

# LETTERS

## STATE OF MEN'S HEALTH IN EUROPE

# Are limited opening times really to blame for men's underuse of healthcare services?

Susan H Walker *senior lecturer*

Department of Primary and Public Health, Anglia Ruskin University, Chelmsford CM1 1SQ, UK

It is not clear that men's underuse of health services is a direct effect of the limited opening times of healthcare services.<sup>1</sup> This assumption ignores the fact that nearly 58% of working women work full time.<sup>2</sup> It also ignores the fact that men access lawyers, accountants, and similar professional services with opening times that are restricted to the working day.

It would be interesting to study whether full time working women access (or fail to access) health services at the same rate as full time working men. If the same poor use of health services is seen in full time workers, regardless of sex, then more accessible healthcare opening times might be the answer. Reducing the average working week might also improve the health of full time workers. Alternatively, if full time working women access healthcare services better than full time working men, it becomes a question of the culture in the workplace. Are

employers less likely to allow men time off work to attend healthcare appointments and are men less likely to feel they can ask for this? Such a study would clarify whether working practices (long hours and traditional healthcare opening times) or working culture (whether or not it is acceptable for men to ask for time off work) needs to change.

Competing interests: None declared.

- 1 Malcher G. The state of men's health in Europe. *BMJ* 2011;343:d7054. (29 November.)
- 2 Office for National Statistics. Annual survey of hours and earnings. 2011. [www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ashe/annual-survey-of-hours-and-earnings/ashe-results-2011/ashe-statistical-bulletin-2011.html#tab-Hourly-earnings--excluding-overtime](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ashe/annual-survey-of-hours-and-earnings/ashe-results-2011/ashe-statistical-bulletin-2011.html#tab-Hourly-earnings--excluding-overtime).

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2012;344:d8214

© BMJ Publishing Group Ltd 2011