



Annual Review 2003-2004



Executive Summary

As the UK's leading patient organisation providing support and advice to women about their gynaecological and sexual health problems, Women's Health Concern (WHC) has had a very busy 12 months.

The biggest health story of the year was the debate over the safety and use of HRT. WHC's nurse counselling service experienced a doubling of their workload during this period, whilst other members of the team worked with the media to ensure women were better able to make informed decisions on whether to continue HRT treatment.

As women continue to seek out more information about their health, WHC is in a unique position to support them, being one of the very few charities that employs qualified gynaecological and menopausal nurses to run our counselling helpline. Our nurses are backed up by 21 of the UK's leading medical doctors specialising in the field of gynaecology and the menopause. For this reason, we are receiving an increasing number of referrals from other helplines, which are unable to deal with a woman's specific enquiry. In the last year, 20 per cent of our helpline calls have been referrals from NHS Direct.

Development of our counselling service is key, not only to the charity, but also to all the women who use it. As women are increasingly using the Internet for information and communication, we have recently launched an e-mail counselling service.

As we look towards the future, WHC wants to ensure that women feel comfortable about dealing with their gynaecological and sexual health problems. Too many women continue to be too embarrassed about their problems to discuss them with their GP, and although they are not life

threatening, they severely impinge on everyday living. In particular, WHC wants to target black and minority ethnic women, and those women from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Finally, everyone at WHC would like to say a huge thank you to all those organisations, companies and individuals who kindly donated funds to the charity. Without their support, WHC could not continue to provide this much-needed service to women.

Women's Health Concern Conference Programme

On Friday 10th October 2003, the 14th annual Women's Health Concern Conference took place at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in London, attracting 162 attendees, with the Gerald Sawyer Memorial Lecture, on Thyroid Disorders, being given by Dr Anthony Toft CBE.

But this was not the only WHC event of the year. The Charity was able to extend its meeting programme during the year, adding a successful regional programme to its annual London-based symposium.

The Charity's new regional meetings were held at St Mellion, near Plymouth and Truro in Cornwall, with nearly 300 GPs and Practice Nurses attending these meetings.

Detailed evaluation of each meeting was carried out amongst attending delegates, who rated each one with a high score, indicating that we had chosen the correct programme design, content and organisation.

The subject areas covered by the meetings were expanded this year. The menopause continued to be a prominent feature, but the programmes also covered subjects such as contraception, the perimenopause, female incontinence, breast and ovarian cancer, complementary medicine, diabetes in the older woman, as well as introducing group workshops on patient profiling. These new topics correspond to the increased range of enquiries that members of our Helpline staff receive, as well as relating to requests from meeting delegates as part of our conference evaluation.



Our expanded meeting activity for last year also resulted in a very popular exhibition stand at the British Menopause Society conference at Harrogate, and additional stands at several meetings, in a series on the menopause, held at Hammersmith Hospital.

Meetings allow Women's Health Concern to generate some additional income, which is ploughed back into the Charity's overall operation. At this stage in our development, the number of events we can organise is governed by our existing resources, as it is essential that we also keep up the quality of our meetings.

Telephone Helpline Services – Nurse Counsellors' Report for 2003

2003 saw a number of changes. There was an increase in nurse counselling hours to 29.5 hours per week, the appointment of one new nurse in Scotland, and additional contracted hours for another nurse.

Telephone enquiries continued to increase, probably as a result of the WHI study, and the most recently published CSM guidelines on HRT. The number of telephone enquiries was approximately 3,000 in total, ranging between 200 and 350 per month. These were higher in February, August, November, and December.

The health related enquiries included:

45%	Menopause and HRT
18%	General Gynaecological
10%	Sexual
10%	Post-operative Care
8%	Continence
5%	Breast
4%	Other Health Enquiries

The age range of callers was principally between 15 and 65, with 8 per cent of callers over 70 years of age. There was some very positive feedback received from the callers, stating that they found the service helpful, supportive and appreciated the contact with a person to discuss the issues.

