



MEDIA RELEASE

6th June 2013

Men Continue to Bridge Gender Health Gap

New data released today reveals that in the past six years the health of Australian men has improved, yet alcohol consumption, poor diet and excess weight continue to have a negative impact.

Coinciding with the start of Men's Health Week (10 – 16 June), the Alere Wellness Index* with data for calendar year 2012, reveals that males are slightly more active and healthier medically than their female counterparts (Figure 1).

The Alere Wellness Index tracks the changing health of the nation by surveying 50,000 Australians every year. Scores were set at 100 in 2007 and increasing scores reflect improvements in health.

Whilst both men and women have improved their overall health since the index began 6 years ago, men (101.5) have improved more than women (100.4). This is reflected in the longevity data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics which shows the difference in life expectancy between men and women has decreased from 7.1 years in the early 1980s to 4.8 years currently.¹ If this trend continues, the lifespan of males will match that of females by the year 2056 when both sexes will live an average of 94.5 years.

Alere Wellness Index data shows that when it comes to alcohol, men consume significantly more than women (scoring 97.4 and 104.5 respectively in 2012). As a result, men are twice as likely to suffer from liver disease (Figure 2), and the higher their socio-economic status, the more likely men are to drink excessively (Figure 3).

Associate Professor Gary Richardson, Chair of men's health initiative Foundation 49, says the Alere Wellness Index highlights the need for men to consider the impact their lifestyle choices are having on their health:

"It is encouraging that men's health is improving, however it remains that every hour in Australia, more than four men die from conditions that could potentially be avoided. Being overweight is the single biggest risk factor for chronic disease in Australian men. A nutritious diet and moderate daily exercise can help men maintain a waist measurement under 94 centimetres. Reducing alcohol intake and quitting smoking can further reduce risks of diabetes, heart disease and some cancers.

Foundation 49 encourages men to stay connected with family and friends and to see their GP for regular health checks."

The Alere Wellness Index also reveals that men tend to make wiser health choices as they age. Men over 50 years old tend to eat significantly better and smoke less (Figure 4a), as well as moderate their drinking and lower their BMI (Figure 4b).

Men are 4 times more likely to commit suicide than females; this is despite men having a better psychological health index (100.5 vs 98.1). Females do report higher levels of stress, anxiety and depression than males,² and the number of suicide attempts is similar; however men are 5 times more likely to succeed.³

* Powered by Roy Morgan Research

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics Cat. No. 3302.0; and Cat. No. 3105.0.65.001.

² ABS Cat No. 4125.0 - Gender Indicators, Australia, Jan 2012

Notwithstanding their shorter lifespan, the Alere Wellness Index shows men to be slightly healthier overall than women, which begs the question; why do women, on average, live almost 5 years longer than men? Most of the difference comes down to non-modifiable issues such as pre-menopausal hormone status (estrogens prevent CVD), having some back-up genes (XX vs XY) and possibly lower iron levels.⁴ Being male is itself a risk factor – castration adds 14 years to a man’s life expectancy.⁵

There are also a number of diseases that men are significantly more likely to suffer from. These include Gout, Cirrhosis of the Liver, Cardiovascular Disease/Angina, Sleep Apnoea and the associated snoring. For women, anaemia, osteoporosis, multiple sclerosis, migraines, arthritis and irritable bowel syndrome are more prevalent than in men (Figure 2). Interestingly, the common male conditions are more amenable to simple behavioural interventions (Smoking, Alcohol, Nutrition, Exercise and Weight gain) than the female specific conditions.

Prostate Cancer

The most common “male only” disease is Prostate Cancer. 1 in 9 men in Australia will suffer from prostate cancer in their lifetime. If you live to 85 you have a 1 in 5 chance, and if you have a family history, this doubles your risk. The good news is that around 85% of men survive prostate cancer.⁶

Prostate Cancer is difficult to prevent – most of the risk factors are “non-modifiable” (ie. age, family history, height⁷ - for every 10cm increase in height, prostate cancer risk goes up by 12%). But a number of nutritional factors, particularly selenium (nuts and seafood/shellfish) and lycopene (the most powerful antioxidant in food⁸ found in “red” fruit and vegetables such as tomato, guava, watermelon and red cabbage) have been shown to reduce prostate cancer risk.

This spells bad news for a lot of Australian men whose diets are not offering much protection. According to the Alere Nutrition Sub-index*, 20% of men haven’t eaten fresh vegetables in the past week, 26% haven’t eaten fresh fruit, and 42% haven’t consumed seafood.

