



Megaphone Online

April/May 2020

the voice of Health Sciences' staff and students

Message from the Head of Department

Thank you for your tremendous support. Our response to rapid and uncertain change has been impressive. I know we continue to face challenges – and will for some time to come – but your remarkable resilience and professionalism has been humbling.

We now have over 150 students in practice and supporting all our cohorts remains our priority. The redesign of our nursing and midwifery programmes, which was done at speed, maintained the quality associated with our teaching, while ensuring we could respond to a diverse range of student experiences.

I am proud of our continued support to the NHS. Our students have been wonderful and have received great support from Departmental colleagues.

Excellent work continues on student recruitment. This is important to our future and currently, is holding up well. We look forward to welcoming new undergraduate and postgraduate students during September and October.

I am pleased of how our research teams have adapted, by generating many highly relevant projects exploring the impact of COVID19. It is perhaps no surprise that our research expertise has been in such demand. This demonstrates the underpinning excellence of what we do.

The Department is in good shape and I am confident that we will be able to respond positively to any changes required of us. We will need to do things differently in the future. Nonetheless, our commitment to health will provide many new opportunities, to enable us to apply our wisdom and flourish.

More importantly, I do hope you are well and keeping in touch with each other. Your wellbeing is incredibly important and if I have one concern, it is the amount of hours people seem to be working. Please do take care of yourself. The Department is nothing without your continued commitment to a community of shared purpose.



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Nursing student wins Library innovation prize

Second year nursing student Shelly Vipond recently won the University of York's library LibInspo innovation competition. Shelly was selected as one of six finalists for the event in February, where she presented her pitch to a panel of judges and an audience from across the University.

Shelly impressed the judges with her idea for a family-friendly space in the Library, where students with children would have a shared space to work and play. She had done some fantastic research about what a difference such a space makes to student parents, many of whom find it difficult to find time to study alongside their caring responsibilities.

The judges chose Shelly as the winner and she received a prize of £1,000 and was named Library Innovator 2020. The library will now work with Shelly to make her idea a reality.

Shelly said: "I am delighted to be awarded the LibInspo award 2020 and truly grateful to the judges for seeing the potential that this will provide. The provision will enable flexibility and a study/home life balance that students with children need. It really shows that the University of York are truly thinking of the diverse student body that makes up the University. I can't wait to work with the University to make this a reality and to be able to use it with my own children."

Professor Paul Galdas, Professor of Nursing and Deputy Head of Department (Nursing and Midwifery) said: "Huge congratulations to Shelly on an excellent idea to help students who are parents to manage their studies alongside their caring duties. I am immensely proud of the continuing success of our nursing students with their inspiring visions for the future. I look forward to seeing the final space when the work has been carried out."



Picture shows L-R Alison Barrow, Head of Media Relations at Transworld Publishing, Shelly, and Masud Khokhar, Director of Library and Archives.



Farewell to our Postgraduate Diploma students

In March we said farewell to our 2018 intake of Postgraduate Diploma in Nursing (Adult Field) students. The group enjoyed a celebration event attended by Dr. Judith Dyson RGN, RMN, BSc (Hons), MSc, PhD, PGCHE, CPsychol Head of Nursing and Midwifery at City University London and a Senior Lecturer in Implementation Science. Judith spoke of her career as a nurse and then as a researcher and implementation scientist. Her work is around behaviour change, from changing patients behaviour to changing behaviour of clinicians. She is passionate about promoting women in science.

We wish them all the best with their future nursing careers.



Laundry bags are on the way

Matthew Jacobs, Student and Academic Services Manager writes: “ Danielle Simpson and I have been busy mailing laundry bags to our 2nd year and final year BSc Hons Nursing and Integrated Masters in Nursing students who were undertaking an extended placement or the 80/20 model.”

“We are planning on mailing to Midwifery students next week. We hope to have enough to be able to distribute to all 1st year nursing and midwifery students too but that will be in the weeks to come.”



Teaching News

Overview of changes to nursing programmes

Jess Powell, BSc Nursing Programme Lead writes: “In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) issued Emergency Education Standards in an attempt to increase flexibility and support the NHS workforce.”

“To adapt to the standards, the nursing programme team, students and their representatives, in the Department, have adapted and redesigned course plans for each of the pre-registration nursing cohorts. This has brought some significant challenges but often led to some creative problem solving, collaboration and a strong sense of community.”

