News from the Unit

A quarter of a million Health Related Behaviour Questionnaires have now been processed here at the Unit. There was a great "family" effort to produce a cake suitable for the celebration: this travelled to and fro, from one house where it was cooked to another to be iced and yet another to be decorated — a major team effort!

Requests for our latest publication Young People in 1992 have been flooding in. This series of books has been so popular with those interested in the secondary school age range that many people involved with the primary sector requested a book for their age range also.

The Primary Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire is well established, having been used by over 11,000 youngsters, and so to popular demand Very Young People in 1991–2 should be available in June. This covers the 8–11 age range, and for some questions which match the secondary version of the questionnaire additional results are given for the 11–12 age group to show the continuation or demise of the youngsters' activities.

Anon is presently involved in re-drafting the accompanying materials for the Primary and Secondary Health Related Behaviour school results — how many editions are there of "Final" Orders for Science, Maths, etc.?

Do you ever wish you could be in two places at once? We have the answer — make a video!

With surveys being in ever-popular demand, and requests coming in for John and Anne to visit areas far and wide, a new dimension to the service has been developed. Both John and Anne (with the expertise of Phil Head and Dr Colin King in the School of Education's TV studio) have been filming together a video, which describes the use and methodology of the Health Related Behavioural Questionnaire.

John and David have been visiting Cornwall in connection with the Unit's evaluation of the Health Authority's schools smoking programme. It's striking how very different schools are in their policies and approach, which is very much the same story as Di found in the alcohol education research.

David has been re-drafting the documentation for the Health Risk Appraisal service. This provides each pupil, confidentially, with a personalised health-related score as derived from the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire. The documentation describes the calculations and has suggestions for follow-up work, and we are keen to have some feedback on its use.

The new version of PS-Open, which is the package we use for producing School Reports and the Community Profile Service, has been installed in the University. We also keep our schools database on this system, and it looks as if it will speed things up a lot.

S.F.

Some Unit publications...

Young People in 1991

The sixth of our annual reports, with results from 23,928 young people between the ages of 12 and 16 who completed the Health Related Behavioural Questionnaire.

Young People in 1992

The latest of our annual reports, with results from 20,318 young people between the ages of 11 and 16 who completed the Health Related Behavioural Questionnaire.

Video pack: 'The Extra Guest'...

This was developed to support alcohol education in secondary schools. The well-received video depicts a teenage party, and the materials include background information, suggestions for use, worksheet makers and overhead transparencies.

Schoolchildren and drugs in 1987

The use by young people of "illegal" drugs, based on the reported behaviour of 18,014 boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 16, is described and discussed.

We teach them how to drink...

Analysis of young people's most frequent sources of alcohol.

Young People into the Nineties... 56.00.

In 9 books: £42 for the set as issued.

The 'survey of the decade': a study of 125,933 young people between the ages of 11 and 16 over the period 1984–1990.

These prices include postage and packing.

Julia A. Newton, Bronwyn R. Hughes & Douglas G. Altman

Young people and skin cancer: challenging powerful images

This article describes the first attempt in this country to assess the effect on adolescents of educational material on sun and skin cancer.

Public education campaigns have been run in the last ten years to promote early detection of melanoma and to increase public awareness about the dangers of sun exposure. As in anti-smoking campaigns, educational work on sun exposure have powerful images in the media to fight. Since Coco Chanel in the 1930s first made it fashionable to be brown, a suntan has become highly desirable. Glossy magazines still project the image of attractive young women as browns, and small children soon adopt the attitudes of their seniors.

We therefore see children as an important target group for health education about the sun and skin cancer. There is an additional scientific argument for this. Epidemiological studies have shown that melanoma patients often give a history of severe sunburn before the age of 15. There is, therefore, reason to suppose that young people may be particularly susceptible to the ill-effects of sun exposure.

