



Megaphone Online

December 2022

the voice of Health Sciences' staff and students

Department receives Silver Athena Swan award

We are delighted to announce that the Department of Health Sciences has received an Athena SWAN Silver award. The Athena SWAN charter was launched in 2005 to support and transform gender equality within higher education (HE) and research.

The Athena SWAN process enabled the Department to assess how well it was doing in promoting gender equality and supporting the careers of students and staff.

A working group, led by Dr Amanda Perry, facilitated a review of student and staff numbers, employment policies and practices and career development opportunities. Involving the whole department, we created an Action Plan identifying areas for improvement in progressing Athena SWAN principles.

Head of Department, Professor Kate Flemming, said: "We are delighted to have received this award in recognition of our commitment to promoting gender equality. We are a large department with an inclusive culture and the Athena Swan Charter recognises the advancement of gender equality: representation, progression and success for all."

Professor Kiran Trehan, Chair of the Athena Swan Steering Group said "I am delighted that the Department of Health Sciences has been successful in their application and have been awarded the silver Athena Swan award. This award is real testimony to the measurable differences colleagues in Health Sciences are making in advancing Gender equality and ensuring we continue to deliver on our values as a university for public good in transforming our practices and commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion."

"I would like to congratulate and thank the Athena Swan Assessment group and the Department of Health Sciences for their passionate commitment and efforts to ensuring through their leadership we continue to demonstrate the importance of creating an inclusive community".



In this issue:

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Student elected to Student Midwifery Forum (SMF)

Second year midwifery student India-Rose (Rosie) Bakewell has been elected to the Student Midwifery Forum. Rosie writes:

“Hello, my name is India-Rose Bakewell, and I am currently a second year student midwife at the University of York. I am delighted to be accepted onto the SMF and honoured to represent North England’s student midwives.”

“It is so exciting to have an opportunity to work with other student midwives from across the UK in ensuring that they have a say in the discussions currently being held at higher levels of maternity care.”

“I am passionate about providing individualised, equitable care for all women and pregnant people. In particular, I am keen to be a part of ongoing conversations surrounding diet and nutrition in pregnancy across the UK.”

“It is no secret that maternity care in the UK is under scrutiny, but we have a chance to be a part of the change we want to see going forward in our chosen profession, and I can’t wait to get started!”

Helen Bedford, Subject Lead for Midwifery said: “This is a fabulous achievement and thoroughly well deserved and I am sure that Rosie will make a significant and positive impact in the role.”



Ben plays for the King and Queen Consort

Final year MNursing student Ben Allen recently had the opportunity to play for King Charles III and Queen Consort on their recent visit to Yorkshire. Ben, who is also the UG Department Community Coordinator, plays in a brass band in his spare time. (Ben is pictured 4th from left in the second picture below). You can hear the band playing via this [Twitter link](#).



New Student Wellbeing Officer

Congratulations to Daisy Whitwood who has been appointed as the new Student Wellbeing Officer. Daisy writes:

“Hi, I’m Daisy and I’m your Student Wellbeing Officer.”

“I’m here to provide a space for you to discuss any issues that might be concerning you or affecting your wellbeing during your time at University.”

“If you’re feeling stressed or worried, or struggling with your studies, feeling overwhelmed with your academic work, or if you’re experiencing a personal issue, a health issue, a relationship problem or financial concerns, I’m here to listen and to talk things through.”

“I provide 1:1 support, information and guidance and can help you navigate the support available on and off campus. Please don’t hesitate to get in touch if you would like a chat.”

How to contact your Student Wellbeing Officer:

You can book an appointment with Daisy directly via the self-booking system (<https://calendar.app.google/7DPPFiVkotYWzj8N8>), or email her at daisy.whitwood@york.ac.uk.



New MSc Mental Health Research

Katie Pybus, Lecturer in Mental Health writes: “We are pleased to announce that applications to the new MSc Mental Health Research are now open for a September 2023 start. The programme is a joint venture between Hull York Medical School and the Department of Health Sciences and will be led by Professor Dean McMillan and Dr Katie Pybus.

