



Megaphone Online

April 2016

the voice of Health Sciences' staff and students

Student careers fair

The Department held its second careers fair for nursing and midwifery students to meet potential employers, on 14 March.

Around 75 students visited the fair and discussed opportunities open to them post graduation. Stands were provided by regional employers including hospital trusts, hospices and private healthcare providers. During the afternoon, students were given a short presentation from each of the employers.

Rob Allison, lead for the pre-registration nursing programme, said: "feedback was very positive from both our students and partner organisations on the importance of these events, although students have advised that they would like to have this event earlier than the Spring. We are currently working on the next event for our current second years, more details will follow shortly."



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NurSoc hosts heated bursary debate

On 16 February, the Department's Nursing Society hosted a debate to discuss the proposed introduction of a loans system to replace the current bursary for healthcare students. The debate panel (pictured right) included Rachael Maskell, Labour MP for York Central; Paul Galdas, Reader in Nursing; and Rhys Mood and David Morgan, Royal College of Nursing (RCN) representatives. Jordan Hennessy, from the Conservative Party Society at the University of York, also stepped in to provide a balance in the political debate and represent the Conservative party which declined an invitation.



The debate saw rapid and heated discussion of the merits of both sides of the arguments highlighting the bigger picture of nursing education and strain on the workforce. The greatest concerns arose from inadequate formal consultation and a striking lack of detail in the government proposal. Rachael Maskell called for a complete profile of the healthcare workforce to accurately understand the extent of the shortage of nurses. The RCN representatives were challenged over the lack of engagement early on in the consultation which they explained was due to the restrictions of their constitution. However, it remained clear that not only was the voice of nurses and current and future nursing students not sought but also only a small percentage of our colleagues stepped up to be heard: too little too late.

The issue of replacing nursing bursaries with a loan scheme cannot be looked at in isolation from ongoing challenges within funding and shortages in the workforce. Nursing training is facing another overhaul of how education is provided for the nurse associate role and the proposed re-introduction of an apprenticeship style training. Paul Galdas cautioned that taking nursing education away from university threatens the status of the nursing profession as a whole. The diversity of roles and responsibilities of nurses is increasing and we need an education system which supports this. However, removal of the bursary system will result in more non-university educational providers stepping in to educate future nurses.

The debate highlighted that this financial conflict is the tip of the iceberg for the ongoing concerns facing our profession and education as a whole. The debate concluded with thought provoking input from the audience challenging nursing students to be more proactive than reactive and to speak up in defence of the profession. There are over 600 nursing students at York and when the announcement about the proposed changes in funding was made, angry, dissenting voices could be heard in many a coffee shop. But, in the event, only 55 people attended the debate to actually have a say where it mattered and only 25 of these were students. "We need to stop burying our heads in the sand and waiting for someone else to represent our concerns. We need to use our voices in these times of turbulence for our education but also our profession as a whole now and in the future," said Abigail Hiester, Vice President of NurSoc.

Annual John Snow lecture

Staff and students are encouraged to attend the annual departmental John Snow lecture on Tuesday 10 May, 6.15pm – 7.30pm, in the Bowland Auditorium, Berrick Saul Building.

This year it will be given by Professor Jeff Collin, of the University of Edinburgh, who will be speaking about E-cigarettes and the future of the tobacco industry.

Alongside debates about the comparative safety of e-cigarettes, understanding the strategic significance of such new products to the tobacco industry is of critical importance to the future of tobacco control and public health policy more broadly.

This lecture will examine how tobacco companies have sought to respond to such threats, and highlights the opportunities associated with e-cigarettes and the harm reduction agenda. It appraises key acquisitions and initiatives and examines their roles within wider industry efforts to undermine tobacco control, including by promoting alliance with parts of the public health community, exploiting subsequent divisions, and advancing the core strategic objectives of rehabilitation from pariah status and increased engagement in policymaking.

To book a free place please visit www.york.ac.uk/news-and-events/events/public-lectures/summer-2016/e-cigarettes/.

Postgraduate Taster Day

Prospective students learned what it is like to be a postgraduate student in the Department of Health Sciences at a Postgraduate Taster Day on 9 March.

Senior lecturer in Population Health Dr Steven Oliver; MSc in Applied Health Research Programme Leader Charlie Lloyd and Postgraduate Admissions Tutor Dr Mona Kanaan talked to prospective Masters in Public Health and Applied Health Research students at a postgraduate taster session held in the department.