“Students in their first year have moved to ‘theory only’ distance learning until the end of this academic year. Second and third year BSc and MNursing students have had some complex and often difficult decisions to make about whether or not to “opt in’ to paid placements or to ‘opt out’ to take theory only options or a leave of absence. Current placements now involve a very different learning environment involving additional responsibility and a loss of supernumerary status. Many students have found themselves weighing up issues related to childcare, the vulnerability of those they live with and caring responsibilities. Neither are ‘easy options or ones which they expected to make.”

“Many of our senior students are now supporting the NHS workforce in a wide variety of clinical areas and across fields of practice, they will be joined by the second years in coming weeks. The national context and situation in clinical practice is likely to remain unpredictable and the team are working hard to remain responsive, flexible and supportive.”

Update from the Midwifery Education Team

Rachel Lavelle, Midwifery Programme Lead, writes: “The Midwifery Team have responded to the current global crisis and the NMC Emergency Standards and are in the process of making changes to the Midwifery Programme for first, second and third year student midwives.”

“The students have been fully informed, involved and updated about this work. Our first year students cannot go into practice at the moment so they decided to respond with this positive video posted for the International Day of the Midwife on 5th May’.”

<https://twitter.com/Sophie75727922/status/1257586046465912832>

Teaching News

Supporting the Nightingale Hospitals

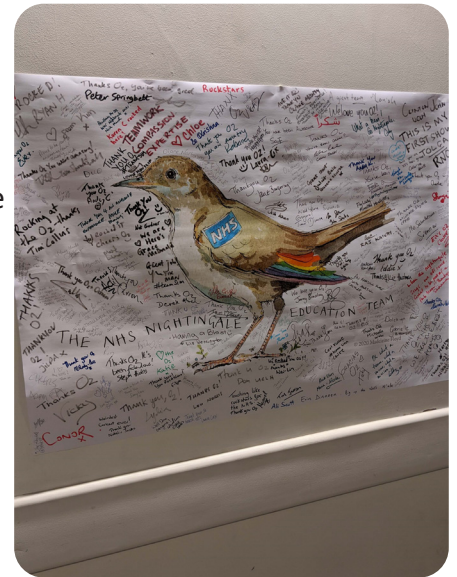
Sue Faulds, Senior Lecturer writes: “Over the last few weeks I have been working as part of the Education Faculty in the newly set up Nightingale Hospitals in London and Harrogate.

Both hospitals will be staffed with a mixture of experienced intensive care nurses and medical staff as well as a lot of staff, both registered and non, who will be working in critical care environments for the first time. The focus of the education has been on supporting everyone who may be working in the hospitals some confidence in their roles, introducing them to the skills important in such an environment.”



“The transformation of the Excel and O2 in London and the Harrogate Conference Centre is truly phenomenal and everyone involved is in awe of what has been achieved in such a short time.

Thanks to the department’s support I have been able to use my experience in delivering intensive care nursing and education and will continue to do so, focusing on Harrogate.”



Staff nominated for YUSU Excellence Awards

Several members of staff were nominated for YUSU Excellence Awards and Jo Rose, Programme Leader – MSc in International Humanitarian Affairs and Lucia White, Practice Experience Support Nurse, have been shortlisted. Congratulations to everyone who received a nomination and good luck to Jo and Lucia.

Jo Rose - Most Inspiring

Beth Hardy - Supervisor of the Year and Most Inspiring

David Graham - Supervisor of the Year

Devi Nannen - Supervisor of the Year

Jessica Powell - Supervisor of the Year and Teacher of the Year

Mike Parker - Supervisor of the Year and Teacher of the Year

Lucia White - Supporting Accessibility

Anita Savage-Grainge - Supporting the Student Voice

Janaka Jayawickrama - Teacher of the Year

Danielle Simpson - Unsung Hero of the Year

Covid-19 exposes inequalities in the UK food system

Food banks will struggle to cope during the Covid-19 pandemic and vulnerable households should be given cash grants to buy food instead, a group of leading academics have suggested. According to the analysis, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted stark inequalities in the UK system of food supply and distribution.

The study - published on Emerald Open Research - concludes that food banks and other food aid providers are already at capacity and will struggle to adopt any additional responsibility required of them by central and local government.

