



# Megaphone Online

April 2021

the voice of Health Sciences' staff and students

## New Head of Department

Welcome to our new Head of Department, Professor Patrick Doherty.

Patrick was deputy Head of Department and Head of Research from Jan 2014 - March 2021 during which time he also led the University's health research REF submission (UOA 2) with colleagues in CHE, CRD and HYMS.

As Chair of Cardiovascular Health in the Department of Health Sciences and Director of the British Heart Foundation (BHF) National Audit of Cardiac Rehabilitation (NACR) he also led on a REF impact case showcasing how York's research has changed NHS practice and benefited patients. Patrick was former president of the British Association for Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation (BACPR) and former Chair of the Cardiac Rehabilitation Section of the European Association of Preventive Cardiology (EAPC). He continues to be highly research active in the area of cardiovascular disease prevention and rehabilitation with over 140 peer reviewed journal papers in the last ten years, six co-authored European position papers alongside five British and European clinical guidelines.



Patrick's research and academic supervision has supported 15 PhD students (10 international) to success with many continuing into post-doctoral collaborative research. He continues to supervise national and international research students in the area of cardiovascular health, physical activity interventions, exercise prescription and patient self-management interventions.

Patrick said 'The Department has an excellent reputation for quality teaching and interdisciplinary research which is led by academics and researchers who are leaders in their subject areas. Our staff remain the Department's greatest asset which bodes well for the future and will help us overcome the challenges that are likely to emerge as we come out of the pandemic.'

### In this issue:

- Introducing new NurSoc Committee
- Research News
- HYMS Spotlight on Research Seminars
- Staff news

### Introducing NurSoc

The University of York's Nursing Society, known as NurSoc, recently re-launched and we are planning some great talks for the future. So far we have managed to hold a fundraiser for the epilepsy society, host quizzes, coffee and catch-ups, study sessions, placement Q&A's and we have much more planned. We are excited to have the opportunity to host such events and, as always, if you have any ideas for the society we would love you to get in touch with us at [nursoc@yusu.org](mailto:nursoc@yusu.org).



#### Meet the committee

##### Georgina Lilly Lucas – NurSoc President

“Hello, my name is Georgie! Although I am very passionate about nursing, I actually started off with more of a creative brain. Initially I studied fine art and psychology, before working for over three years helping to set up an acute mental health ward.”

“After dealing with many medical emergencies in the role and accompanying patients to hospital, I realised that I wanted to learn even more about anatomy and physiology, so in 2018 I embarked on studying Adult Nursing. During this time I have been lucky enough to be involved in a Twitter page supporting student nurses, had the opportunity to be course rep and review books for a popular nursing publishing company. I realised just how important a nursing society would be for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students (especially mid pandemic) so with this wonderful group of people, we set about making it happen. Although this is the last year of my degree I am hopeful that the society continues for many years to come. Oh, I also have a small dog and cat who seem to take up all of my free time.”



##### Amy Laura Watkin – NurSoc Vice President

“Hello! I’m a mature student, studying Adult Nursing and I have a previous degree in Geology! (Yes, that’s mainly rocks and dinosaurs!). I’ve spent the last five or so years working in restaurants and have spent the last three years managing a fine dining restaurant! I was furloughed from my position last year and spent last summer getting prepared to be back at University!”

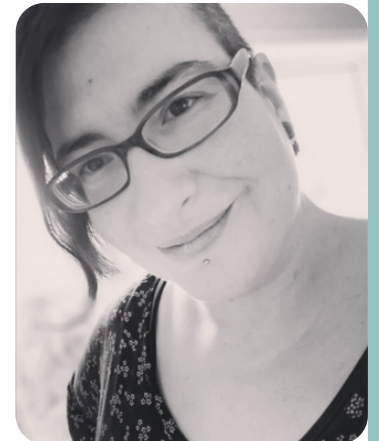
“I wanted to be involved in NurSoc to meet new people and to give other students the fantastic experience of societies that I had in my first degree!”

“I live in sunny (ish) Scarborough and love spending my free time walking on the beach or cliff tops!”