Mental health research is a particular strength at York and the programme will ensure students can benefit from the expertise in place across Hull York Medical School and the Department of Health Sciences, as well as the wider University. The course will have an applied focus, enabling students to develop the knowledge and skills to succeed in mental health research across academic and clinical settings.

Two new bespoke modules have been developed as part of the programme: Theory, Research and Treatment of Mental Health Problems and Principles of Mental Health Research, and students will have access to a wide range of research methods training provided by the Department of Health Sciences. You can visit the course page here: [MSc Mental Health Research](#).

Please share with your networks and if you have any questions about the programme, just get in touch: katie.pybus@york.ac.uk

Primary schools needed to test new online tool to support to 'whole school' approaches to food

Maria Bryant and Wendy Burton from the Public Health Nutrition team in the Public Health and Society research group are calling for help to recruit primary schools to a pilot study testing a new online tool aimed at supporting schools in implementing a 'whole school' approach to food as part of their food policy: CONNECTS-Food.com.

The UK government, as part of the Levelling-Up agenda, has advocated that all primary schools should develop a 'whole school food policy', which outlines how a school approaches food across the entire working day to support children in making healthy food choices. The policy paper states that primary schools should produce a statement on their website that includes their commitment to food learning within the curriculum, as well as how children and stakeholders can get involved with decisions around food culture, and how the school maintains a consistently high quality food offering.

The CONNECTS-Food study, funded by the Medical Research Council (MRC) and in partnership with the Department of Education, held systems mapping workshops with school leaders, teachers, caterers and parents to understand the school food system and identify barriers to implementing a whole school approach to food. Identified barriers included difficulties in understanding what is meant by a whole school food policy, and concerns around time pressures, staff training, and available funds.

This systems mapping work underpinned the design of the CONNECTS-Food resource, co-designed with school stakeholders. Specifically, CONNECTS-Food.com helps schools work out how well they are already doing at implementing their whole school approach to food, as well as provides templates for school leaders to use in drafting their food policy statements, and sets out key principles that they should follow to implement their 'whole school' approach. These principles, covering areas such as the priorities of school leaders, stakeholder engagement and pastoral care, will support schools in considering what may be feasible for them to implement in their school.

The next stage of the CONNECTS-Food project is to find how schools engage with the resource and to what extent they find it useful. Maria and Wendy are appealing for anyone with links to primary schools to see if they would be willing to take part. Each school would need to nominate 3-5 people to take part in a 45 minute interview. In return, they receive £200 to put toward school resources and receive a free training session on how to develop their whole school approach to food policy using the resource.

If you know anyone who may be interested or to find out more, please contact:
wendy.burton@york.ac.uk.

York Trials Unit (YTU) attend the International Clinical Trial Methods conference

Sixteen researchers from York Trials Unit made the most of the local setting to attend and contribute to the success of the 6th International Clinical Trial Methods Conference, ICTMC 2022 held in Harrogate in October.

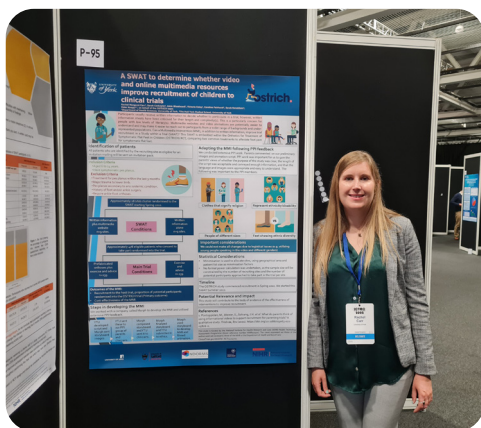
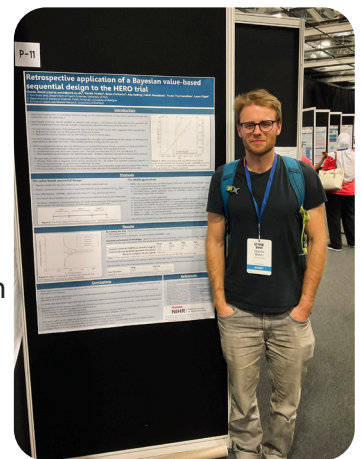
It was a busy three days with a wide range of presentations to engage with, interesting keynote speakers and opportunities to discuss all things trials methodology with colleagues from across the UK and beyond. YTU researchers shared their methodological knowledge and experiences in a selection of presentations covering a wide variety of topics and settings.