The report, by University of York academics from the Global Food Security Programme-funded IKnowFood research team, calls on the Government to make changes to social security policy, 'emergency' food provision, and urge supermarkets who are experiencing increased sales to pay their employees a Real Living Wage, to help alleviate the problem.

The researchers - with expertise in food insecurity and food supply systems - recommend that households are given cash grants to enable them to buy the food they require, rather than food itself, as Covid-19 has exposed the fragility of the food banking system. They suggest it may be possible to administer this through hardship funds administered by Local Authorities, although these funds would need to increase substantially for this to be viable.

Dr Maddy Power from the Department said: "Millions of households were in poverty before the pandemic, and millions more will be so during and as a result of the pandemic unless the government continues to protect household incomes through additional policy change.

"It is well-established that food banks -- whether independent or affiliated with the Trussell Trust -- and other food aid providers are unable to improve household incomes and mitigate against food insecurity in the long-run. At present, they are fighting on all fronts but, ultimately, struggling in the face of this health and economic crisis."

The researchers also call on the Government to end the five week wait for Universal Credit and streamline the processing time. They say reducing the time from application to receipt of first payment will ensure that fewer households are reliant on advance payments and therefore facing debt or a longer term reduction in payments at a time when they may already be experiencing increased financial difficulties.

The paper explores emerging fragilities within the food aid system including the social and economic crisis surrounding Covid-19 which has jeopardised food supply chains. Individual food donations have dropped sharply as households prioritise their own food supply, while many food banks are unable to purchase the non-perishable items required for standard food parcels, due to supermarket rationing and the poor availability of much of this produce as a result of stockpiling.

Dr Power added: "The Covid-19 pandemic has revealed the profound insecurity of large segments of the UK population; increased unemployment, reduced hours, and enforced self-isolation for multiple vulnerable groups is likely to lead to an increase in UK food insecurity, exacerbating diet-related health inequalities.

Prof Bob Doherty also explained: "The social and economic crisis associated with the pandemic has exposed the fragility of the system of food charity which, at present, is a key response to growing poverty. A vulnerable food system, with just-in-time supply chains, has been challenged by stockpiling.

"Resultant food supply issues at food banks, alongside rapidly increasing demand and reduced volunteer numbers, has undermined many food charities, especially independent food banks."

Research News

Researchers team up with NHS to produce chair-based exercises during lockdown

Academics from the Department are using their research to help people stay fit and healthy during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The project is a collaboration between the Department of Health Sciences, Oxford Brookes University and the NHS. Together they have developed a specific chair-based exercise programme – which is being used by the NHS - to help people working from home and those recovering from Coronavirus (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJgZygWBKaE&feature=emb_title).

Professor Patrick Doherty's research area, in exercise for patients with heart disease, has led to the development of a programme of chair-based exercises that have been adapted for use by the NHS during this crisis.

This is the first in a series of short online videos to help people stay fit at home and in doing so reduce the burden on the NHS.

Professor Doherty said: "Exercising safely and effectively at home, either as a post COVID-19 patient or as a consequence of lockdown or social distancing, is essential to keep fit and healthy. Our health and wellbeing research programmes at the University of York rely on patients, in the NHS, volunteering for studies so it's a privilege to give something back and to make our research count where it matters by benefiting the NHS and patients directly."

"You can use these exercises if you have trouble getting up and about, or even if you just want a change of activity on days you can't get outdoors. Even a small amount of activity can be a tremendous boost to our wellbeing and help you to tone and strengthen."

COVID 19 convalescent plasma to protect healthcare workers

David Torgerson, Catherine Hewitt and other members of York Trials Unit are working with Professor David Tappin, University of Glasgow, on a research application of using plasma from recovered Covid 19 patients as a strategy to prevent healthcare workers contracting the disease.

If such an approach was effective it would mean fewer frontline workers would contract the disease and reduce the spread of the illness among patients.

The study would involve randomising approximately 200 healthcare staff who are in regular contact with Covid 19 patients with half receiving the plasma and half to act as controls with acquisition of Covid 19 being the primary outcome.

New research reveals a significant rise in the number of children with life-limiting conditions

A new study shows that the number of children in England with life-limiting or life-threatening conditions has continued to rise over the last 17 years.

The research is published amid the Coronavirus crisis in the UK, which has already had a far reaching and negative impact on families caring for seriously ill children.

The Make Every Child Count study, conducted by the University of York, has revealed that the number of children in England with life-limiting or life-threatening conditions increased to 86,625 in 2017/2018 compared to 32,975 in 2001/2002.