### **Claudia Collins – NurSoc Secretary**

“Third time lucky, they say - Well, it’s my third time at University! Originally from Germany, I first studied in Berlin and graduated with degrees in Urban Sociology and Metropolitan Studies. I’ve spent a lot of time in the United States on work experience and research. Having always wanted to live abroad, I took the decision to move to the UK ten years ago and have never looked back. In the early years I worked in all sorts of technical industries.”



“I have my wonderful little family but my career was missing the human, caring factor. So I decided to follow my instincts and the timing felt right to pursue a career in healthcare and here I am now! Maybe it’s a crazy time to start a Nursing degree, but I am loving every minute of it and I’m also one of the course reps for the Sept 2020 cohort.”

“Being part of NurSoc is a great way to reach out and engage with so many dedicated, hardworking and like-minded people! What’s next for me? Well, for one thing our first placement is coming soon! Like all of my fellow first year tiger cubs, I can’t wait to get into practice! Where do I see myself 10 years from now? Oh, I have no concrete ideas yet. I think my interests vary as much as there are roles and specialisms. I’d like to have a nosey into research, but I also really like the idea of community nursing and care of older people. I’m just glad I don’t have to decide that yet!”

### **Michael Andrew Ferguson - NurSoc Treasurer**

“Originally I studied Law but gave up all thoughts of becoming a barrister when I realised, after graduating, that I couldn’t speak in public (my planning skills have always been suspect). I went into Accountancy, had some great years and some not so great years, eventually leaving on Good Friday 2019.”



“My decision to become a nurse followed six years as carer, balancing my job, clinic appointments, dialysis days, and endlessly wondering why Thursday’s pills had vanished when it was only Monday. I found I enjoyed being busy, keeping a smile going whatever was happening, and I felt useful. Since then, I’ve spent the year up to Lockdown One at York College which was fantastic, and now I’m here, and if I think about it too much, it makes no sense at all!”

“I like knowing as much as I can about a subject, not the detail so much, but more getting a handle on how everything fits together. So NurSoc, with its variety of topics to explore and a wonderful team to work with really appealed to me. Next steps? Long term aims? I don’t know yet but I’m sure that it will be ok. I would like to work abroad, and Mexico with its dusty vaquero towns and vast deserts would be a great place to test myself.”

### Students required for committee representation

#### **Service User and Carer (SUCI) Forum**

There is an opportunity for two students to join the Service User and Carer Involvement Forum steering committee. This friendly committee includes service users and carers, students, lecturers and other department staff. The committee meets twice a year and as a student member you will hear about activities that happen within the Forum, and have the opportunity to contribute your ideas about how this can develop and further influence your programmes.

As the student representative of this group, you will be expected to read any papers that have been circulated before the meeting and attend the committee meeting. You will also be invited to get involved with other SUCI activities. This is a year long role, and if appointed you would receive a handover from current student representatives.

This important role is a good opportunity to be a student representative, to develop your knowledge of Service User and Carer Involvement and it will be great on your CV! Ideally, you would be able to attend the next meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 1pm.

If you would like to be considered for this role please submit a short (no more than 500 words) piece of writing to [sarah.l.thompson@york.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.l.thompson@york.ac.uk) outlining why you think service users and carers should be involved in the education of healthcare professionals by Friday 7<sup>th</sup> May. You will be notified of the outcome by Friday 14<sup>th</sup> May.

If you have any questions please contact Beth Hardy (Academic Lead for Service User and Carer involvement) at [beth.hardy@york.ac.uk](mailto:beth.hardy@york.ac.uk)

#### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Athena Swan**

An opportunity has arisen for students within the Department of Health Sciences to apply for joint membership to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDI) and Athena Swan Committee (AS).

We are looking for dynamic individuals with relevant knowledge of the Equality Act 2010 and a passion for inclusion.

You will be required to contribute to both committees. Your views will promote consultation and discussion on a variety of topics. They will contribute to monitoring and implementation of equality policies and activities across the Department.

You will be required to attend termly meetings.

For more information contact Devi Nannen, Chair of EDI [devi.nannen@york.ac.uk](mailto:devi.nannen@york.ac.uk) or Amanda Perry, Chair of AS, [amanda.perry@york.ac.uk](mailto:amanda.perry@york.ac.uk).

