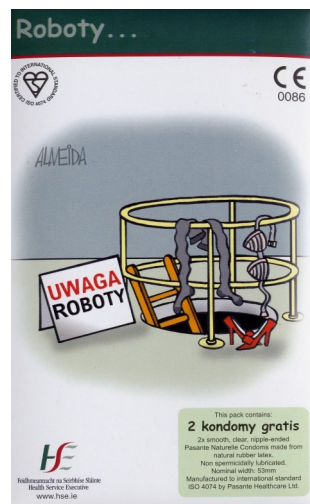


Press Release Health Service Executive (South), 27/08/2007

HSE gives condoms to building workers

Building workers in the south of the country are to receive free sexual information packs including two condoms. The Health Service Executive (HSE) South is distributing the kit after research it is publishing shows low levels of awareness of sexual health services available to men. The packs, titled 'Men at Work', will be given to hundreds of men and are available in English, Polish and Russian. Many men – around four out of five – told researchers they used a condom when having vaginal sex with a casual partner, but one in four complained that condoms were too expensive to use. Four in ten said drinking and taking drugs would stop them from using condoms. The Crisis Pregnancy Agency funded the study, which sought to find out what was preventing men using sexual health services. Almost 800 men in Cork and Kerry were asked about their knowledge and use of facilities for contraception, erectile dysfunction, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and screening. Many of the men were contacted through their workplaces, or further education centres. A third of men said they would be very embarrassed to use sexual health services and more than half wouldn't know where to find such services anyway, the research found. Fewer than one in four of the men surveyed said they had ever attended a GP for sexual health reasons, and fewer than one in 10 had been to another type of clinic or service. Most (87%) knew they could get help in this area from a GP, but knowledge of other providers, such as STI clinics and family planning clinics, was low. Just over a quarter knew about STI clinics, and only 13% knew that gay and bisexual organisations often provide such services. 'The report indicates that men have a low awareness of sexual health services, and engage in risk-taking behaviour,' commented Linda Hogan, health promotion manager with HSE South. The Construction Health Workers' Trust (CHWT) will distribute the Men at Work packs. The Trust is an independent body set up by construction unions to promote better health and lifestyles among building workers. Brian Daly of the CHWT said it gives health screenings to more than 3,000 men on building sites in the HSE South area each year. The Men at Work pack will also focus on testicular cancer, the most common form of cancer in young men. Two years ago a HSE South study found that only half the men questioned knew about testicular self-examination, and only one in five did it. The report recommended a number of measures that should be taken, including increased access to condoms for all men, and tackling cultural beliefs that sexual health services are for women only.



Comment (not part of HSE press release): Above pictures show the custom condom packs designed by Lark Healthcare Solutions Ltd., in cooperation with Pasante Healthcare, and delivered to HSE South as a turn-key solution.