Presentations



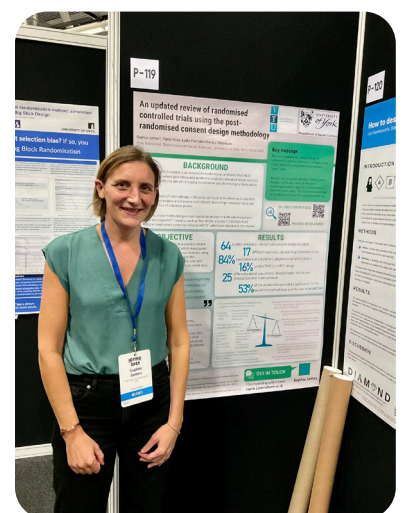
Alex Mitchell (left) presented a poster with Alison Booth on “The design and implications of a two-stage consent process for an RCT in the police setting”. When researcher recruitment and consent turned out to be impossible in the Gateway study, developing this approach with the police had allowed the study to continue.

Charlie Welch (right) presented a poster on behalf of the ENACT project (which includes Stephen Brealey, Ada Keding, Sarah Ronaldson, and Puvan Tharmanathan from YTU) looking at Bayesian value based sequential designs and a retrospective application of this design to data from the Hydroxychloroquine Effectiveness in Reducing symptoms of hand Osteoarthritis (HERO) trial previously conducted at YTU. Puvan Tharmanathan also contributed to the overview poster from the ENACT project presented by a colleague from the University of Sheffield.



Rachel Carr’s (left) poster presentation featured the design of a multimedia website and video animation, in addition to written information, to improve trial recruitment in a Study within a Trial (SWAT), embedded within the OSTRICH host RCT which is investigating orthotics for symptomatic flat feet in children.

Sophie James (right) presented an update on a review of randomised controlled trials using the post-randomised consent design methodology. The review found that while post randomisation consent can help to mitigate some biases present in ‘open’ trials, there remains relatively low usage of this consent approach.

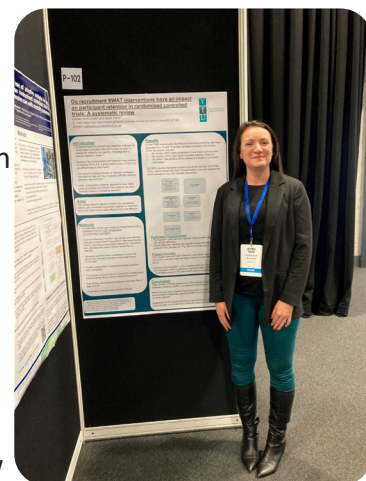


Research News

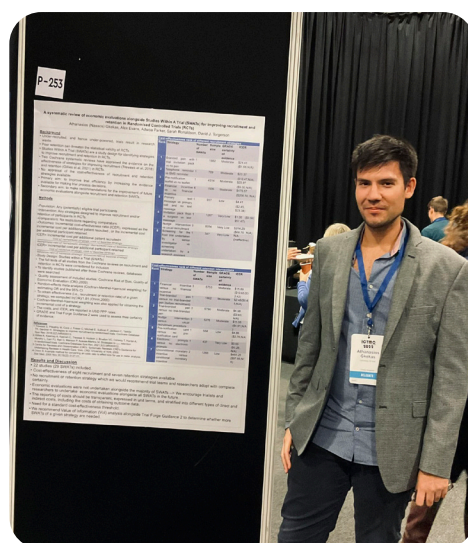
Catherine Arundel's (right) poster was of a systematic review assessing the impacts of recruitment SWAT interventions on study retention. The review found only 10 studies which assessed impacts of recruitment interventions on retention and so further assessment in SWATs is recommended.