### Spring Holiday Mental Health Initiative

Tinnie Louie writes: “As many of us begin our summer term, I want to remind everyone to take care of their mental and physical health. As the Departmental Community Coordinator, I am extending the step-count challenge all the way through May. Please see the Google document for the description, rules, and links to sign up. Remember, you have the opportunity to win up to a £25 Amazon voucher!”

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bailtvloE25oHiheZScBpzE-bT61B8k3ZKRgzVIHWFs/edit?usp=sharing>

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### Postgraduate Wellbeing Initiatives

We have created 2 postgraduate wellbeing sessions in conjunction with the Departmental Wellbeing Team and Eventbrite. They will start on the 16<sup>th</sup> April and will run fortnightly until 28<sup>th</sup> May. More sessions may be added following a review. The links are below:

Taught Postgrad: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/coffee-and-chat-tickets-147112598743>

PhD: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/coffee-and-chat-phd-group-tickets-147589818119>

Informal group sessions to help PhD or PGT students connect with others. Come along to a coffee and chat session for an informal get together to meet other PhD or PGT students.

These sessions will be hosted by your Department Wellbeing Officers who are on hand to offer fun wellbeing and mindfulness tips.

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### Student Digital Top Tips

#### Where did I read that?

You downloaded a file from the VLE yesterday. Now you can't find it on your computer! Or you vaguely recall an argument you read in a journal article that you'd love to reference. How do you keep track of all this 'stuff'? It's time to view our game changing tips on [organisation and referencing skills](#).

#### How to organise your handwritten notes

“I prefer to write things by hand initially, and then go back and I type up or write it again neatly...I found first year that .. anything I've typed up, I won't remember; anything I write by hand, I will remember.”

Do you have trouble finding important information in all your handwritten notes? Learn some techniques for making your notes more usable and searchable. View our game changing tips on [note taking](#).

### Randomised controlled trial of bathing adaptations in the homes of older adults (BATH-OUT-2 trial)

The BATH-OUT-2 trial is due to begin recruitment in the summer of 2021, led by Dr Phillip Whitehead at the University of Northumbria at Newcastle, in collaboration with York Trials Unit. This multicentre randomised controlled trial aims to assess the clinical and cost effectiveness of rapid expedited bathing adaptations (typically removing a bath and replacing it with a level, walk in shower), compared with the standard waiting list, typically four to nine months, for adaptations control group. It will also explore the factors associated with routine and expedited implementation of bathing adaptations.

There are nearly 12 million people aged over 65 in the UK and this is set to increase 51% by 2030 and by 2066 will make up 26% of the UK population. A national debate on social care spending is ongoing and it is unclear whether local authorities will be able to keep pace with projected demand. Thus, local authorities need evidence of the effectiveness of new and existing social care interventions that seek to promote independence for older adults and delay the need for other services.

Housing adaptations, including bathing adaptations, may be a protective factor for reducing the risk of hospitalisation and increasing quality of life. Currently there are lengthy delays in provision with some local authorities reporting that people may wait for two to four years reducing the preventative effect. Such delays may lead to more rapid functional deterioration in older adults as they may start to experience difficulties with other daily living activities while they are waiting. Furthermore, mental health outcomes are also impacted as they may avoid leaving the house or attending social situations due to concerns about their personal hygiene. Further academic research is vital to understand both the health and care outcomes of housing adaptations and the impact of delays in provision. A feasibility study (BATH-OUT-1) showed recruitment, randomisation and intervention delivery within differing timescales were feasible. Participant outcomes improved across all measures following the adaptations but a larger full-scale randomised controlled trial is required to assess effectiveness and cost-effectiveness.

This is a multi-centre, parallel group, randomised controlled trial with embedded economic and process evaluations. It is set in local authority housing adaptations services in different geographical locations across England. The trial is due to run for a total duration of 32 months with a 12-month recruitment period, and aims to recruit 360 adults aged 65 and over with permanent and substantial disabilities, affecting their ability to bathe safely and independently. Participants will be randomised 1:1 into either an expedited shower adaptation provision (intervention) or remain on the usual waiting list for their adaptation (control). Participants will be followed-up at four time points across 12 months completing questionnaires relating to their health, wellbeing and quality of life.

