In the news

A LEAN HOLIDAY SEASON

As the season of eating, drinking and general merriment approaches, a recent study has suggested that reduced consumption of the holiday trimmings this year (and forever) is needed.

A new report from the World Cancer Research Fund analysed 7,000 cancer studies and Sir Michael Marmot, chair of the 21-strong international research panel, summed up their findings with the recommendation that people should "...aim to be as lean as possible within the healthy range and that they avoid weight gain throughout adulthood." (<http://www.guardianunlimited.co.uk>, 31 October 2007)

The researchers were particularly concerned about the consumption of red and processed meat, and recommended a maximum consumption of 500 g of cooked red meat per week, but concluded that there are no safe limits for the consumption of processed meats such as ham, salami and bacon: "That's why we recommend that if people eat processed meat at all they save it for special occasions like ham at Christmas or the occasional hot dog at a baseball game," said Philip James, another of the panel members, who established the International Obesity Task Force (<http://www.cp.org>, 31 October 2007).

These findings have been welcomed by many scientists and health-care workers, but whether the findings will be heard by an ever-expanding population is unclear. With so much advice on diet and lifestyle available, some people are just switching off, and "...that's a worry because we do need to understand that there is a clear link between lifestyle and cancer, and you can do something to protect yourself," said Fred Kavalier, a genetics consultant from Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals in the UK (<http://news.bbc.co.uk>, 31 October 2007).

Nicola McCarthy