



Megaphone Online

December 2020

the voice of Health Sciences' staff and students

Christmas message from Head of Department

"I am sure many of you, like me, appreciate that 2020 has been one of the most challenging years we have faced. I was proud to see our nursing and midwifery students responding to the call to work within the NHS during the early stages of the pandemic.

We have all got to grips with meetings via Zoom, Google Meet and in some cases Microsoft teams. Staff and students have had to respond and react to changes very quickly.

I would like to thank all staff and students for your continued support, it has been a great collective effort. I continue to remain impressed by everyone's enthusiasm, commitment, and engagement during these challenging times.

Our research activities continue to be highly successful and we have successfully recruited to our undergraduate nursing and midwifery programmes.

I hope that you all enjoy the festive season and take the time to take a break from screen time and focus on recharging your batteries ready to face 2021.

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and all the best for 2021.



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New student representatives announced

We are delighted to announce the new student representatives for the 2020/21 academic year. Well done to everyone who was elected. Student reps have certain responsibilities:

- to identify student concerns and gauge opinions of their fellow students
- to keep students informed of current issues in the Department and report back on meetings attended
- to attend departmental meetings and bring student issues to those meetings
- to liaise with other reps of the Department of Health Sciences

UGT and programmes leading to professional registration Departmental Representative:

Poppy Bonsall

Year one BA (Hons) Midwifery Practice	Lauren Bardett
Year two BA (Hons) Midwifery Practice	Sophie McDonnell
Year two BA (Hons) Midwifery Practice	Eve Hankin
Year three BA (Hons) Midwifery Practice	Mollie Smith
Year one BSc (Hons) Nursing	Rosina Crowley - Whitehead
Year one BSc (Hons) Nursing	Claudia Collins
Year two BSc (Hons) Nursing	Ben Allen
Year two BSc (Hons) Nursing	Sinead Campbell
Year three BSc (Hons) Nursing	Chelsea Fawcett
Year three BSc (Hons) Nursing	Georgina Lucas
MNursing Stage 1	Vacant
MNursing Stage 1	Vacant
MNursing Stage 2	Sophia Collins-Ricketts
MNursing Stage 3	Dee Duncan-Cottingham
MNursing Stage 3	Keira Haffiane
MNursing Stage 4	Megan Chafer
MNursing Stage 4	Bethany McLaine
Nursing Associate	Cindy Ewen
Nursing Associate	Claire Spaven

New student representatives announced

Postgraduate Departmental Representative - tbc

Year one Postgraduate Certificate in Health Research and Statistics	Joyce Olulu
Year two Postgraduate Certificate in Health Research and Statistics	Vacant
Full time route Master of Public Health	Marlon Freeman
Part time route Master of Public Health	Vacant
Full time route MSc in Applied Health Research	Chambalson Jorge Chambal
Part time route Year one MSc in Applied Health Research	Vacant
Part time route Year two MSc in Applied Health Research	Judith Townend
Year one PhD in Health Sciences	Vacant
Year two PhD in Health Sciences	Vacant
Year three PhD in Health Sciences	Vacant
Year four PhD in Health Sciences	Vacant
MSc in International Humanitarian Affairs (Part time distance learning) Year 1	Vacant
MSc in International Humanitarian Affairs (Part time distance learning) Year 2	Vacant
PGDip Advanced Clinical Practice	Vacant

To find out more information and to find out how to contact your course representative(s) visit:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/healthsciences/student-intranet/bos/student-rep/>

Pandemic report reveals massive hit to the North of England's health and economy

The Coronavirus pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on the North of England – leading to more deaths and greater social and economic hardship than any other region in England, according to a new report.

The research, which involved analysis from leading University of York health expert Professor Kate Pickett, concluded that the epidemic has exacerbated inequalities between the North and the rest of the country and that mitigating measures must be put in place to stop inequalities rising further and faster.

The report called, *Covid-19 and the Northern Powerhouse: Tackling Health Inequalities for UK Health and Productivity*, also found:

- An extra 57.7 more people per 100,000 died in the Northern Powerhouse region than the rest of England between March and July.
- Mental and financial well-being was hardest hit in the Northern Powerhouse region, as was loneliness.
- Reductions in mental well-being in the Northern Powerhouse region could cost the UK economy up to £5 billion in reduced productivity.
- Austerity disproportionately affected the Northern Powerhouse region, particularly areas of high deprivation which led to reduced productivity.
- Pre-pandemic child health, a key predictor of life-long health and economic productivity, was poor and deteriorating in the Northern Powerhouse region. Since the pandemic adverse trends in poverty, education, employment and mental health for children and young people have been exacerbated.
- Economic outcomes, particularly unemployment rates, were hardest hit in the Northern Powerhouse region.

