Article Analysis

Public health: saving lives and spending less

Note to teachers: Vocabulary given can be used to help explain unknown words/phrases, to ask the client for synonyms to show understanding, or to ask client to find a synonym for the word/phrase given in the definition
Eg. Can you find a synonym for ‘menace’?

Précis: The article is about public healthcare and what has the most impact on a nation’s health. It makes reference to public health campaigns, investment in healthcare, advances in medicine and increasing life expectancy (and subsequent increases in healthcare costs). Smoking was the unhealthy practice at the end of the century, over-consumption of food and alcohol is the threat in the 21st. Obesity figures are given for the UK and US, as well as related diseases. The issue of ‘popping pills’ rather than leading a healthy lifestyle is brought up, as well as the link between healthy lifestyles and high income and longevity. Figures and comparisons are given for life expectancy and public health expenditure in the US and Japan.

Cultural references:
- NHS (National Health Service) - The National Health Service (NHS) is the shared name of three of the four publicly funded healthcare systems in the United Kingdom. They are primarily funded through general taxation rather than requiring insurance payments. They provide a comprehensive range of health services, the vast majority of which are free at the point of use to residents of the United Kingdom.

- In US more than one-third of adults obese
  http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/trends.HTML

- Oxford University Institute of Ageing study into effects of healthy lifestyles and high income on life expectancy/longevity

- OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) - is an international economic organisation of 34 countries founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade.
  - OECD health data 2011
    http://www.oecd.org/document/16/0,3746,en_2649_33929_2085200_1_1_1,00.html

Headline: (If client hasn’t read article) What do you think the article addresses?
**Subheading:** What is compared?
What is suggested as the reason that the Japanese healthcare system cost less than that of the US?

**Photo Caption:** What has been the result of increased consumption of food and alcohol?
Where?

**Paragraphs**

1: *adjunct – complement, auxiliary, accessory*
What would you answer to the first question?
What had a dramatic effect on UK male life expectancy at the end of the 20th century?
How do politicians often consider public-health campaigns?

2: *stroke - cerebrovascular accident*
1st sentence – when, how many, who, what?
What had happened to cancer/stroke deaths in the same section of the population?
What caused these changes?
Sentence starting ‘In 1971…’ – when, who, what?
What has changed?
What can this be attributed to? How much of the increase?

3: *threat – menace, danger*
What’s the unhealthy practice of the 21st century?
What has it led to?
How many US adults are obese?
And how many UK women over 50? And men?
Is obesity fatal?
What can it cause?
What has gone down?
Why?

4: *preventable – can be avoided*
*tackle – confront, face up to*
What is meant by ‘this’? ‘increased use of drug therapies...’ from previous paragraph
What do you understand by ‘preventable’?
What could happen in the future?
What do you think of this scenario?

5: *alleviate – lessen, relieve*
How are pharmaceuticals described?
What will happen in the future? Increasing longevity and potentially disabling conditions
Why?
What should be asked?
Can all conditions be alleviated by changing lifestyle alone?

6: What effect can public health initiatives have?
Can you think of some examples? Adverts (smoking, alcohol, unhealthy food)
What did the Oxford study reveal?

7: expenditure – spending, costs
What else can have a positive effect on life expectancy?
What has increased in Japan? When? By how much?
Japanese healthcare expenditure – what does it incorporate? risen by how much?
What would you put this down to?

8: US life expectancy – risen by how much?
US health expenditure – risen by how much?
How is the US healthcare system described?
What would you put these results down to?

9: per se – in itself, intrinsically
What is not pushing up healthcare costs? What is?
What is the population learning?
Would you agree that people think they can live an unhealthy lifestyle because of advances in medicine?

10: What is Professor Harper referring to by ‘A simple lifestyle change…’?
Does the article end on a positive or negative note?
Do you agree with the last paragraph? Give reasons

Conclusion: Did you learn anything new from this article? Are there any interesting points you will remember?
On the whole, do you agree or disagree with the article/journalist?

Going Further:

- Healthcare in client’s country – compare with UK (and US/Japan?); pros/cons
- Tax on fast food?
- Charging to treat people with ‘self-imposed’ illnesses caused by alcohol, smoking, unhealthy food…?
- If you smoke and drink alcohol then you are paying for your NHS treatment (VAT). Discuss
- More overweight people = profits for food companies, creates more money for (private) health companies?
- Pharmaceutical companies - big business
- Eating less healthy food because of long working hours and commutes so less time to prepare food; never learning how to cook properly (parents/school)
• Some people eat unhealthily, do no exercise, drink and/or smoke and live a long life, whereas some who live a ‘healthy life’ can die early
• Difference between Japan and US mortality and health care due to differences in levels of income rather than lifestyle choices?
• Inequalities in US (eg. price of private healthcare), more equality in Japan – does greater equality increase population health and longevity? Make it easier to choose healthier lifestyles?
• Less exercise -Public sports facilities reduced, children not playing out (video games, TV, health and safety, ‘dangers’ of playing outside, reducing sports at school…
• Quality of life in old age