Steven delivered a short taster session about one of the founders of epidemiology, John Snow, who was born in York. The prospective students also heard talks about accommodation and finance at the university and talked to current students on the programmes and to members of staff.



Jerome Wright visits Malawi

Jerome Wright was an invited speaker at the 6th Malawi Mental Health Research and Practice Development Conference at University of Malawi, Blantyre, Malawi, 14-16 March 2016.

He presented a key note address on 'Strengthening community mental health promotion and care' and chaired a panel discussion on Capacity Building in Primary Care Mental Health where contributions were facilitated from Ministry of Health, College of Medicine, Mental health user groups and Service providers to inform the development of Malawi's Mental Health Strategy 2016-2020.



Wendy Graham gives Jim Matthew lecture

On 8 March, the Department hosted the Jim Matthew lecture which was given by Professor Wendy Graham, Professor of Obstetrics and Epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Emeritus Professor at the University of Aberdeen.

The talk entitled: "Health, history, hygiene and hands" focused on the importance of hand hygiene at home, and in health facilities, for preventing infection. This practice has been known about for centuries and sadly reinforced in the recent Ebola outbreak in West Africa. Wendy highlighted that this key behaviour has, however, proven resistant to improvement. Findings from clinical settings around the world typically show hand washing being missed on more than half of the occasions when it should be practised.

Wendy explored the drivers of this stubborn yet basic behaviour in the context of maternity units in low-income settings, where hygiene can make a difference between life and death. Each year an estimated one million mothers and babies die of infections owing to poor practices at the time of delivery. In this talk, lessons were shared from several countries on the bottlenecks to improving hygiene behaviour on maternity units, as well as the opportunities for achieving real progress in the 21st century.

Following the talk there was an opportunity for visitors to try out several hand washing stations, manned by BA (Hons) Midwifery Practice students and Dr Emma Morrison, Scientific Project Officer for The Soapbox Collaborative.



Alison Booth writes book chapter

A York Trials Unit researcher, Alison Booth, has written a chapter on registering reviews for a new book titled 'Umbrella Reviews: Evidence Synthesis with Overviews of Reviews and Meta-Epidemiologic Studies', published by Springer-Verlag, Heidelberg (2016). The chapter presents the case for registration of systematic review protocols and introduces PROSPERO, an open register run at the University of York. Examples from PROSPERO are used to illustrate considerations when registering a review of reviews. The book itself is the first to focus on analysis and pooling of reviews and meta-analysis. All aspects of the methodology are covered, together with a number of case studies, to equip readers with the ability to interpret and conduct umbrella reviews.



Stepped wedge conference held

On 10 March 2016, the York Trials Unit within the department welcomed national and international delegates to the "First International Conference on the Stepped Wedge Trial Design". This design employs the incremental randomised implementation of an intervention. It has gained popularity in the health, social and environmental sciences as a tool to enable the evaluation of interventions/policies whilst being rolled out gradually over time.



Keynote speakers included eminent researchers at the forefront of the development of the design: Professor Richard Lilford (University of Warwick), Professor Jim Hughes (University of Washington, USA), Dr Karla Hemming (University of Birmingham), and Professor Andrew Forbes (Monash University, Australia).

The conference brought together practitioners, researchers and methodologists to share ideas, best practice and challenges for the design, implementation and analysis of the stepped wedge model.

Dr Mona Kanaan, Senior Lecturer and member of the organising committee (which also included Ada Keding, Dr Noreen Mdege, and Professor David Torgerson), said: "It was an honour and pleasure to host an event that brings together a community of researchers in this growing field. We were very excited to provide a platform for knowledge exchange in this important field and to contribute to shaping its future development."

The conference was simultaneously broadcast to remotely attending delegates from the UK and abroad via dedicated online channels.

Call for new public health message about high potency cannabis

Department of Health Sciences' Lecturer in Mental Health Ian Hamilton has joined other researchers to call for a new public health campaign about the dangers of higher potency cannabis.

Researchers from Kings College, The University of Bristol and The University of York are all concerned about the risks to users, particularly younger ones, of cannabis which has increased in potency over recent years due to increasing tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) levels. Higher THC and lower cannabidiols (CBDs) are associated with an increased risk of developing psychosis.

"The combined risks to mental and physical health justify a public health campaign that should aim to reduce the potential for harm for high risk groups who use cannabis," said Ian. "This would require a radical change in the current public health approach to drugs which promotes abstinence rather than trying to minimise harm."

