

Health and Social Care Select Committee: Prevention in Health and Social Care Inquiry
Call for proposals - response submitted by Intelligent Health
February 2023

Proposal

1. Intelligent Health welcomes the Committee's Inquiry into prevention in health and social care. We recognise many of the topics indicated in the scope of the inquiry and believe that tackling the causes of chronic inflammation encompasses many of these issues as a form of preventative healthcare. Acute inflammation describes the process where the body send outs an inflammatory response to fight bacteria or heal an injury, it becomes a chronic inflammation when this response happens where there is no need for it or if it continues after the bacteria has gone or an injury has been healed. The Committee must consider this issue as part of its Inquiry, as worldwide approximately three in five of all deaths are related to chronic inflammation.¹
2. Conditions related to chronic inflammation include CVD, Type II diabetes, obesity, heart disorders stroke, some cancers, dementia, COPD and depression amongst other life altering diseases and conditions. During the last century we have witnessed the number of people living with these conditions increase significantly, even where marker are adjusted in relation to the ageing population, what is most worrying however, is that many of these conditions could be prevented if chronic inflammation is addressed earlier on. Chronic inflammation is caused directly by chronic stress and poor lifestyle choices, with many issues relating to the other. Within this, poor lifestyle choices include poor diet, obesity, physical inactivity, alcohol intake and drug abuse, all of which are caused and exacerbated by chronic stress.
3. Chronic stress is caused by the social determinants of health² and aggravated by social inequalities. These social determinants of health highlight how poor health is intersected across many areas, and how it will take more than just those working exclusively in health and social care to directly tackle the causes of chronic stress and therefore build population resilience against the poor lifestyle habits that both contribute to chronic inflammation and its related diseases and conditions. Therefore, Intelligent Health would stress that prevention concerns not only health and social care but also, education, transport, housing, urban planning, crime and justice, access to green and blue spaces and community resilience.
4. To truly embrace preventative health the aim should be to equip individuals with the tools and education to prevent chronic stress and in turn chronic inflammation as a whole. This is opposed to focussing on the prevention of individual disease, which too often is ineffectual. Future public health strategy must also consider the wider determinants of health, and considered conversation must be had to determine what institution, existing or new, is best placed to deliver on prevention and reduction of chronic stress and chronic inflammation.
5. Considering the above as an encompassing topic and the wider social determinants of health, we would suggest that addressing chronic inflammation at all levels requires a whole system approach. We propose that the Inquiry addresses the following questions:
 - What can policymakers do to ensure that preventative health is considered as an issue across government departments?
 - How can those working within health and care provision work better with other sectors to take a whole-system approach in disease prevention?
 - How can policymakers embed physical activity into the prevention agenda?

About Intelligent Health

Intelligent Health was founded and is led, by Dr William Bird MBE a practicing GP and an honorary professor at the University of Exeter. Predominantly achieved through our flagship programme Beat the Street, Intelligent Health has engaged 1.6 million people in the UK from the most deprived communities to enable them to be more physically active, help them to connect with their place and their community and in turn, improve their wellbeing. The benefits continue well beyond the intervention, lasting at least two years and possibly longer.

Intelligent Health's mission is to create resilience and improve health by connecting people to each other, their communities and their environment. We do this through engagement of communities at scale, sharing knowledge of the foundations of good health, and by using data and evaluation to deliver actionable insight. The vision is simple; to transform people's health through small changes that make a big difference.

¹ Chronic Inflammation ([Pawha R, Goyal A, Jialal I.](#))

² Income and social protection, Education, Unemployment and job insecurity, Working life conditions, Food insecurity, Working life conditions, Food insecurity, Housing, basic amenities and the environment, Early childhood development, Social inclusion and non-discrimination, Structural conflict and Access to affordable health services of decent quality ([WHO](#))