Other institutions collaborating in the trial are the University of Nottingham, Care & Repair England, Nottingham City Council and Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council. This trial is sponsored by University of Northumbria at Newcastle and funded by the National Institute for Health Research – School for Social Care Research. The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the NIHR, NHS or the UK Department of Health and Social Care.

# Digital healthcare challenging to people with severe mental health illnesses

Research from the University of York has shown that a more digitised healthcare service could pose significant challenges to those with severe mental ill health.

The findings, which have been used in the House of Lords recent report on 'Planning for a Hybrid World', are part of the [Optimising Wellbeing in Self-isolation \(OWLS\) study](#) at York, which explores the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on people with the most severe forms of mental illness, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

In a survey of more than 360 people with severe mental ill health, requesting details on their use of digital technology, the researchers found that more than a third of people did not use the internet for daily activities, and that some expressed that digital experiences can make their symptoms worse.

The OWLS study participants are members of the Closing the Gap Network's cohort of 10,000 people with severe mental ill health.

Dr Emily Peckham, Research Fellow in Mental Health from the University of York's Department of Health Sciences, said: "Based on what we have learnt so far, digital technologies can be a source of great anxiety for those with severe mental ill health. It can increase paranoia for example about security and being safe whilst online. This can result in people, who are some of the most vulnerable in society, not accessing health services that are delivered remotely."

"Having experienced the positives and negatives of a more digitalised health service during the Covid-19 pandemic, we know that some elements of these services are likely to form part of our future, but we must not forget that adaptations and considerations must be made for those people who find this very difficult to engage with on health grounds."

The House of Lords report cites that the pandemic has increased dependence on digital technologies and accelerated digital trends such as online shopping and remote working, but acknowledges whilst some may adapt to these changes effortlessly, there will be millions of people that will not.

In the healthcare system, the pandemic has meant online GP appointments, digital forms of submitting medical symptoms, and mobile apps, which have made positive, as well as some negative, contributions to the working lives of GPs.

The OWLS study in relation to digital engagement, digital experience, digital access, digital knowledge and digital healthcare services, has helped shaped the recommendations to the UK Government for a new hybrid way of working, which will include policies to ensure that nobody, particularly those most vulnerable, will not be left behind in a new digital age.

### Equal access

Professor Simon Gilbody, Director of the Closing the Gap Network at the University of York, said: "Contributions to this important report means that people who have severe mental ill health are being considered, and we are encouraged that inquiries, such as the House of Lords report, takes us a step closer to a more equal and supported access to healthcare."

Follow the link to read more of the [House of Lords recommendations](#) or visit the [Government committees website](#).

## Research News

### Stepped Wedge Trial Design Conference held online

Ada Keding writes: “On the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, the Department of Health Sciences hosted the Third International Conference on Stepped Wedge Trial Design as a free online event.”

“Engagement with the event surpassed that of previous face to face conferences, and the department registered a total of 161 delegates with an interest in this unique trial design. The online delivery allowed delegates across continents and time zones to join either live (108 attendees on day 1 and 95 on day 2) or to follow recorded sessions after the event. “



“The organisers were delighted to welcome high profile speakers in the field, including Professor Andrew Forbes (Monash University) and Professor Karla Hemming (University of Birmingham). In total, over 20 speakers delivered engaging talks in five topical sessions with focus on the latest developments in the design and analysis of stepped wedge trials. There was a good balance of theoretical work and lessons learnt from ongoing trials. York Trials Unit contributed an informative review of bias in recently published trials, presented by Jenny Roche.”

“Event feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with the majority of responders rating the overall quality of the conference as excellent. Based on their comments, delegates especially enjoyed following exchanges between experts and ease of access to the sessions. One delegate said: ‘Thank you for setting up such a great conference (for free!) I wouldn’t have been able to attend the overseas in-person version, so I really appreciate how accessible this online version was.’”

