, as well as on side effects that are of significance in older patients. From now on, the Agency will be asking applicants to supply this information in the list of questions at day 120 of the assessment procedure if they fail to include it in their dossier.

The updated templates also include additional sections on claims that a medicine contains a new active substance. Applicants with ongoing procedures including such claims will be asked to supply this additional information at days 120 or 180, so that the responses can be assessed by the [Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use](#) (CHMP).

The new information will be included in the assessment of medicines for use in humans, and will appear in the final [European public assessment reports](#) at the end of the authorization process.

Mental illness related disparities in diabetes prevalence, quality of care and outcomes: a population-based longitudinal study

The journal *BMC Medicine* has published a research article by academics from the School of Population Health of The University of Western Australia. It focuses on a comparison of the prevalence of diabetes, quality of care and outcomes between mental health clients (MHCs) and non-MHCs, the abstract can be read [here](#).

Articles of interest

- ✓ *BBC News online*, DNA gene find 'transforms' theories on how brain works
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-15505641>

- ✓ *Mail online*, Glow in the dark tumours could help surgeons treat deadly brain cancer
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2056014/Glow-dark-brain-tumours-help-surgeons-remove-deadly-disease.html>

Dates for your diary

- ✓ EBC Board Meeting November, Warsaw, November 17th 2011
- ✓ EBC Polish Presidency Meeting, Warsaw, November 18th 2011