The research is published amid the Coronavirus crisis in the UK, which has already had a far reaching and negative impact on families caring for seriously ill children, who are feeling frightened, isolated and alone, with some families struggling to get the right care and support for their child.

Responding to predications that the number of children with life-limiting conditions will rise at least another 11% by 2030, UK children's palliative care charity, Together for Short Lives is calling on the Government, NHS and others to make sure seriously ill children and their families can access the lifeline services they rely on.

The new research also reveals that prevalence of life-limiting conditions is by far the greatest in babies under the age of one, and that more young people with life-limiting conditions are living to the age of 19 years.

The reports says that more seriously ill children are living longer is cause for celebration, however there is an urgent need to make sure that children's palliative care services are properly planned, funded and delivered to ensure that these children, and their families, can live life to the full. It's hoped that the Make Every Child Count research will make it easier for government, the NHS, children's palliative care providers and others to do this.

The study used routinely collected hospital and death certificate data in England to provide an up-to-date count of children and young people with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions.

Other key findings also show:

- The prevalence of children with life-limiting conditions has increased from 26.7 per 10,000 in 2001 to 66.4 per 10,000 in 2017/18 and is higher in boys than girls.
- The prevalence of life-limiting conditions is highest among the most deprived groups of the population, who are least able to afford the financial burden of caring for a child with a complex condition.
- The prevalence of life-limiting conditions is increasing across all regions of England, with the highest increase in the North West of England and Yorkshire and the Humber.

Research News

- The study's most conservative prediction suggests that the number of children with life-limiting conditions will rise to between 95,318 and 97,242 in 2030 – an increase of 11%. Whilst the increase may be partly down to better recording of hospital data and improved diagnosis, the study suggests that it is also likely to be because children are living longer as a result of better care being provided and advances in medical technology.

Lead author, Professor Lorna Fraser, Director of the Martin House Research Centre at the University of York said: "Hopefully these findings will help commissioners and service providers to work together to ensure that all these children and young people have access to accessible and age appropriate health services."

CEO of Together for Short Lives, Andy Fletcher said: "In many ways the pandemic has exacerbated many of the challenges families were already facing in getting the support and services they need. So, we must not forget the growing number of children and young people with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions and their families who need care and support, both now and in the future."

The research was conducted by the Martin House Research Centre, University of York and funded by The True Colours Trust.

ASTRA (Addressing Smokeless Tobacco and Building Research Capacity in South Asia) team members win awards

Congratulations to three of our ASTRA NIHR Academy Fellows: Faraz Siddiqui, PhD student Zainab Kidwai and Safat Ullah (a member of the team based in Pakistan) who have been successful in receiving NIHR SPARC pilot awards.

For ASTRA team members to win three out of 11 national awards is an amazing achievement.



York academic leads world's first multi-vaccine animal efficacy studies in the fight against COVID-19

A York virologist has established an animal model that is being used as one of the three preclinical models for COVID-19 vaccines and therapies. Professor Seshadri Vasan, who holds an honorary chair in Health Sciences at the University of York, is leading the Dangerous Pathogens Team at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).

His team has shown that ferrets could be used as preclinical model for COVID-19 vaccine and therapies. Professor Vasan, who is currently based in Australia at the Australian Animal Health Laboratory, has found that the animals are susceptible to SARS-CoV-2, as reported by the journal 'Nature'.

The researchers are now studying the course of infection in detail, and started efficacy studies on vaccines that are due to enter Phase 1 clinical trials in UK, USA and China. Ferrets are a popular model for influenza and other respiratory infections because their lung physiology is similar to that of humans, and researchers hope they will mimic aspects of COVID-19 in people, such as its spread.

The preclinical research is funded by a partnership between CSIRO and the global Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) which is also funding eight vaccine development initiatives.

Two of these candidates – one from Oxford University and another from Inovio Pharmaceuticals – are due to enter Phase 1 clinical trials with healthy volunteers. But before they can advance to Phase 2, it will be necessary to complete efficacy testing in animals, so CEPI has funded Professor Vasan to run the world's first multi-vaccine efficacy studies in animals.

Oxford's vaccine is currently envisaged as intramuscular injection. Professor Vasan is additionally investigating if giving it through the nose (intranasally) would confer additional protection due to mucosal immunity, and whether one or two doses will be necessary for Oxford's vectored vaccine and Inovio's DNA vaccine.

