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Smoking and drinking are in top 10 causes of death in UK

Smoking is the number one cause of death in the UK – which has also seen an increase in deaths due to alcohol use – according to a new global study published today in *The Lancet* (Friday 11 September).

Northumbria University's Dr Ivy Shiue is one of the co-authors of a new paper published by the Global Burden of Disease study which looked at the leading health risk factors most likely to cause death in 188 countries between 1990 and 2013.

The study found that smoking contributed to 106,981 deaths in the UK in 2013, making it the top risk factor for both men and women, closely followed by high blood pressure and obesity.

Although the UK has made progress against the leading global risks of death – with significant decreases in high blood pressure and high cholesterol – there has been a 9.5% increase in the number of deaths due to alcohol use, with 21,765 people dying from this in 2013.

The top ten risks in the UK are, in order, smoking, high blood pressure, high body mass index, high cholesterol, low physical activity, a diet low in fruits, diabetes (known as high fasting plasma glucose), kidney disease (known as low glomerular filtration rate), alcohol use and a diet low in vegetables.

The top ten global risks are smoking, high body-mass index, high blood pressure, diabetes, alcohol use, high cholesterol, kidney disease, low physical activity, a diet low in fruits and drug use.

Dr Shiue, a senior researcher in Northumbria University's Department of Healthcare, said: "Progress against so many leading risk factors is excellent news and should be celebrated, but these risks still continue to contribute to the disabilities and deaths of thousands of Britons.

"We need to focus on minimising risks clustering from childhood to adulthood to reduce the burden on our health system and ensure that we all live long and healthy lives."

The study, which is led by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington in Seattle, found significant regional variations in the leading health risks.

In much of the Middle East and Latin America, high body mass index is the number one risk associated with health loss. In South and South East Asia, household air pollution is a leading risk. India has high risks of unsafe water and childhood undernutrition and alcohol is the number two risk in Russia. However, smoking is the number one risk in many high-income countries, including the United Kingdom.

IHME Director Dr Christopher Murray added: "There's great potential to

improve health by avoiding certain risks like smoking and poor diet as well as tackling environmental risks like air pollution. The challenge for policymakers will be to use what we know to guide prevention efforts and health policies.”

Click [here](#) to read the full paper Global, regional, and national comparative risk assessment of 79 behavioral, environmental and occupational, and metabolic risks or clusters of risks in 188 countries, 1990-2013: a systematic analysis for the GBD 2013.

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