

MANCHESTER MEDICAL SCHOOL

Public Health Forum

The eighth **Chadwick Lecture** of the Public Health Forum of the Manchester Medical Society was held on **Thursday 26th April 2007** at **6.00 pm** in the **Manchester Dental Education Centre (MANDEC) Higher Cambridge Street, University of Manchester.**

Dr C Birt, President of the Section, welcomed members and guests of the audience and introduced the evening's speaker as follows:-

Mr G Meadows

(Director General for Regional Policy, European Commission)

who spoke on

“Europe’s new maladay – Yossarians’ dilemma”
Is Regional Development the solution to health inequalities?
If so, how do we cope with its carbon footprint?

Mr Meadows lecture looked at the following issues:-

The European Union is heading for Catch 22. If we are to preserve our way of life, we need faster economic growth in the face of mounting competition from China and India, to say nothing of our traditional trade rivals. Yet our population is shrinking and ageing, so it's all hands to the economic pumps – women as well as men, old as well as young. Forget retirement. But wait a minute. If the women must work at the pumps, who will have the babies? You think this is an exaggeration? In Saxony in Germany the government is already committed to destroying 2000.000 homes because of population shifts. Now do you see the Catch 22? If we want faster growth, more people must work; if more people work, there are fewer babies; if there are fewer babies, population shrinks; if population shrinks, economic growth slows down.

Is there a way out? Too early to say but one thing is clear, the link between health and economic performance is about to be demonstrated as never before. The obvious effect of people living longer is more demand for health care and a buoyant health sector will be good for growth. So far, so straight-forward. But health's contribution must go wider and deeper than that. Sick people don't work, invalidity and early retirement increases social costs. If we're to work more regularly and for longer, we must stay healthy and to stay healthy we must develop healthy habits. What does the health sector need to meet this challenge?

This part of our future is in our own hands. Either the European Union will or will not succeed in having the best of both worlds. But the problem has another dimension. More growth means more environmental cost, and a bigger carbon footprint hastens the transformations due to global warming. Health problems we may, with application and good fortune, solve for ourselves. Global warming is a problem which needs global-co-operation. We could keep ourselves healthy enough to work for longer, we could reduce our impact on global warming, yet still be undone by the irresponsibility of other nation blocs.

Is there a solution to this conundrum? Or should we just relax and enjoy the time we have left?

Mr Meadows received a vote of thanks and prolonged applause for presenting an excellent lecture which stimulated much discussion.