E-mail enquiries

There were over 360 e-mail enquiries requiring a response, ranging between 18 and 50 per month. Rates were higher in August and November.

Income & Expenditure projections - for year ending 31 March 2005

£

Income

Known income

Grant Giving Bodies	40,490
Corporate Sponsorship	14,000
Symposiums (net)*	6,000
Interest	150

Unknown income

Fundraising	20,000
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Total Income	80,640
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Expenditure

Funded positions**	30,899
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Counselling Helpline

-Staff & related costs	27,367
-Telephone costs	5,250
Printing costs for publications	1,292
Website & IT	4,100
Fundraising & publicity	3,520
Audit & accountancy	2,675
Administration	3,985
Total Expenditure	79,088
Surplus	1,552

These income & expenditure projections are un-audited, and are based on the budgeted figures for the year, which have been agreed by the Trustees.

* Three symposiums are planned for the year

** Two positions funded by the Community Fund

The Annual Report and Accounts are available on request.

Postal enquiries

There were approximately 200 postal enquiries over the 12-month period.

Professional development

Our nurse counsellors attended the British Menopause Society's conference, and several seminars and educational programmes throughout the year, and raised their profile on stands at events.

The complexities of the enquiries made to the Helpline highlight the importance of the nurses maintaining their clinic skills and ensuring their knowledge is current and extensive.

WHC in the Media

For over 32 years, WHC has been speaking out about treatment of the menopause. In the early seventies, the charity was one of the first organisations to encourage women to seek medical help and not to put up with the symptoms of the "change". For many years, HRT has helped women deal with debilitating symptoms of hot flushes and night sweats as their body's hormonal activity slows down.

In 2002 and 2003, two very controversial clinical studies virtually put the treatment of the menopause back 40 years. The media headlines led many women to become so scared, that they stopped taking HRT overnight. This obviously had a terrible impact on their quality of life, as their menopausal symptoms did not disappear. Whilst the WHC counselling service was inundated with calls from women wanting to know their best option, the WHC Chairman and Executive Director undertook over 80 media interviews throughout the year to ensure women really understood the facts about HRT.

People at WHC

Meet **Lesley Woodward** – a Women's Health Concern nurse counsellor. Lesley Woodward has worked in gynaecology for over 10 years. As part of our staff of nurse counsellors, Lesley is one of the team on our WHC Helpline who gives confidential health advice over the telephone. She has worked for Women's Health Concern for more than five years.

As well as her role as a nurse counsellor for WHC, Lesley also works for Dorset NHS PCT, running their education centre and assisting women to make choices on the management of their own health, treatment options for the menopause and other women's health issues. She also provides help and support to those who need surgery.

Lesley works closely with the hospital and local consultants, which helps her to keep her knowledge and training up to date. Prior to focusing on gynaecology, Lesley gained her RGN qualification, practised as a district nurse, worked in health education and attained her teaching certificate for adult education. She also has several published articles, book reviews and has given numerous presentations on women's health, nationally and locally around her home county of Dorset.

Meet **Jo Marsden** – one of our Women's Health Concern medical advisors Jo Marsden is a consultant surgeon in the Breast Care Unit at King's College Hospital NHS Trust in London. In addition to her clinical work, she has a specific research interest in the management of problems related to the menopause in women who have been treated for breast cancer. This has involved extensive study of HRT and HRT alternatives. Jo helps out Women's Health Concern in an advisory capacity. We call on Jo's extensive expertise when we need assistance or advice in her specialist subject of the menopause, breast cancer and HRT.

Jo holds an MD FRCS qualification and is also on the council of the British Menopause Society.

Donate to WHC

If you would like to send a donation to WHC please make a cheque payable to Women's Health Concern and send it to our mailing address below.

Women's Health Concern Contacts

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