Some 75% of cannabis users combine tobacco with cannabis when they smoke a joint, this can significantly increase the risk of developing tobacco dependency and developing respiratory related problems.

A podcast via The Guardian outlining the research to date and the rationale for a public health campaign featuring Professor Sir Robin Murray, Dr Suzi Gage and Ian Hamilton can be accessed here: https://www.theguardian.com/science/audio/2016/apr/15/how-harmful-is-cannabis-podcast?utm_source=Guardian+Sci+Podcast.

Nearly half of all women who stop smoking during pregnancy go back to it once the baby is born

New research shows that 43% of women re-start smoking within six months of the birth of their child.

A paper, published this week in the scientific journal *Addiction*, and co-authored by Steve Parrott of the Mental Health and Addiction Research Group in the Department of Health Sciences, shows that nearly half of all women who stop smoking during pregnancy go back to it once the baby is born.

While not smoking during pregnancy is very important, there is an urgent need to find better ways of helping mothers stay off cigarettes afterwards.

The research team that produced the report is part of the UK Centre for Tobacco and Alcohol Studies, and includes collaborators from the University of Nottingham. The study was funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Programme Grants for Applied Research programme.

Former student publishes book

A former PhD student at the Department of Health Sciences has written a book about Life After Encephalitis.

Ava Easton, who was a PhD student at the department from 2005-2014, and is now Chief Executive of The Encephalitis Society, collated survivor and family member stories into the book.

Dr Easton has been the Chief Executive of The Encephalitis Society since 2011. She is a Health Scientist and Researcher and considered a world expert in the consequences of the condition, an inflammation of the brain.

She often accepts invitations to speak at conferences around the globe, and was awarded an Honorary Fellowship from the University of Liverpool, thanks to her extensive collaborative work on the research and study of Encephalitis with the Liverpool Institute of Infection and Global Health. She also works extensively with the University of Oxford and Public Health England.

Life After Encephalitis provides a unique insight into the experiences of those affected by encephalitis by sharing the rich, understanding, and often powerful, narratives of survivors and family members.

Ava interviewed many people affected by encephalitis for the book which features several nightmarish accounts of changed personalities, increased violence, and even attempted suicide, alongside tales of hope, love and of lives renewed.

She said: "I wanted to give a voice to survivors of encephalitis and provide an insight into the experiences of those affected – be they survivors, family members or those left bereaved. Their stories are heartfelt, at times distressing to witness, but also full of hope and inspiration."

She went on: "A lot of my work at the University of York planted the seeds for what would eventually become Life After Encephalitis. I have to credit the guidance of my supervisor, Professor Karl Atkin, Head of the Department of Health Sciences, who challenged me and approached the subject from a different point of view."

Her PhD covered the role of narratives in recovery following Encephalitis.

Karl Atkin said: "I'm delighted one of my former students has published such an interesting book on the affects of Encephalitis on all those who come into contact with the condition."

For details of how to purchase the book, please visit www.encephalitis.info/LifeAfterEncephalitis.

David Torgerson visits Milan

On 14 March David Torgerson, Director of the York Trials Unit, travelled to Milan to deliver a seminar and workshop at the Sacred Heart University of Milan. David was also there to be a member of a steering group of a randomised trial of a social work intervention to reduce school absence. For more information about this please contact David (david.torgerson@york.ac.uk).

Research News

Kate Pickett's book becomes a film

A documentary, inspired by the critically acclaimed book *The Spirit Level* by Department of Health Sciences' academics Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson, received its London premiere.

The Divide has enjoyed successful festival and preview screenings, but this is the first time tickets have gone on general sale.

The film seeks to expose the widespread effects of increases in inequality through telling the story of seven individuals striving for a better life in the UK and USA. It is directed by Katharine Round.

The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better, was published by Penguin in 2009 to world-wide acclaim.

The authors show that many modern health and social problems, from drugs and violence to obesity and long working hours, are more likely to occur in a less equal society.

The book, chosen as one of the Top Ten Books of the Decade by the *New Statesman* and winner of Publication of the Year by the Political

Studies Association, has been translated into 23 languages.

It is co-authored by Kate Pickett, Professor of Epidemiology, and Honorary Visiting Professor, Richard Wilkinson, in the Department of Health Sciences.

Kate Pickett said: "It's vital to communicate important research evidence in ways that engage and interest people. We are delighted that Katharine Round has made a film inspired by our research that packs such a powerful emotional punch."