Andrew Mott and Catriona McDaid (left) presented a poster on a scoping review of interventions to improve the design and conduct of research given these are often used despite limited assessment of their effectiveness. Preliminary results of the review have identified 78 evaluations assessing study design, conduct or both.



Nassos Gkekas (PhD student, right), presented two posters. The first was a systematic review of economic evaluations alongside SWATs for improving recruitment and retention in RCTs; and the second was on the cost of slow recruitment to the RECOVERY Trial, from an NHS perspective. Nassos also gave a lightning talk based on the second poster.



Izzy Coleman presented on the use of the simultaneous SWAT designs, using two case studies of recently published work by YTU to highlight the importance and potential benefits of using this design, as opposed to undertaking a single SWAT.

researchers.

Danielle Podmore presented a paper written during a recent YTU Writing Week on the use of the h-index and Scientific Quality Index to measure the output quality of health services

PerSEVERE Project Presentation and Workshop

Puvan Tharmanathan is part of the UKCRC PerSEVERE Project Steering Group and facilitated at the pre-meeting workshop on using the principles from the project in real-world scenarios of handling participation changes in clinical trials. Puvan also contributed to the accepted oral presentation on the development of the principles for the project.

Trial Forge SWAT Network Meeting

Catherine Arundel, Izzy Coleman and Adwoa Parker led the Trial Forge SWAT Network meeting. It was great to be able to meet many members of the group face to face for the first time, and to discuss priority actions to improve the undertaking of SWATs.

Digital divide poses exclusion risk for people with mental illness

A stark digital skills deficit among people with severe mental illness means they struggle to access key services which are increasingly online. The study found that adults with conditions such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder are more likely to lack digital skills and are at risk of greater social isolation due to the digitalisation of services including health and social care, a trend that gathered pace during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Skills and Proficiency in Digital Essential Requirements (SPIDER) study by a team from the Department of Health Sciences assessed the digital skills of 249 people aged between 21 and 84 with severe mental ill health. The study, published in *Perspectives in Public Health* and supported by the NIHR Yorkshire and Humber Applied Research Collaboration, found that 42.2 per cent of participants did not have a basic 'foundation' level as defined by the Government's Essential Digital Skills (EDS) framework. The EDS sets the standards for all formal digital skills training programmes in the UK.

Foundation Skills tasks that participants were most often unable to perform were updating and changing passwords and using device settings to improve usability. Older people, those not in work, without home internet access or with a psychosis-spectrum disorder were at greatest risk of lacking basic skills.

More advanced skill levels were Skills for Life, which included setting up an email account, using a search engine and staying safe online, and Skills for Work, which included setting up and managing an account on a professional online network and organising, storing and sharing information.

The researchers also found that people with severe mental ill health were twice as likely to experience a deficit in either Foundation or Life Skills (46 per cent) compared with the general population (22 per cent). Employed participants were more likely to have Foundation Skills though employment is less common among people with severe mental illness. Though most people in the study (85.9 per cent) owned a digital device, this on its own did not appear to reduce digital exclusion.

Lead researcher Dr Panagiotis Spanakis, from the Department's, Mental Health and Addiction Research Group, said: "Digital exclusion is increasingly concentrated in vulnerable populations including older people with severe mental ill health who are likely to be heavier users of healthcare services. The increasing delivery of health services online will mean those who are digitally excluded will be unable to access them. "Tailored training in digital skills for people with severe mental illness along with confidence-building and motivational measures would help to address digital exclusion."

The SPIDER study team is drawn from the Mental Health and Addiction Research Group in the Department of Health Sciences at York. The group is part of the Closing the Gap network which aims to tackle health inequalities in people with severe mental illness. Professor Simon Gilbody, director of the Mental Health and Addiction Research Group, said "With the drive towards comprehensive digital healthcare within the NHS, the importance of digital inclusion for health and social care should be acknowledged. Reducing the digital divide has the potential to diminish health inequalities."