* Powered by Roy Morgan Research

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Cat # 3303.0 Cause of Death Australia, 2011 & ABS Cat # 3309.0 Suicide, 2010 Ageing and Suicide; Aust. Inst. for Suicide Research and Prevention: Comm. Dept. Health & Aged Care (2001)

⁴ Mech Ageing Dev. 2012 May;133(5):282-90

⁵ Scientific American, Oct. 21st;2010

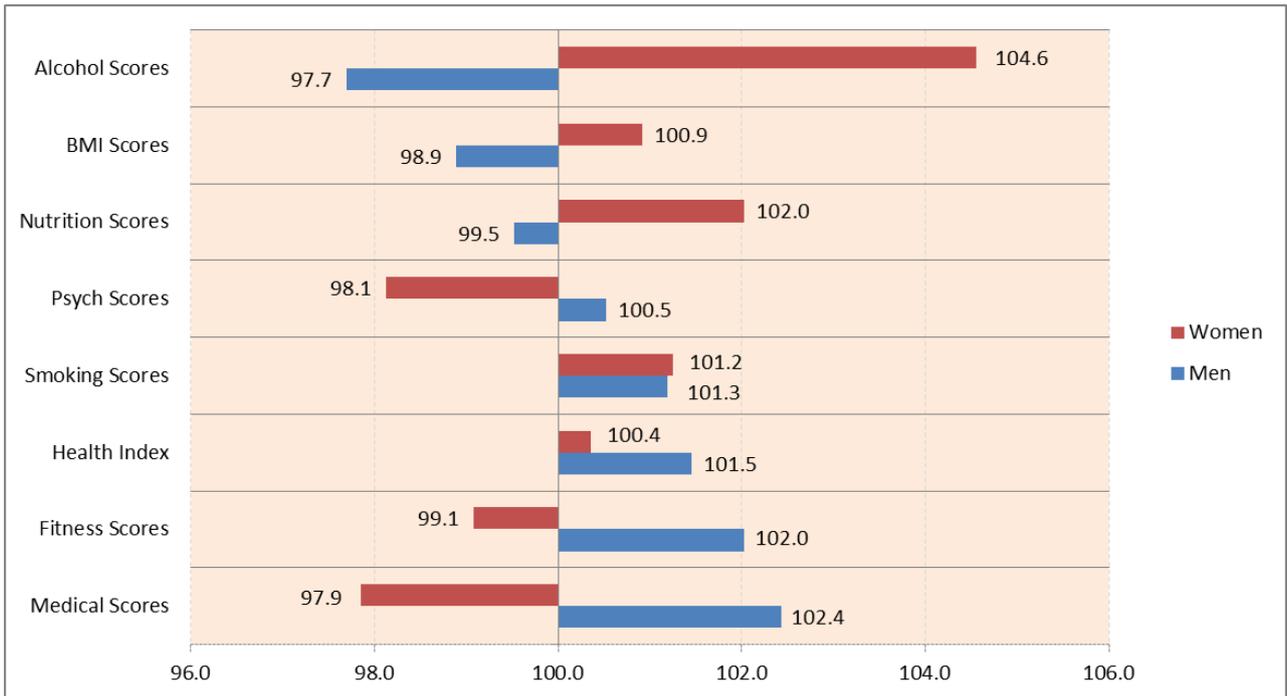
⁶ Australian Cancer Database, 2008, AIHW; ABS Cat No. 3303.0, Causes of Death, Australia, 2009.

⁷ Zuccolo L, Harris R, Gunnell D, et al. Height and prostate cancer risk: a large nested case-control study (Protect) and meta-analysis. Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev 2008;17:2325-36.

⁸ Mascio PD, Kaiser S, Sies H. Lycopene as the most efficient biological carotenoid singlet oxygen quencher. Biochemistry and Biophysics Volume 274, Issue 2, 1 November 1989, Pages 532-538.