The film was shown at London's Picturehouse Central to clubs and groups before general release across the UK on 22 April. It will be shown at Picturehouse Cinemas across the country on 31 May as part of Discover Tuesdays, including York's City Screen.

Following the screening there was a Q&A with the book's authors.

The documentary made its world premiere at the Sheffield Doc/Fest 2015 and was nominated for Best UK Film at London's Open City Documentary Festival 2015.

Writing Week February 2016

The second instalment of the York Trials Unit Writing Week 2015/2016 (aka the Writing Olympiad) had a successful run over the week commencing 22 February 2016. Those participating are divided into five teams (themed along the colours of the Olympic rings), and prompted with a small dose of healthy competition, with Team Blue (pictured here) winning this time. The week kicked off with a training session on communicating research to the media and the public. This helpful session was conducted by colleagues from the University of York Media Team in Heslington Hall, and helped those attending reflect on the means with which to create wider impact for their research. Those participating in writing week once again made the most of the event and focussed on completing a range of academic outputs, with some teams forming ongoing collaborations amongst them to produce new work.

The next and final writing week for this year is scheduled for the week commencing 13 June 2016.



‘Stop Smokeless Tobacco’ app developed by Public Health and Society team

Smokeless tobacco (SLT) is a product containing tobacco, placed in the mouth or nose but not burned at the time of use. Consumed worldwide, a wide variety of SLT products are available, which are chewed, sucked or applied to gums and teeth. Its use is particularly common among people of South Asian origin, including those living in the UK.

Research shows that behavioural support helps people who are addicted to smokeless tobacco to quit. However, this research, mainly conducted in the US and European populations, is of little relevance to South Asians who use more addictive and hazardous products.

A bespoke Behaviour Change Intervention (BCI) was developed to help South Asians quit smokeless tobacco. The BCI was piloted in Pakistan and in the UK among SLT users and also for the feasibility of delivery by the providers. This project was funded by the MRC Public Health Interventions Development Scheme (PHIND).

The BCI resource consists of a practice manual and interactive slides. The interactive slides provide a set of different scenarios using photographic materials inviting a dialogue between the provider and the SLT user. Overall, activities within the BCI include raising awareness of the harms of SLT use and benefits of quitting, boosting clients’ motivation and self-efficacy, and developing strategies to manage their triggers, withdrawal symptoms, and relapse should that occur.

As part of this project, a digital app was also developed for use by providers to support their clients, for quitting SLT use. The app ‘Stop Smokeless Tobacco’ is made available for free: <http://www.york.ac.uk/healthsciences/research/public-health/archive/adapting-behavioural-support-intervention/>

The app contains features which include: a step-by-step quit tobacco programme to facilitate the provider in helping the client through their pre-quit, quit and post-quit stages; informative slides explaining the detrimental effects of chewing smokeless tobacco; interactive slides aimed at challenging common beliefs related to chewing tobacco; suggestions for raising awareness of the harms of smokeless tobacco use and benefits of quitting.

For ease of communicating with clients the app is available in multiple languages including: English, Urdu, Hindi, Gujerati, Nepali and Bengali.



Kamran Siddiqi (pictured above) and Omara Dogar (pictured below).



Hello

We wish a very warm welcome to new members of staff who have joined the department recently, these include: Jackie Martin-Kerry, Linda Currie, Elena Ratschen, Michael Kitching, Tiffany Yang, Carole Lindsey, James Rushby, Janaka Jayawickrama, and Jo Rose.

Goodbye

Farewell to staff who have left us recently or who will be leaving us shortly, these include: Clare Brooks, Helen Roberts, Sally Evans, Lynn Burnell and Joyce Johnson and Ann Hopton.

Wing walk for daredevil Kat

Kat Chatterton from York Trials Unit will be taking part in a wing walk on 25 June in aid of Cancer Research UK. As this is a disease that is close to many people's hearts she would like to raise as much money as possible to help fight this worthy cause.

The wing walk has been fully paid for by Kat so all monies raised will go direct to the charity. If you would like to donate she has a Just Giving page: [justgiving.com/Katherine-Chatterton](https://www.justgiving.com/Katherine-Chatterton).

Once the wing walk has been completed, photos and a grand total will be announced.

Kat would like to thank everyone in advance for their support!



If you would like to make a submission to future editions of Megaphone, please contact Nicola Thomis (nicola.thomis@york.ac.uk or tel **01904 321927**).