

Welcome to our January Newsletter

In this issue we highlight our new HERU Blog. We're looking forward to using the blog to communicate policy-relevant research. We feature a recent royal visit to the University, updates on our short courses and recent public and policy engagement events. We also showcase our research on time and risk preferences in medical decision making.

Further information is available on all our activities on our website. More frequent updates are on the HERU twitter account (@HERU_Abdn).

**HERU
NEW
Blog...**

Our new HERU Blog was launched in January. The Blog is aimed at anyone interested in the research and activity of HERU. The first post was a short video introduction to HERU from our Director, Mandy Ryan, and our second post presented a summary of our findings on the impact of minimum unit pricing of alcohol. We have other posts planned and will mainly use the blog to highlight our research, with a focus on the policy implications of our work. We will use a variety of formats – including video, images and text – and are excited about this new way of communicating our research.

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/heru/blog/>

**NEW 2019 DATES ANNOUNCED
FOR OUR COURSE**

**'Using Discrete Choice Experiments in Health Economics:
Theoretical and Practical Issues'**

Banff, Alberta: 8th–11th September

Aberdeen, Scotland: 13th–15th November

For more information on both courses, and registration, see: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/heru/courses/workshops/canada-dce-workshop/>

APPLICATIONS WELCOME

**MSc/Postgraduate Diploma/Postgraduate
Certificate in Health Economics for
Health Professionals**

Further details are on our website, please visit:

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/heru/courses/pgcert/> where a short YouTube video about the course is available.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwJ4KB_wUBEShelley

Duchess of Rothesay visits the University

Her Royal Highness, the Duchess of Rothesay and Chancellor of the University of Aberdeen, visited the University in January for the official installation of Professor George Boyne as Vice-Chancellor and Principal.

While at the university HRH took time to visit the Foresterhill campus and met with the Directors of HERU and HSRU (right). This was a chance to catch up on the work of the units over the last year. In February 2018, the Duchess presented the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education to the University in recognition of the research of HERU and HSRU.



Capacity Building

Our annual 'Using Discrete Choice Experiments in health economics' course was delivered for the 11th year. The course ran from 21st to 23rd November in Aberdeen. This course is aimed at individuals interested in the application of DCEs in health economics and focuses on the practical and theoretical issues of applying this technique. Twenty four delegates attended from wide ranging backgrounds, travelling from as far afield as United States and Australia.



November 1st saw HERU's highly successful **Using health economics evidence in health care decision making** workshop run for the fifth time. Twenty delegates registered from a range of backgrounds including leadership roles on health boards, public health trainees and quality improvement officers in the health system. The applied emphasis of the workshop, with case studies, interactive exercises and tools for identifying and critiquing economic studies, once again proved very popular with all delegates.

For more details see www.abdn.ac.uk/heru/courses/workshops/.

Public Engagement activities

Café Med – 'Informing health policy: is it time to celebrate or innovate?'

On November 19th at the Suttie Centre, Foresterhill, a Café Med was given by HERU Director **Professor Mandy Ryan** and Professor Craig Ramsay, the Director of our 'sister' unit the Health Services Research Unit. Café Med events are an initiative of the Public Engagement with Research Unit at the University of Aberdeen and are a way of bringing researchers, clinicians and members of the public together to discuss how current research is being translated into improved treatments and care in an informal café setting.

This event focused on our Queen's Anniversary Prize, highlighting how our research has changed healthcare over the last forty years and the challenges we face in the next forty. The presentations led to lively discussion on the future of healthcare and healthcare research. The event is available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4QABWAGbic>.



Engage Researchers' Academy

We congratulate **Patrícia Norwood** (left), HERU lead for public engagement, who was successful in her application to take part in the Engage Researchers' Academy. This is a new initiative from the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement. It consists of a year long professional development programme for researchers with a passion for public engagement. The programme creates a challenging but supportive environment to reflect upon what it means to be an engaged researcher, and to explore the quality and value of engagement. It also supports participants to develop the skills and experience to work with others and improve the impact and relevance of their research.

Research 'Spotlight': The role of time and risk preferences in doctor behaviour

Time preferences (*how future or present oriented an individual is*) and risk preferences (*how sensitive an individual is to risk*) are key parameters in economic models determining decisions that have uncertain outcomes over time. These preferences are highly relevant in the context of the decisions that doctors make, including clinical decisions and career decisions. For example, the use of diagnostic tests represents a trade-off between the costs of these tests and a reduced risk of misdiagnosis. Doctors who are risk averse are more likely to order diagnostic tests for their patients as they would value the reduced risk more highly compared to doctors who are risk seeking. Doctors' time and risk preferences may therefore help explain practice variations.