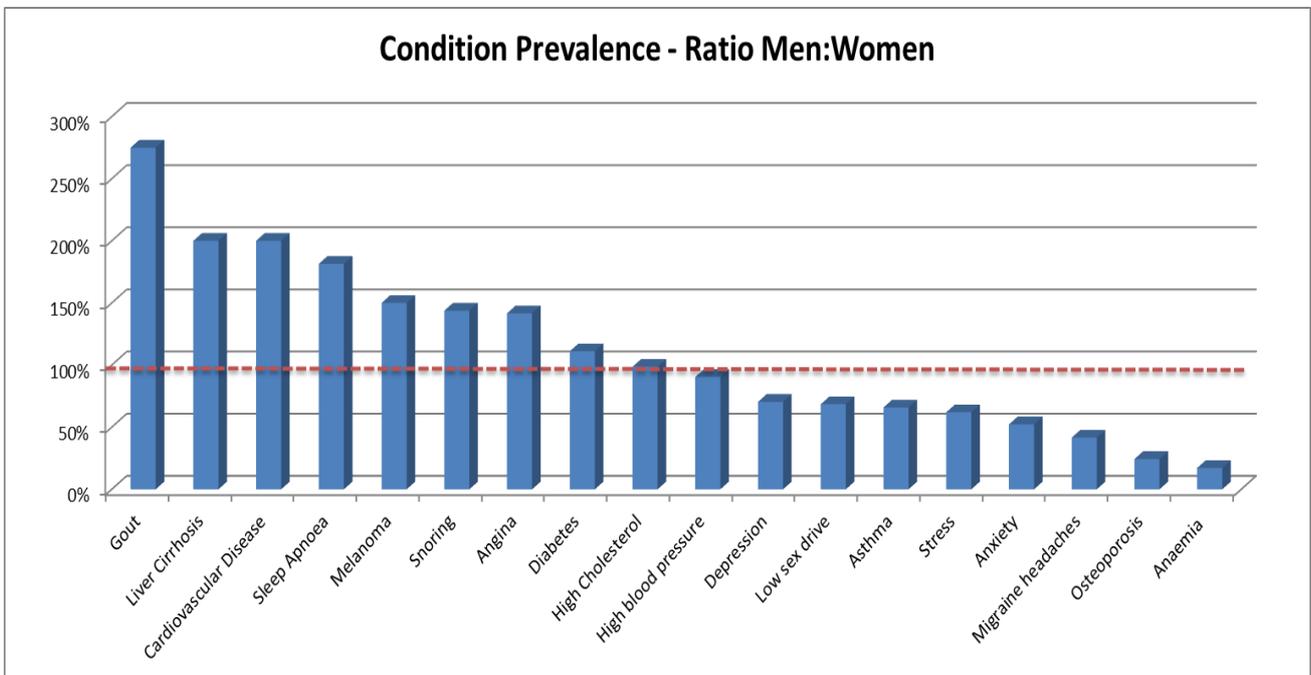
FIGURES

Figure 1: Health Index and Sub-Indices by Gender - 2012.



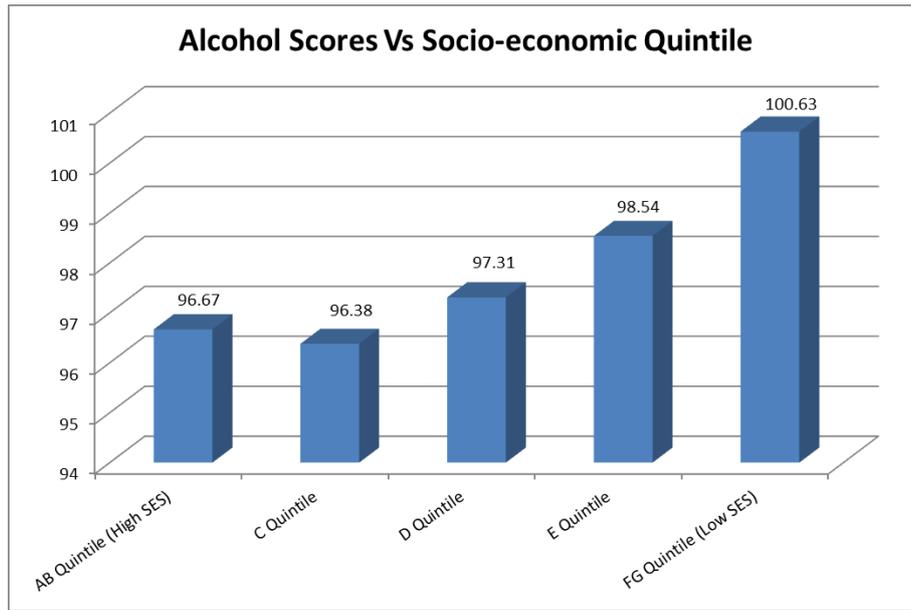
Source: Roy Morgan Single Source – Jan-Dec 2012