Professor Vasan said: "We are operating at speed in response to a global public health emergency while adhering to strict attention to detail and regulatory requirements which makes this so challenging. We've grown the virus for our research and have also reconfirmed the genomic sequence published by the Doherty Institute. Having demonstrated that ferrets are susceptible to this virus, we have designed a staggered challenge study to get timely information on vaccine efficacy."

Chair of CEPI, Jane Halton, said: "These preclinical trials are very significant. This is world leading technology, and this is the first time that we've done these animal model tests to look at two candidate vaccines both of which the CEPI coalition has provided funding towards."

The team are also investigating the physical and molecular characterisation of the virus to find differences and similarities with other known coronaviruses. They have worked with bioinformaticians and analysed the 181 published genome sequences from the current COVID-19 outbreak to understand how changes in the virus affect its behaviour and impact.

Professor Vasan added: "The virus strain can be currently organised into three major clusters, with more emerging. Some of the mutations in the virus may be significant for the development and evaluation of new diagnostics, drugs and vaccines, so it is very important for us to understand it."

People fearful of taking part in vital clinical research

Fear is a major factor behind people's reluctance to take part in clinical research, such as trials to test new medicines and treatments, a global review has found.

In the UK, up to two thirds of trials currently fail to recruit their target number of participants for vital medical research.

The review, led by researchers at the University of York and Hull York Medical School, found that fear about testing new treatments and possible side effects was the most common reason given by patients for not wanting to participate.

The researchers looked at the results of more than 400 studies from around the world on the reasons behind recruitment to health and medical studies. Concerns about privacy and confidentiality have also increased over the past decade, the study suggests.

Among black and minority ethnic (BAME) patients, distrust in research and medical professionals was also a common reason given for not wanting to participate.

The authors of the study are calling for the development of new schemes to increase participation in research, which address patient anxieties and motivations.

Lead author of the study, Dr Peter Knapp, from the Department of Health Sciences and the Hull York Medical School, said: "Clinical trials are an essential part of developing new medicines and improving healthcare, but recruiting patients to take part is one of the biggest challenges researchers face."

"Our review highlights how people are held back from taking part in research by their fears surrounding losing control of the treatments they receive and worries about possible side effects. Lack of trust was also identified as a common barrier for minority ethnic patients around the world - perhaps a legacy of major historical violations of ethical standards in cases like the Tuskegee syphilis experiment."

The study found that on the other hand trust in doctors and clinical staff; a desire to help others, and the potential for improvements in their own health, were key factors that motivated patients to get on board with research.

Common methods that are currently in place in the NHS to increase patient participation in research are designed to prompt memory and raise awareness via schemes including phone reminders and personalised letters addressed to patients. The research highlights how these methods may have missed the mark as neither of these factors were identified in the study as a barrier to participation.

Dr Knapp added: "Interestingly, we found quite a few gaps between the main reasons people gave for their reluctance to take part and the interventions currently in place in healthcare systems like the NHS to try to remove barriers to participation. There is a need for more research to identify effective recruitment strategies that draw on psychological theory and the facilitators and barriers identified in this overview."

"Feelings of fearfulness are clearly a key issue and so it would make sense to look at interventions focused on directly addressing patient concerns."

"A desire to help develop better healthcare for others also came up as a strong reason for taking part in research and trials, and so this – people's sense of altruism - is another possibility that could be explored as a way of appealing to people."

Staff News

Hello

We wish a very warm welcome to new members of staff who have joined the department recently, these include: Christine Appleton, Theano Pavlidou, Jess Hugill-Jones, Fiona Rose, Samantha McDermott, Mirza Fazlic, Ben Jones, Peter Mather, Gareth Roberts, Noemia Siqueira, Andrew Bartlett, Adele Taylor and David Whitehead.

Goodbye

We also wish a very fond farewell to those who have left, including: Stuart Lacy, Jonathan Ayto, Maria Hyde, Wumi Ajayi, Gerri Kaufman, Mick Wolverson, Abisola balogun, Simon Appleton, Ben Younhg, Caroline Pearson and Jo Poskitt.

Congratulations to:

Laura Mandefield who gave birth to a baby girl called Carie born on 19th April.

If you would like to make a submission to future editions of Megaphone, please contact Jane Milsom (jane.milsom@york.ac.uk or tel 01904 321392).