

## Europe against euthanasia

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has adopted a non-binding resolution concerning Advanced Directives, Living Wills, Powers of Attorney and Consent to Treatment under the title: Protecting human rights and dignity by taking into account previously expressed wishes of patients. This resolution did not specifically concern euthanasia, nonetheless Article 5 states: *'Euthanasia, in the sense of the intentional killing by act or omission of a dependent human being for his or her alleged benefit, must always be prohibited.'*

(Council of Europe, 25 January 2012, [bit.ly/zkZmSP](http://bit.ly/zkZmSP))

## Cheap alcohol

According to a recent YouGov survey 61% of UK adults believe that excessive drinking is a problem in their neighbourhood. Three major Christian denominations have expressed concerns about the increasing availability of cheap alcohol and the effects this is having on local communities. They believe enforcing a minimum per-unit price could be part of the solution to this problem, a move that has already been taken by the Scottish Government and backed by NICE. So far, Westminster has refused to go down this route, although a growing number of local authorities are considering it.

(*The Methodist Church*, 21 December 2011, [bit.ly/wYyeZy](http://bit.ly/wYyeZy))

## Christians are better at marriage

Latest research into the lifestyles of Christians reveals that they are happier in their marriages and better at staying married than non-Christians. They are highly likely to accept outside help and advice to keep their marriages healthy when problems arise, and make better initial preparations for marriage often through attending Church-run courses. Another highlight of the research, by the Evangelical Alliance, is the finding that cases of domestic violence in marriages between evangelical Christians is far lower than that reported by society as a whole.

(*Evangelical Alliance*, 7 February 2012, [bit.ly/zf7yuO](http://bit.ly/zf7yuO))

## Commitment contracts for health

An article in the *BMJ* on behaviour change explores the concept of 'commitment contracts' - simple incentive schemes in which money deposited into an account can only be withdrawn if the participant is successful in keeping their commitment. Noting that such contracts already exist in the corporate world as incentives for weight-loss or conquering addiction, the authors ask whether the concept could have a wider application in tackling other ill-health related behaviours. (*BMJ*, 2012;344:e522, [bit.ly/wBaHAF](http://bit.ly/wBaHAF))

## We are not animals

The Archbishop of Canterbury has spoken out against the conclusions of the Commission on Assisted Dying warning that giving the terminally ill a 'right to die' would place patients and doctors at risk. He argued that a change in the law would create an environment in which life could be legally deemed 'not worth living' and this would lead to 'a change in the default position on the sanctity of life' which 'would be a disaster'. He summed up by saying 'A truly compassionate society will invest in high quality palliative care rather than lethal doses of poison - we are not the same as our animals.'

(*Telegraph*, 7 February 2012, [tgr.ph/ySHqld](http://tgr.ph/ySHqld))

## British 'stiff upper lip' preventing a good death

The chairman of the National Council for Palliative Care has called for a 'change of philosophy' in the medical profession when it comes to discussions on end-of-life care. Encouraging a more open discussion of death and endorsing Anticipatory Care Plans Professor Lakhani said: 'These decisions should be made early because if you do plan early it gives you a chance to say "goodbye" and say "sorry" and say "I love you"... We are not going to be able to cure these people but actually we can help them have a good death - a happy ending.'

(*Telegraph*, 3 February 2012, [tgr.ph/y19FnY](http://tgr.ph/y19FnY))

## Abortion advertising

Commercial advertisements on TV and radio for Post Conception Advice Services (PCAS) will be allowed from 30 April. Private clinics that undertake abortions for profit will be allowed to advertise their services, whilst the new rules state that any provider that does not directly refer for termination must make this clear in the advert. It is likely, due to the high costs involved, that only the larger government-funded abortion providers like BPAS and MSI will be able to afford such advertising. Read more at [cmf.li/xaQyTy](http://cmf.li/xaQyTy)

(*Committee of Advertising Practice*, 20 January 2012, [bit.ly/xvOGic](http://bit.ly/xvOGic))

## Groundless abortions

A systematic review by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, shows that abortion does not *improve* mental health outcomes for women with unplanned pregnancies and does not offer any real protection from mental health problems. Yet the vast majority of abortions in this country are carried out on mental health grounds amounting to 185,000 abortions in 2010 (98% of the annual total). The report shows that doctors who authorise abortions in order to protect a woman's mental health are not acting on the basis of medical evidence. Read more at [cmf.li/yP9cka](http://cmf.li/yP9cka) (*Academy of Medical Royal Colleges*, 16 January 2012, [bit.ly/zFkzqh](http://bit.ly/zFkzqh))

## The cost of sexual freedom

The latest *Cambridge Paper* from the Jubilee Centre claims that the true cost of sexual freedom and relationship breakdown to the taxpayer and wider economy totals some £100 billion annually; about twice as much as alcohol abuse, smoking and obesity combined. This figure includes direct costs to the taxpayer, such as NHS costs for treating STIs and providing abortions for teenage pregnancies, but also indirect costs to the economy such as lost working hours following a divorce and resulting problems in mental health, educational under-achievement, worklessness and addiction. (*Jubilee Centre*, 4 December 2011, [bit.ly/zRARjI](http://bit.ly/zRARjI))

## Still alive

Stephen Hawkins' 70th birthday on 8 January was a reminder of the difficulties in making prognostic forecasts for the terminally ill with months to live. Diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease as a student in 1963 Hawkins was given a life expectancy of two to three years, and was told he would not complete his PhD, but he has gone on to live well beyond that forecast. So it is regrettable that Lord Falconer has recommended that people with 'less than twelve months to live' should qualify for assisted suicide because it is in fact impossible to have certainty on a prognosis that stretches into months.

(*CMF blog*, 9 January 2012, [cmf.li/wAxKGX](http://cmf.li/wAxKGX) and see also [cmf.li/wTcNUh](http://cmf.li/wTcNUh))