In collaboration with Professor Anthony Scott at the University of Melbourne we started work in this area. The first project examined whether UK GPs who migrated to Australia have different risk preferences compared to GPs currently practising in Scotland. Migration is fundamentally a risky decision that balances the risks of staying with the risks associated with leaving and risk preferences may therefore play a role. Retention of the clinical workforce is of increasing concern and the number of UK doctors working in Australia and New Zealand has seen a recent increase. To better understand migration decisions, we compared risk preferences (for financial, career and clinical risks) of GPs who qualified in the UK and migrated to Australia with those who are currently practising in Scotland.



Research in this area will continue with a new PhD student **Xuemin Zhu** (left), who started in March 2018. Xuemin is exploring the role of risk preferences (and personality) in clinical decision making. She will also examine how stable risk preferences are in doctors. The supervisory team includes expertise in health psychology (Dr Julia Allan, Health Psychology Group, University of Aberdeen), recognising that this research is at the intersection between economics and psychology.

For further information please contact **Marjon van der Pol** (m.vanderpol@abdn.ac.uk).



Workshop on health labour market analysis

Dr Diane Skåtun attended a week long workshop in Turin in November organised by the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organisation (ITC/ILO) and in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO). The workshop was designed around the development of a toolkit for health labour market analysis across countries and in particular Low and Middle Income Countries. The toolkit will provide analysts with the support to undertake in-depth analysis of their own health labour markets and to develop effective policies to ensure an adequate supply of health workers which is essential to achieve the goal of universal health coverage.



Workshop on health labour market analysis (HLMA)

A9011644 – Turin (Italy), 19 – 23 November 2018

Other News...

PhD Graduations



We were delighted to celebrate the achievements of our PhD students at the November graduation ceremonies.

Luis Loría Rebolledo (left, with Supervisor Verity Watson) and **Alastair Irvine** (right, with Supervisor Marjon van der Pol) attended their graduation ceremony in November. Luis' thesis investigated preferences for emission reductions in buses (using Discrete Choice Experiments), using the Aberdeen Hydrogen Bus Project as a case study. Alastair's thesis, investigated the role of time preference in non-adherence within the patient-doctor interaction.



HERU welcomed Jin Xiao Lian from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University

As part of her training Fellowship Jin Xiao Lian (Tina) visited HERU. She attended our Discrete Choice Experiment (DCE) course and spent two weeks in the Unit meeting staff and discussing her research plans. Tina said: *"I received and appreciated the very valuable suggestions and comments from the DCE experts to guide my DCE project on elders' preference on financial incentives to promote preventive care. I also appreciated the opportunity to meet and discuss with experts from across HERU"*.



New Funding

We are delighted to receive funding from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) on a project entitled *'Oral splints for orofacial symptoms: an evidence synthesis'*. The research is led by Professor Helen Worthington at the University of Manchester, and **Dwayne Boyers** is part of the team. The project is for 14 months and receives £74,528 in funding.

PhD Studentship available now:

HERU are currently advertising a funded PhD Studentship. The Studentship is offered by the Institute of Applied Health sciences (IAHS) at the University of Aberdeen, and two HERU projects are eligible:

- Valuing health services: does it matter whether it is an existing or new service? (Supervisors: **Professor Marjon van der Pol**, **Dr Verity Watson** and **Mr Dwayne Boyers**.)
- To pay or not to pay: Investigating the validity of monetary preferences in health choice experiments. (Supervisors: **Professor Mandy Ryan**, **Dr Verity Watson** and **Dr Nicolas Krucien**.)

The closing date for applications is Friday 22nd March 2019 and more details on the projects, the funding, entry requirements, and the application process are available via the PhD pages of the HERU website <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/heru/courses/phd/>.

Health Economics Research Unit

University of Aberdeen, Institute of Applied Health Sciences,
Polwarth Building, Foresterhill, Aberdeen AB25 2ZD

T: +44 (0)1224 437196 F: +44 (0)1224 437195
E: heru@abdn.ac.uk W: www.abdn.ac.uk/heru [Twitter](https://twitter.com/HERU_Abdn) /HERU_Abdn