

just a minute with...

David Cameron, Leader of the Conservative Party and MP for Witney

Heart and circulatory disease is still the UK's biggest killer. How do you plan to prevent it in the future?

There are four important ways we can act. First, through health promotion. For cardiovascular and other disease this is essential. So we would ring-fence public health budgets to stop the money getting siphoned off.

Second, through prevention. Screening for circulatory diseases is vital in identifying those with symptoms or at risk.

Third, through access to treatment. For example, currently fewer than ten per cent of stroke patients get the vital clot-busting drugs they need in time.

Fourth, through cure. At the moment, the judgement

of health professionals is constantly being questioned, and patients' priorities constantly distorted. We need to allow the NHS to focus on outcomes instead of targets, so that patients get the best care at every stage of their treatment.

How will you tackle existing health inequalities?

Factors like poverty, poor housing and environment – as well as hereditary factors – can make even more of a difference than the local NHS. So part of dealing with health inequalities is about tackling these problems at their source.

One good example of how public health measures can tackle inequality is through

health visitors. They are highly trained NHS professionals who can build up really strong relationships with families in the home – not by judging, but by helping out. We need more of them.

We are planning 4,200 more, so they can provide a universal service to all parents, with extra help for those in the most deprived areas. It could mean, for example, six hours' home support in the first two weeks, and regular visits after that.

How will you ensure the UK remains a leader of medical research?

We need to make sure we are as competitive as possible in research and development. My colleagues in the health team have been liaising with the Royal College of Physicians about how best to provide the right number of pharmacology clinicians and help professionals identify and select suitable participants for trials.

How will you ensure that patients are involved in decision making?

By putting them in the driving seat. We would give people the right to choose their GP, their hospital and even the consultant responsible for their care. At present, this simply isn't happening.

That would be matched by nothing short of a revolution in the amount of information made available. Informed choice is real choice. Things like the hospitals which perform well for a particular kind of surgery, and the GPs which have a good record for delivering good outcomes for patients, would be published as a matter of routine.

How do you look after your own heart health?

I try to eat healthily – plenty of fruit and salads – but I have to admit that I am a fan of red meat and cheese!

I cycle to and from work at least once a week. And I also try to block time out in the diary for a couple of good runs a week. It's fine once you get going – the important thing is reserving the time and making sure it doesn't get filled.

During National Heart Month we are encouraging people to leave a love note in BHF shops. Who would you write your love note to and why?

My wife Sam – for being able to juggle career and family responsibilities seemingly so effortlessly, and for helping me keep my feet on the ground.