BALM team raise money for Movember

The BALM team held a bake sale to raise funds during Movember, and raised £166.75 for men's and boys' health. The bake sale was held in the Seebohm Rowntree reception area and received some donations of cakes and flapjacks from other members of the Health Science department, and also some mince pies from Sainsbury's Whitby. They wanted to say thank you to all those who donated or bought sweet treats.



Movember

As many of you will know, Movember is a charity that hosts the annual event of growing a moustache to raise awareness of men's health issues, such as prostate cancer, testicular cancer, and men's mental health. In England, suicide is highest among men and is the leading cause of death for men aged 20-34.

The BALM Study: A Reminder

BALM is a research study funded by Movember, which stands for Behavioural Activation for Low mood and Anxiety in Male NHS Workers. Mental health issues account for nearly a quarter of all NHS staff absences indicating that the healthcare system is currently unable to 'help the helpers'. Male frontline staff are at increased risk of stress and burnout, and developing common mental health conditions.

Traditionally, frontline NHS workers operate in 'a pull your socks up' culture where individuals are expected to be resilient and stronger than the general population. Male frontline workers are also less likely to acknowledge work-related stress. Moreover, they are less likely to seek help. Suicide rates among male frontline NHS workers are disproportionately high.

Behavioural Activation is an effective treatment that can be used as an early intervention to prevent these difficulties getting worse. Behavioural Activation can also be adapted as a gender-sensitive intervention because of its practical, action-oriented strategies that are consistent with a strengths-based masculinities approach aiming to reinforce men's sense of autonomy, control and independence. So far, we have developed a self-help e-booklet tailored specifically for men who are working on the NHS frontline, based on Behavioural Activation principles. The programme will not only focus on clinicians, but also on men working in diverse roles such as estates and maintenance.

The next stage of the study will evaluate how effective the intervention is. We will recruit 45 men at risk of low mood or anxiety who are working on the NHS frontline. Personal coaches will be trained to guide them through the e-booklet. We will evaluate the intervention both quantitatively and qualitatively measuring their mood and/or anxiety and interviewing 20 of them as well as their coaches to find out how useful they found it. To find out more about the study, please follow us on Twitter: @BALMprogramme, or visit our website: www.balmprogramme.co.uk.

Hello

We wish a very warm welcome to new members of staff who have joined the department recently, these include: Rebecca Lait, Paul Williams, Gareth Palliser, Jackie Skinner, Gloria Mongelli, Kelly Hollingsworth, Fraser Wiggins, Andrea Barquet, Anita Lawson, Frances Burnell, Sheraz Khan, Molly Crosland, Natalie Collins, Maria Dyett, Morgan Clarke.

Goodbye

We also wish a very fond farewell to those who have left, including: Gemma Mitchell, Andrew Papworth, Marysia Koc, Dorothy McCaughan, Pam Hanely, Danielle Podmore and Virginia Harrison.

Congratulations

Mariam Khokhar on the birth of a baby boy Noah R. Rehman on 28th October.

Useful information

Two notices are being displayed in all toilets on the ground, first and second floors. On the ground floor the 'Are You Needing Support' notice is displayed in every cubicle (female and male) as it is aimed at students and then every alternate cubicle on the first and second floors. The 'Winter Break Support' notice is displayed on the inside of the inner doors. Both notices are displayed in adapted toilets.

The 'Are You Needing Support' notice will be updated as and when new support mechanisms are put in place and need to be advertised. The 'Winter Break Support' notices will be changed monthly/seasonally.

There are also 'quotes' notices, which we hope have lightened up someones day and will be changed at the beginning of each month with uplifting verses/quotes to reflect the month/time of year.

Jackie is working her way around the building and will update/renew other non permanent notices as they are found but please let her know of anything that may need addressing and we can review it with the relevant departmental managers.



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).