

## LETTERS

## AIRCRAFT NOISE AND HEALTH

# Working at Heathrow airport may be a risk factor for cardiovascular disease

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Residual confounding is a possibility in Hansell and colleagues' study on cardiovascular disease and aircraft noise, and correlation is not causation.<sup>1</sup> I would like to suggest a confounder. Living in the vicinity of Heathrow airport, I am often struck by the irregular hours worked by its employees, many of whom presumably live under the flight path. Shift work is known to be associated with vascular events and could be a residual confounder.<sup>2</sup> It is also possible that the aircraft noise disturbs their sleep even further.

If the effect of noise on cardiovascular events is immediate, a big if, then perhaps the effects of variation in flight paths or the six days of silence during the ash cloud in 2010 could be studied.

Competing interests: I live under a flight path of Heathrow.

- 1 Hansell AL, Blangiardo M, Fortunato L, Floud S, de Hoogh K, Fecht D, et al. Aircraft noise and cardiovascular disease near Heathrow airport in London: small area study. *BMJ* 2013;347:f5432. (8 October.)
- 2 Vyas MV, Garg AX, Iansavichus AV, Costella JC, Donner A, Laugsan LE, et al. Shift work and vascular events: systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMJ* 2012;345:e4800.

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2013;347:f6794

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