Professor Pickett from the Department of Health Sciences, who is also Deputy Director of the Centre for Future Health, co-led on the report's research focused on children. Her work shows how children in the North were already falling behind children elsewhere in England, and are being disproportionately affected by the Coronavirus crisis.

Professor Kate Pickett said: "Covid-19 has brought into sharp focus the unacceptable inequalities in health and life chances suffered by children in the North. We need policies now that support our families and children during and following the pandemic."

Professor of Public Health, Clare Bambra from Newcastle University added: "We need to significantly 'level up' the country by providing immediate additional support to local authorities and devolved administrations in the North - and by investing further in public health prevention in the North Powerhouse. In this way, we can reduce the inequalities that the pandemic has highlighted and ensure that our regions are better equipped for building back better."

The report authors make a series of recommendations to stop further deteriorations in the level of inequalities. These include: additional Test and Trace systems, targeting the clinically vulnerable and deprived communities in the first phase of the roll out of the Covid-19 vaccine, reducing child poverty and investing in mental health interventions.

The report was released today by the Northern Health Science Alliance, the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Applied Research Collaborations (North East and North Cumbria, Greater Manchester, North West Coast, Yorkshire and Humber), and the NIHR School of Public Health.

New research on electronic cigarettes to help smokers with mental health problems quit and reduce harm

Academics from the University of York and University College London are to lead a major new trial, funded by Yorkshire Cancer Research, to establish whether integrating the offer of a vaping starter kit to mental health patients who smoke helps increase the number who quit successfully. The cost-effectiveness of this approach will also be analysed.

Smoking rates among people with mental illness on average more than double those of the general population (~14 per cent) but can reach proportions of around 70 per cent in some sub groups, for example people with schizophrenia.

The new research will be led by Elena Ratschen, Associate Professor in Health Sciences at the University of York and Lion Shahab, Professor of Health Psychology at University College London.

Although smoking rates are declining in the UK, no change has been seen in people with mental illness. Developing and testing better strategies to support this population to quit has been identified as a public health priority and forms part of the NHS Long Term Plan.

Dr Ratschen said: “There is an urgent need to address smoking-related inequalities in mental health. People with mental illness lose up to 20 years of life expectancy, mainly to consequences of smoking including cancer. Until very recently, smoking has remained deeply embedded within the culture of mental health care and treatment settings, where it was commonly accepted as a coping mechanism for patients. We now know that smoking worsens mental illness symptoms and may even be linked to their development.

“People with mental illness are just as motivated to quit as those without. However, giving up smoking can be difficult because of limited access to support and high dependence.”

According to Public Health England, vaping products are significantly less harmful than smoking. They have become the most popular stop smoking aid in England, with up to 57,000 people using them to quit smoking each year.

Professor Shahab said: “There is growing evidence that e-cigarettes can help smokers kick the habit of a lifetime and that these devices may be particularly helpful for more disadvantaged smokers, including those with common mental health conditions.”

Around 740 people who are currently receiving outpatient treatment for mental illness will be recruited to take part in the four-year trial. As well as receiving standard stop smoking support, they will be offered a starter kit including a vaping device, e-liquid and brief e-cigarette related advice.

The research team includes members who have experience with, or care for, people with mental illness and will enable people who smoke and use mental health services to participate in a world-leading research programme.

Research News

Workstress Survey in COVID Times

Professor Christina van der Feltz-Cornelis writes:

The survey about work and study stress related to COVID19 among staff and students of the University that was conducted in May/June, was completed by 1055 staff and 925 students. The outcomes were very interesting, 98% of staff and 78% of students worked or studied remotely. University staff and students reported high psychological distress, presenteeism and absenteeism. However, students were much more resilient (72%) than staff (34%).

We explored factors contributing to vulnerability for psychological distress or presenteeism. Being young, of the female gender, having children, suffering from medically unexplained symptoms or a chronic medical condition, living in an urban environment without access to green space and having to self-isolate contributed to vulnerability. We think that having small children and being allotted the homeschooling or looking after the children more than the father because of income differences may contribute to that. Exercise contributed to resilience.