“Just over half of evaluation responders indicated that they would like future conferences to take place online, and this and many other constructive suggestions will be considered in the planning of the next event. The organisers are grateful for the keen participation of all presenters and delegates and particularly thank Emma Brooks for making this event a success.”

Organising Committee: Mona Kanaan, Ada Keding, Noreen Mdege, David Torgerson



## Research News

### New research reveals possible cause of mystery condition that leaves people paralysed

Researchers believe they may have discovered a possible cause of a mystery condition that can leave sufferers suddenly unable to walk, talk or see.

It's hoped the study - led by the University of York and Hull York Medical School and supported by Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust - will pave the way for new treatments for Conversion disorder which affects around 800,000 people in the UK alone.

The condition, also known as functional neurological disorder (FND), causes physical symptoms that would appear neurological but doctors can't find an injury or physical condition to explain them.

Professor Christina van der Feltz-Cornelis from the Department of Health Sciences is leading the Conversion And Neuro-inflammation Disorder Observational (CANDO) study. This pilot study is the first in a program of research to explore how conversion disorder/FND can be caused, and to develop and evaluate new treatments.

#### Isolated

The first findings suggest that conversion disorder could be caused by a low grade inflammation process that influences gene expression, which is the process by which the instructions in our DNA are converted into a functional product, such as a protein. Protein does most of the work in cells and is required for the structure, function, and regulation of the body's tissues and organs.

Professor van der Feltz-Cornelis said: "This is a very difficult condition for people to live with and one which is often overlooked because the medical profession doesn't have the answers."

"People living with the condition can become very distressed and isolated, often losing jobs and social networks through being unable to communicate or being unwell. Patients can also suffer from memory and concentration problems."

"We made the discovery by examining levels of inflammation in blood samples from patients with FND that mimicked stroke-like symptoms. They were found to be higher than normal. Also, microRNA levels in the blood seemed to play a role and this influences the expression of genes in the cell."

"These preliminary results deserve further exploration and replication in larger samples before we can draw firm conclusions."

#### Treatments

The CANDO researchers hope the new study will help in the development of new treatments, as treatments previously given to people with conversion disorder have often not helped ease the symptoms.

Annie, a patient involved in the CANDO study, says: "It is a relief to suddenly find that there may be a reason for this condition. I can't wait for treatments that may be developed as a result of this work."

## Research News

### HYMS Spotlight on Research Seminars

WEDNESDAYS 14:00 – 14:30, online

These online seminars aim to raise awareness of the scope and breadth of health research underway at Hull York Medical School and, in doing so, help to facilitate collaboration between researchers across different disciplines. (Links to talks already gone will still work).



Dr Ahmed Aburima, 31<sup>st</sup> March

[Oxidised low-density lipoproteins and platelets: the clot thickens](#)

Dr Gavin Barlow, 14<sup>th</sup> April

[Biomarker driven antifungal stewardship in AML: the BioDriveAFS Trial](#)

Prof Charles Lacey, 5<sup>th</sup> May

[Control of cervical cancer in the developing world](#)

Dr Heidi Baseler, 26<sup>th</sup> May

[How does vision loss affect the brain \(and why should we care\)?](#)

TBC, 16<sup>th</sup> June

[Title to be confirmed](#)

Dr Maria Bryant, 7<sup>th</sup> July

[Food insecurity: determinants and consequences in families with children](#)

TBC, 28<sup>th</sup> July

[Title to be confirmed](#)

Dr Liz Glidewell, 18<sup>th</sup> August

[From pilot testing to process evaluations, what can we learn from dark and light logic models?](#)

## Staff News

### Hello

We wish a very warm welcome to new members of staff who have joined the department recently, these include: Andre Bedendo de Souza, Aishwarya Vidyasagaran, Beverley Barf, Drew Atherton, Claire Heathcote, Grace Gardner, Christopher Andrew, Shamarke Esse, Adele Taylor, Thomas Davill, Victoria Exley, Thomas Pool, Alexander Murphy and Emma Wilkinson.

### Goodbye

We also wish a very fond farewell to those who have left, including: Mike Backhouse, Claire Sloan, Elizabeth McHugh and Anne Von Dongen.

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