Types of skin cancer

There are many varieties of skin cancer, but the most common in order of decreasing frequency are basal cell carcinomas (BCCs); rodent ulcers; squamous cell carcinomas (SCCs), and melanomas. Excessive sun exposure plays a role in the aetiology of all three, although the relationship of melanoma to sun exposure is more complex than that of the other two. For BCCs and SCCs, the incidence is proportional to the fairness of skin (tendency to burn) and the total cumulative dose of sun. The fairer the individual and the more sun-exposed that individual is, the greater the likelihood of developing BCCs or SCCs. Therefore, these tumours are common in outdoor workers such as farmers, cricket professionals, and those who have leisure pastimes such as golf or gardening. Melanomas also occur in those chronically overexposed:
The knowledge and attitude questionnaires were completed by the pupils two months after the educational input in May. The knowledge questionnaire was repeated after the summer holidays, and additional 'sun-related behaviour' questions were also included.

Sample knowledge statements:
1. Sun damage to the skin rarely happens in the UK because the sun is quite weak.
2. A suntan protects you against skin cancer.
3. The ozone layer protects us from too much UV light.
4. People with blue eyes and freckles are more at risk from skin cancer.
5. People who only go out in the sun for a few weeks a year are not likely to get skin cancer.

Sample attitude statements:
1. I feel more healthy with a suntan.
2. It is worth a lot of effort to get a suntan.
3. A suntanned person looks more healthy.
4. Most of my friends think that a suntan is a good thing.
5. There is little chance that I'll get skin cancer.

Behaviour questions:
1. Did you sunbathe during the summer holidays?
2. When did you sunbathe?
3. Did you use sunscreens during the summer holidays?
4. Did you go out without using the sunscreen?

The educational package
We therefore designed a health education package for use in secondary schools which was intended to increase knowledge about the sun and skin cancer, to change attitudes to sun exposure, and possibly to change behaviour. The important principles we wished to convey were:
- Excessive sun exposure causes skin cancer.
- What a melanoma looks like.
- That a suntan can be fatal but that if detected early is curable.
- That some individuals are particularly susceptible to skin cancer and should, therefore, take particular care; people with fair skin, red hair, freckles, and those who burn in the sun or have a lot of moles.
- We also had to convey the point that the darker the skin the less likely it is an individual to develop skin cancer.

The package (available from the International Cancer Research Fund at £8.35) consisted of a text called Sun, Skin, Moles and Melanoma for photocopying in schools, a colour booklet called Suncool, and a video. Suncool was intended to be a bright, positive booklet with a message that it can look good to cover up. The video, featuring Melanie Hill (who plays Aveline in the TV programme Bread), was intended to make the children more receptive to the text.

The project
Seven schools were recruited in order to reflect a wide spread of social and regional factors: two from the private sector, one secondary modern, one technical college and three comprehensives. They were in Liverpool, Rotherham, Rugby, London and Brentwood. In each school five parallel classes from the same year were chosen and treated as below:
1. No special education
2. The class read through the text and took home Suncool.
3. As above, but they also watched the video.
4. As 2, but homework was set to design posters for public education.
5. As 2, but they had an additional discussion later in the week about issues raised by the package.

The educational intervention took place in May 1990. Just before they finished summer term in July, a questionnaire designed to test knowledge and attitudes was answered by all the pupils. Specimen questions are shown in the panel.

After the summer holidays they answered a second questionnaire with behavioural questions about sun exposure during the preceding holiday and the same attitudinal questions as in the first questionnaire.

The questionnaires were returned by post, coded, and the data put into the computer. This was analysed by total scores for knowledge and for what we felt was the 'correct' attitude.

Results
The mean age of the pupils was 14, with equal numbers of boys and girls. The July questionnaire was answered by 543 pupils, while 466 answered the September one and 262 were identified as answering both.

Knowledge
Those with no intervention (group 1) had significantly lower knowledge scores than the other groups (p<0.01) (Table 1). Knowledge scores were higher for girls (p<0.001). There was no significant difference in knowledge with age.