Figure 2: Condition Prevalence - 2012



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source – Jan-Dec 2012

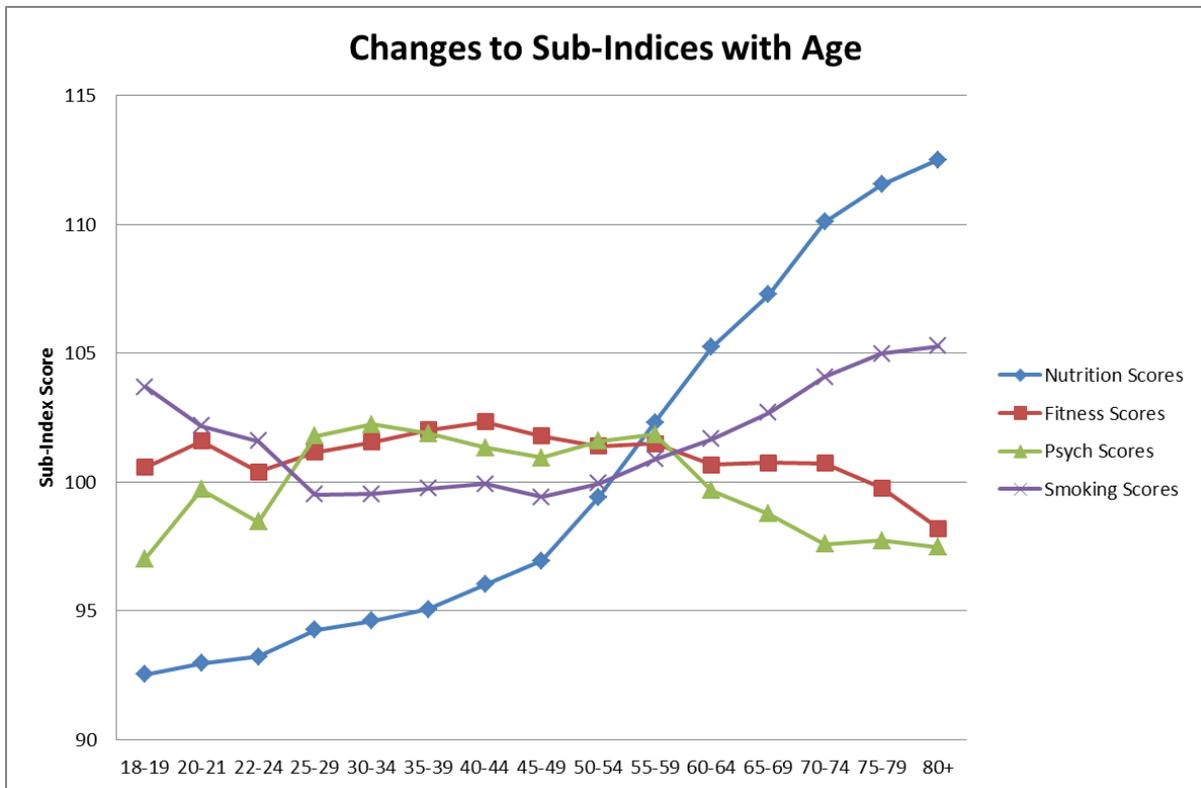
Figure 3. Alcohol Wellness Sub-index Scores and Socio-economic Status - 2012



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source – Jan-Dec 2012

Note: The AB quintile represents the upper 20% of the population in terms of income/education/occupation – the FG quintile represents the lowest 20%.

