



Smoking

Graphic warnings

It looks as if Spain will be one of the first European countries to reproduce graphic images approved by the European Commission in 2004 on cigarette packets.

The photographs and photo-montages show terrible images of the consequences of smoking on your health and the health of those around you. The shocking but realistic images show ruined teeth, ulcerated mouths, cancerous lungs and open heart surgery in an attempt to frighten people off tobacco consumption. The bill is currently going through the formal hoops and if approved, the photos will begin to appear on all packets of tobacco on sale in Spain over the next few months. The photographs will replace the messages which we have become accustomed to since 2002.

The images are currently in use in Belgium, Rumania



and the UK and under consideration in Finland, Latvia, France, the Czech Republic, Malta and Ireland. Outside Europe, similar warnings can be seen in Canada, Brazil, Singapore, Thailand, Venezuela, Jordan, Australia, Uruguay, Panama, Chile, Hong Kong,

New Zealand, Egypt, India, Brunei, Taiwan, Malaysia, Peru, Djibouti and Switzerland. Further changes in the legislation are expected in the first half of the year to prohibit smoking in all closed public areas, primarily leisure areas, restaurants and bars.

Smoking warnings are set to become more graphic

Saving lives

Spain is world leader

168 hospitals in Spain belong to a network of transplant coordinators which began in 1989.

The system, depicted in the Oscar winning movie *All about my mother* by director Pedro Almodovar, identifies potential donors by closely monitoring emergency wards. When they become aware of a death, they gently and tactfully talk to the families to try to obtain permission to remove the organs to save other lives.

The number of deceased donors in

Spain has risen from 14 in 1989 to 34.2 last year, the highest rate in the world according to the ministry for health and the International Registry of Organ Donation and Transplantation.

The average rate for the 27 countries in the European Union was 18.2 in 2008. Italy and Portugal have instigated a similar system and their rates are now rising. Several other European countries, including Britain, are now considering it as well.

The key to success is apparently the careful and sensitive way in which the

bereaved families are approached. Only about 15 per cent of families refuse to donate organs, a massive drop from the 40 per cent who refused in the 1980s.

The recipient and the donor's family never meet, their only point of contact is the transplant coordinator. But despite not knowing who the donor was, many recipients feel a long lasting connection to the person whose death gave them a new lease of life.

Child health

Checking the children

Latest statistics provided by the Health Department of the Canarian Government show that the majority of the children resident in the Canaries have regular health checks.

The health service has a multi-skill group especially coordinated to carry out this task in the health centres across the Islands and the procedures are updated on a regular basis to ensure

the highest efficiency. The Health Department is currently monitoring the health of 95.4 per cent of the children, more than nine out of 10 Canarian children under 15 years of age.

The group monitor the data from the number of health checks and the ages at which they are carried out to get the optimum results and monitor changing situations. For instance last June, due to the prevalence of overweight

and obese children in the Canaries, they formed a working group to develop plans to prevent cardiovascular problems from childhood, concentrating particularly on the prevention, control and treatment of child obesity in the Canaries. This is a problem which is being taken more seriously all over the country and a recent case where a heavily obese child was taken into care to lose weight made headlines over

the holiday period.

The child health program is proactive in that it promotes healthy lifestyles as well as early diagnosis and treatment. Over 286,000 children are currently covered in the scheme of which over 256,000 have received the standard vaccinations. There were 1,791,975 paediatric visits up to December 2009 almost half a million up on the number registered in 1999.

HealthExtra

Leukaemia

Vaccine treatment

A vaccine treatment for leukaemia is to be tested on human patients for the first time in the next few months at the King's College in London.

Scientists have developed a drug which is designed to prevent the cancer recurring following chemotherapy or a bone marrow transplant. Researchers hope that the treatment, which works by boosting the patient's own immune system, could eventually be used to treat other types of cancer.

The first tests will be carried out on patients with acute myeloid leukaemia (AML), the most common form in adults.

The vaccine is designed to identify and then attack any cancer cells which are still in the body after a patient has been treated, preventing a potential relapse. It tricks the immune system into thinking that the leukaemia cells are foreign, even though they are the patient's own. The immune system then destroys these cells.

It has taken 20 years to develop the treatment, funded by the Department of Health, the Leukaemia Research Fund (LRF) and the Elimination of Leukaemia Fund (ELF).

The vaccine is created by taking cells from the patient. They are genetically modified in a laboratory so that they can seek out and act on leukaemia cells. They are then reinserted in the patient.

American study

Alzheimer's hope

A new study using mice would seem to suggest that using a mobile phone could help to prevent some of the devastating effects of Alzheimer's disease.

The study, carried out in the USA, used a long exposure to electromagnetic waves such as those used by mobile phones, on mice genetically modified to make them develop Alzheimer's. In comparison with healthy mice, those exposed to the waves showed equal results in tests of thought and memory.

The hope of the study is that it will be possible to develop a non-invasive treatment for this disease according to the author, Gary Arendash of the University of Southern Florida. The results of the study were a surprise to the scientists involved who expected totally the opposite result, that the electromagnetic waves would increase the levels of dementia.

The levels of waves used were equivalent to those which would be experienced by a human using a mobile phone for two hours a day during seven and nine months. Arendash claims that not only do the waves protect the mice from the illness, but it has reverted deterioration in animals which have already started to show the effects of Alzheimer's.

Lung disease

Height connection

According to a study of one million people over 35 by researchers at Nottingham University, lung disease sufferers are more likely to be shorter in height than average.

They state that people with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease are around 1.12cm shorter and that this may signify a poorer background. The association was strongest in those aged 35 to 49.