**Soroptimist International St Albans & District - speaker meeting 26th July 2017**

We were very fortunate to be addressed by the son of one of our members

**Dr Ed Mullins** who is senior registrar in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Queen Charlotte’s Hospital.

He worked with Professor Dame Sally Davies the UK’s Chief Medical Officer on the production of her annual report. Sally is the Independent medical advisor to the government. There is a yearly report on the state of health of the nation. It is independent and aimed at government and policy makers.

This report was entitled

**The Health of the 51%: Women**

There are 26.9 million women in this country making up 51% of the population and we live longer than men but not in good health. The report examines women’s health in England and makes a range of recommendations to improve it. Ed explained that it was decided that it should focus on areas that had not been covered before eg FGM and violence against women. Cancer in general and dementia were not included because although they are important they have had plenty of coverage.

Ed told us about the way the report was put together and outlined some of the themes and recommendations. It was really very interesting to hear the details from one of the report’s authors and below is a synopsis of the areas that he particularly mentioned.

**Violence against women**

350000 survivors of violence

1.4 million cases of sexual violence

1 in 4 women have experienced violence and there is an increase amongst pregnant women.

Violence is not on the syllabus for medical training

**Recommendation** for it to be included in training for doctors, nurses and midwives

**Perinatal Mental health**

1 in 5 women experience mental illness during or after pregnancy

The greatest impact being the impact it has on children

There are many barriers to treatment in perinatal mental health

**Recommendation** All women should have prompt access to treatment for perinatal mental health problems especially talking therapies as the side effects of drug therapy are particularly undesirable for these patients.

**Taboos**

There are 2 areas in particular which can be seen as an embarrassment but which have huge impact on women’s lives.

1.**Menopause.**  75% seek advice and 25% have serious problems. It is perceived as stigma to be suffering menopausal symptoms particularly in relation to impact on their jobs and careers.

**Recommendation**

Employers need guidance of how to support menopausal women

2.**Incontinence and prolapse** are a huge problem and due to embarrassment often not addressed.

**Recommendation** Raise awareness so that people are more likely to seek help

**Ovarian Cancer**

We do not treat this well. There are low survival rates compared to other similar countries mainly because by the time treatment starts the cancer is often at a late stage. Surgery needs to be more radical to eliminate the hard to reach spots where it has spread.

**Recommendation** Better training for ovarian cancer surgery and national audit for ovarian cancer centres; but this is difficult to set up as there is always opposition to audits.

**Obesity**

Very much in the news of course but the statistics are shocking

Maternal obesity is a particular risk both to the mother and to the child whose physiology and future health is affected so creating a cycle of obesity

**Recommendation** national risk planning should include obesity

**Pregnancy planning**

45% pregnancies unplanned

Women spend 30 years preventing pregnancy.

Planned pregnancy may help to prevent cycle of obesity as women have time to consider getting healthy before becoming pregnant

**Recommendations**

Provision of full range of contraception available to ALL women

Education and awareness in personal social and health education (PSHE). Sex and relationship education should be part of the national curriculum.

Authors of report have worked with Dept of Education to consider how/when this could happen.

At this point we broke for coffee and afterwards here was a lively Q&A session followed this

Topics mentioned were

Mental health

Link of obesity to the future health of the child and the balance between responsibility and risk

Variation of provision in the devolved areas

How NHS deals with prevention

Holistic therapy for prevention

Wellness industry thriving amongst those who can afford it but dismissed by mainstream medicine.

This was a thoroughly interesting, relevant fascinating presentation. It was much enjoyed by our members and the many visitors present. The meeting closed with a very well-deserved vote of thanks.

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/chief-medical-officer-annual-report-2014-womens-health](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/chief-medical-officer-annual-report-2014-womens-health)

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