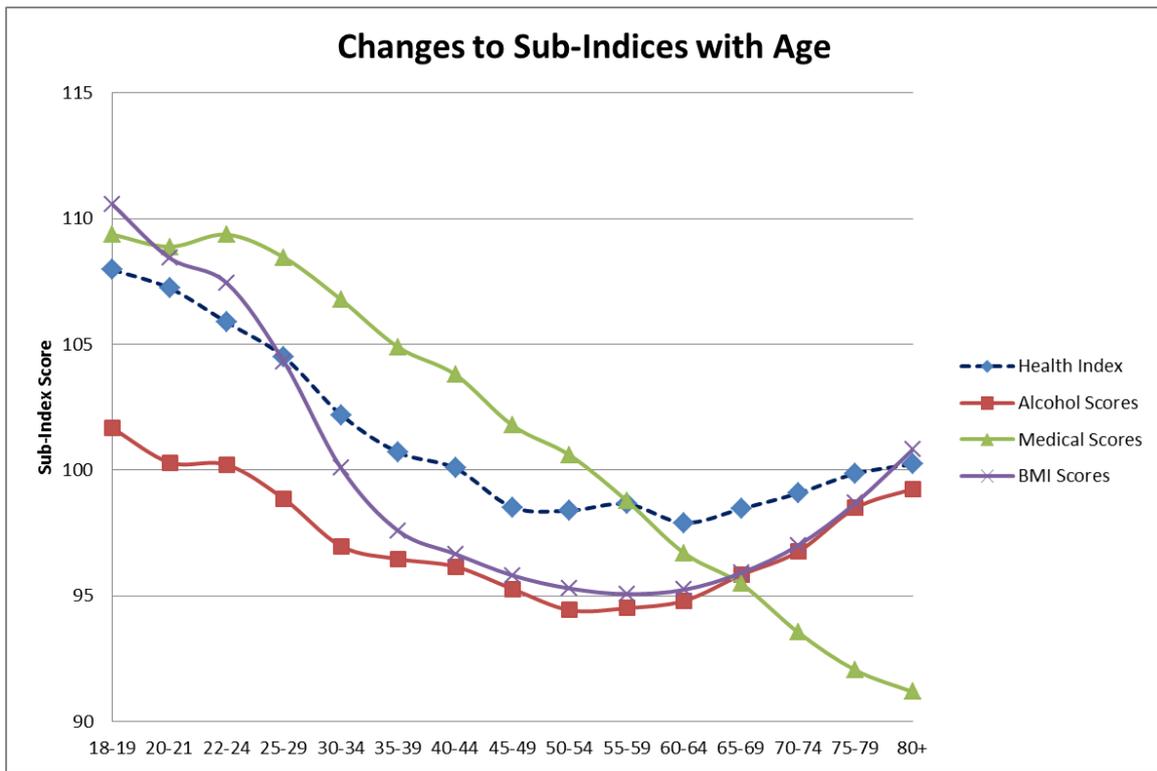
Figure 4a. Men’s Health Sub-Index Scores by Age - 2012



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source – Jan-Dec 2012

Note: All sub-indices set to 100 in Calendar Year 2007. Increasing scores represent improvements in health.

Figure 4b. Men's Health Sub-Index Scores by Age - 2012



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source – Jan-Dec 2012

Note: All sub-indices set to 100 in Calendar Year 2007. Increasing scores represent improvements in health.

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Associate Professor Gary Richardson is available for interview.

About the Alere Wellness Index

Australia's leading research organisation, Roy Morgan Research has collaborated with world-leading healthcare company, Alere, to establish the *Alere Wellness Index**. The AWI was launched in Australia in April 2013 and will be used to update the state of the nations' each quarter.

1,800 health questions answered by 50,000 Australians

Every year since 2007, Roy Morgan has been asking more than 50,000 people questions about their medical conditions, food purchasing and consumption, psychological wellbeing and other lifestyle factors, such as alcohol, smoking, body weight and sedentary behaviour – approximately 1,800 questions in total – in order to create the new Alere Wellness Index*.

For further details visit www.WellnessIndex.com.au or contact:

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About Roy Morgan Research

Roy Morgan Research is the largest independent Australian research company, with offices in each state of Australia, as well as in New Zealand, the United States and the United Kingdom. A full service research organisation specialising in omnibus and syndicated data, Roy Morgan Research has over 70 years' experience in collecting objective, independent information on consumers.

In Australia, Roy Morgan Research is considered to be the authoritative source of information on financial behaviour, readership, voting intentions and consumer confidence. Roy Morgan Research is a specialist in recontact customised surveys which provide invaluable and effective qualitative and quantitative information regarding customers and target markets. For more information regarding Roy Morgan Research please visit www.roymorgan.com.

About Alere

By developing new capabilities in near-patient diagnosis, monitoring and health management, Alere enables individuals to take charge of improving their health and quality of life at home. Alere's global leading products and services, as well as its new product development efforts, focus on cardiology, infectious disease, toxicology, diabetes, oncology, women's health and health management. Alere Australia is headquartered in Brisbane, Australia. For more information regarding Alere please visit www.alere.com.au.