The results were published in *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, section Public Mental Health. There is a lot more information in the publication:

Workplace stress, presenteeism, absenteeism and resilience amongst University staff and students in the COVID-19 lockdown by Christina Maria Van Der Feltz-Cornelis, D Varley, Victoria Allgar, Edwin De Beurs

To view the online publication, please visit

http://journal.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fpsy.2020.588803/full?utm_source=Email_to_authors&utm_medium=Email&utm_content=T1_11.5e1_author&utm_campaign=Email_publication&field=&journalName=Frontiers_in_Psychiatry&id=588803

Other research by Christina:

Biomarkers in Somatic Symptom Disorders

Professor Christina van der Feltz-Cornelis published the first study exploring inflammation biomarkers in SSRD with Dutch colleagues; it shows that elevated IL 6 occurs in SSRD, however, it is also linked to adverse childhood experiences. Read the results of the IL6 and hsCRP in SSRD study - the first study exploring inflammation biomarkers at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666354620301411>

Suicidality in Somatic Symptom Disorders

Christina also published the first systematic review on suicidality in SSRD, together with American and German colleagues; Read the results of the first systematic review on suicide and suicidality in SSRD at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022399920308527?dgcid=coauthor>

Foreign Accent Syndrome as a case of conversion disorder/functional neurological disorder

Together with an international group of researchers, Christina published a case of foreign accent syndrome. This occurs mostly after brain damage, however in this case it was functional, and was considered a case of conversion disorder/FND. You can read the case at:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0213616320300719?via%3Dihub>

Professor Karen Bloor, Dr. Laura Jefferson, Dr. Su Golder, Professor Christina van der Feltz-Cornelis and Professor Tim Doran received an NIHR PRP grant to explore COVID related stress and wellbeing in GPs. They will do this in collaboration with the University of Manchester.

Research News

PROMETHEUS Webinar – The Implementation and Management of Studies Within A Trial (SWATs)

The second webinar of the PROMETHEUS webinar series was successfully held in November. The webinar consisted of experienced SWAT teams providing their first-hand practical knowledge and helpful tips of how to implement SWATs within host trials to prospective teams. Presenters included researchers from a variety of clinical trials units from across the UK, covering a wide range of both retention and recruitment interventions. Dr Sandra Galvin also presented on behalf of the Health Research Board, Trials Methodology Research Network, discussing the use of SWATs in Ireland.

The PROMETHEUS team would like to say a huge thank you to both the presenters and all of the attendees, for making it such a successful morning. If you would like the opportunity to view this webinar or catch up on anything you may have missed, please use the following link to access the webinar recording: <https://youtu.be/efhFj0Rxc8U>.

If you would like any further knowledge in relation to SWATs or the support that the PROMETHEUS team can provide, please contact us on Prometheus-group@york.ac.uk

Or you can visit our webpage at <https://www.york.ac.uk/healthsciences/research/trials/research/swats/prometheus/>

York Trials Unit Writing Week goes back to the 90s

York Trials Unit holds three Writing Weeks each year. The theme for this year is '90s Pop' and is being coordinated by Arabella Scantlebury. The week started with a virtual training session on 'how to be an effective first author and review articles' and was hosted by Arabella Scantlebury and Laura Sheard.

After the training session, Writing Week took a trip down memory lane to find out who would become Top of the Pops at the end of the week. Throughout the week team M People tried to search for a hero, team S Club aimed to reach for the stars and Take That hoped to rule the world (well Writing Week anyway) and many more. Despite the challenges associated with working from home, which included a naughty pet sitting on a keyboard and deleting sections of a paper, the teams made great progress! Ideas for new papers were generated, systematic reviews were progressed, data was analysed and papers were submitted!

Arabella writes "Congratulations to team S Club led by Hannah Ainsworth who claimed the number one position in our charts - the team managed to progress a total of ten publications. Belen Corbacho was our 'Chart Topper' of the week for her 4 day performance as she managed to achieve everything she had planned and more."

"Thank you to everyone who has taken part in the first 90s Pop themed Writing Week and helped to make the week an enjoyable journey back to 90s. I look forward to our next week in February 2021"

Staff News

Hello

We wish a very warm welcome to new members of staff who have joined the department recently, these include: Thomas Mills, Lucy Flatley, Jessie Shepherd, Claudia Fiorella Parra Mujich, Sarah Newsome, Sarah Butler, Holly Hemsworth (nee Essex) and Elizabeth McHugh.

Goodbye

We also wish a very fond farewell to those who have left, including: Jenny Parry, Shanie Young, Paul Evans, Cathryn Britton, Lucy Clark, Laura Bates, Vicky Lack and Sheila Brocklehurst.

Merry Christmas!

Thank you to everyone who has provided articles and pictures to Megaphone over the last year. I really hope you have enjoyed reading the issues and I look forward to your contributions next year.

Merry Christmas and all the best for 2021.

Jane

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).