There was no association between level of knowledge in the first questionnaire and sunburn (reported in the second questionnaire following the summer holidays). Nor was there any association with knowledge and wearing a hat, covering up from the sun, or sitting in the shade. The only significant association with increased knowledge was wearing a sunscreen (p<0.005) (Table 2).

Attitude
The reported attitude score in July showed a highly significant difference between group 1 and groups 2-5 (p<0.01) (Table 3). Correlation occurred between the attitude in July and September, suggesting retention of reported attitudes after the summer holidays (r=0.38, n=249, p<0.001).

Wearing a sunscreen (p<0.004), covering up in the sun (p<0.001), and sitting in the shade (p<0.02) were significantly associated with 'better' attitudes (Table 4). Those who did not sunbathe had significantly 'better' attitudes than those who did (Table 5).

Behaviour
There was no difference in behaviour according to group. There was, however, a significant difference in behaviour according to where they
Table 5. Mean attitude score in relation to sunburn among those who reported sunbathing.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean attitude score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wore sunscreen</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wore sunscreen</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>197</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 6. Sun-related behaviour according to type of summer holiday taken.

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Discussion

As previously stated, this was the first attempt in this country to assess the effect on adolescents of educational material on skin and sun cancer.

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SUN & SKIN
WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF EXCESSIVE SUN EXPOSURE?

Part of a page from the photocopiable book Sun, skin, marks and molesmen in the SUNCOOL pack.

TV watching: beg, plead, order, demand — or ‘lock-off’?

Graham Garner

"Oh, Dad — this is the best bit!"

Recently filed an electrical device for patent. Initially it wasn’t seen as a potentially commercial device, but more of a necessity to stop my wife and myself from getting mad.

We are a ‘normal, average family unit’ — Mum, Dad and two boys now aged 16 and 13. The eldest boy, William, is quite studious and serious about his homework responsibilities, but his brother Thomas has square eyes, and although we begged, pleaded, ordered or demanded that homework be done straight away upon his return from school, would not No — the television was a major thing that drew him ever closer, it mesmerised him by its very presence. He didn’t even have to be in the same room.

We have a video recorder too, but would he video programmes to watch later, after homework? No!

I tore my hair in desperation — I’m quite bald now. How many times have I charged in and switched the television off, to pleas of "Oh, Dad — it’s the best bit!"

All Mums and Dads must know exactly what I mean!

A cunning plan

I had threatened to put a lock on the electricity so many times that I was forced to set to and devise a cunning plan.

I adapted a double socket, and locked off the socket supplying the television, leaving the video operational.

Thomas was terribly upset at first, but thought he could outsmart me. Stalking behind the television, armed with a double plug adaptor, he withdrew the video plug...!

Then my second line of defence came into action. With this device it is impossible to get a plug back into the ‘live’ socket once it has been withdrawn. With the other one locked off, he had denied himself both the television and the video, and left the evidence of his tampering for all to see.

I soon realised that the ability of the keyholder to deny electric power has applications and uses that are almost unlimited. Among many other things it is a very useful and desirable safety device, and if it saves the fingers of just one child wanting to play with Dad’s electrical tools in his workroom or garage, then it’s all been worth while.

The Controlock

I have christened it the Controlock. Based upon a double switched socket outlet tested to BS 1363 (patent pending), the fully-insulated and enclosed locking system provides the keyholder with the ability to deny or control the supply of electricity in a new and versatile way.

With the lock in the neutral position, the normal working features of a switched double socket outlet are not restricted.

One turn of the key through 180 degrees automatically locks both switches off. Plugs can be inserted and reinserted at will, but power is not available to either of the socket outlets.

One turn of the key through 90 degrees to either the left or right automatically locks one of the switches off. The adjacent plug is not affected and may be used normally. If a plug is in position before the lock is activated, power is available to it. However, once this plug is withdrawn, re-insertion is denied, thus rendering the whole double socket outlet unusable.

The same...