

Welcome to the January 2018 HERU News

In this issue we highlight the fantastic news that our research has been recognised with the award of the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education to the University of Aberdeen. The award is for the work of HERU, and our sister unit the Health Services Research Unit, in healthcare-related research over the past 40 years. We also highlight recent events, new staff and students and new research funding.

We hope you enjoy reading about our work. Further information is available on our website and you can see more frequent updates on the HERU twitter account (@HERU_Abdn).

Aberdeen University Awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize

HERU and HSRU recognised for their research leading to improvements in academic and clinical practice and delivery of health care



THE QUEEN'S
ANNIVERSARY PRIZES
FOR HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION
2017



Professor Mandy Ryan, Director of HERU, and Professor Craig Ramsay, Director of HSRU at the announcement of the Queen's Anniversary Prize at St James Palace

We are delighted to announce that we have been awarded The Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education in recognition of our world-leading research into health economics and health services over the last forty years. The Queen's Anniversary Prize is awarded every two years and is the most prestigious form of national recognition for a UK academic institution.

The focus of the award is on innovation and practical benefit to people and society. HERU, together with our sister unit, the Health Services Research Unit (HSRU) were recognised for 'Health service research leading to improvements in academic and clinical practice and delivery of health care.' A delegation from the University, including staff and PhD students from HERU, will attend the awards ceremony

at Buckingham Palace in February 2018.

Professor Mandy Ryan, current Director of HERU, said: "What a fantastic achievement for HERU and HSRU. This is the highest national award to a university and I feel both proud and privileged to be leading HERU at this time of great success. Over the years we have worked tirelessly, collaborating with HSRU, to ensure improved health and healthcare for the people of Scotland and beyond. I would like to thank everyone for their contribution to this award, including those who have moved on, and also acknowledge the visionary thinking of Professors Roy Weir and Elizabeth Russell who forty years ago recognised the potential of health economics and health services research in improving the health and well-being of the population."



Emeritus Professor Bob Elliott

Economists gather to honour Emeritus Professor Bob Elliott

Former HERU Director, Emeritus Professor **Bob Elliott**, was recently honoured with a one-day conference organised by the University of Aberdeen Business School and the Centre for European Labour Market Research. The conference was on labour economics and focused on 'New research in pay determination.' Bob's ground-breaking research in labour market pay is internationally renowned and the event aimed to explore the determinants of pay and the reasons for the post-2008 decline in wages. A distinguished group of speakers from the field of labour economics attended the event which Bob admitted made him feel "rather overwhelmed and humbled."

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/business/news/11325/>

HERU's Capacity Building:

Professor Elizabeth Russell Post-Doctoral Fellowship and Professor Roy Weir PhD studentship

The late Professor Roy Weir and Professor Elizabeth Russell continue to support health economics and health services research at the University of Aberdeen.

Daniel Kopasker took up the Elizabeth Russell Post-Doctoral Fellowship on 1st December 2017. Daniel will investigate the ways in which insecure employment relationships become a socioeconomic determinant of mental health over the life course. The research aims to evaluate strategies to protect the mental health of employees, with the aim of reducing indirect productivity losses associated with psychological distress.

Daniel explained the impact that receiving the Fellowship would have on his work and career, "the great thing about being awarded this fellowship is that it allows

me to concentrate on addressing the methodological challenges associated with this research. This will be invaluable for both my current work and future projects."

Divya Mohan took up the Roy Weir PhD studentship in January 2018. Her research will explore methods for incorporating preference heterogeneity in economic evaluations. She will be supervised by **Graham Scotland**, Sebastian Heidenreich and Craig Ramsay (HSRU).

Divya outlined how grateful she was to receive the studentship, "I knew very early on into my Masters' that I wanted to do a PhD in Health Economics, but I never imagined that it would be among one of the foremost leaders in the field at HERU. I am thankful for the Roy Weir PhD Studentship for giving me this opportunity to develop



Daniel and Divya meeting with Elizabeth Russell discussing their research projects

my skills alongside the experts here. I'm looking forward to the next three years (hopefully longer!)"

Annual DCE Workshop delivered for the 10th time



Delegates at the 2017 DCE Workshop

Our annual three-day Expert Workshop in Discrete Choice Experiments (DCEs) ran from 15th to 17th November in Aberdeen. This workshop 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 delegates attended from wide-ranging backgrounds including the commercial sector, academia and PhD students. Delegates travelled from as far afield as Brazil and Australia.

The course will be offered again from 21st to 23rd November 2018. Further details will be posted on our website when they are available, or email alison.findlay@abdn.ac.uk to register an interest in attending.

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/heru/courses/workshops/annual-dce-workshop/>

HENS Workshop: Identifying, Appraising and Applying Health Economics Evidence for Public Health

Our fourth HENS workshop took place on 22nd November 2017 in Perth. This one-day training course is run by HERU on behalf of the Health Economics Network for Scotland (HENS) and provides an introduction to the identification, appraisal and application of economic evaluation for policy-making in public health. The course is aimed at planners, finance directors and other health and social care staff who manage budgets or resources but may not have prior experience in economic evaluation. The 2017 course was attended by twenty-five participants from health boards across Scotland and included healthcare improvement staff, and planning and performance managers.

Morning presentations from HERU speakers **Paul McNamee**, **Stirling Bryan** and **Aileen Neilson** covered the topics of introducing, identifying and critically appraising economic evaluations. The presentations were followed up by afternoon group work and feedback sessions on appraising a published study (with consideration to applying the results locally) and on economic study design (considering the key features of an economic evaluation to help plan the design of a future study). The day was rounded-up with a final summary and Q&A session. Look out for workshops coming in 2018. Information will be provided on the 'Workshops and Training' pages of our website.



Delegates at the HENS course – practical work on public health investment scenarios

www.abdn.ac.uk/heru/courses/workshops/

HERU Staff Out 'n' About

Mandy Ryan challenges UK valuation methods at the ISPOR Plenary

Mandy Ryan delivered a plenary presentation at the International Society for Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research (ISPOR) 20th Annual Congress which took place from 4th to 8th November at the Scottish Event Campus in Glasgow. The conference theme was the 'evolution of value in health care' and the Plenary Session considered the 'evolving assessment of value' with perspectives from health

economists from Europe and the USA. Mandy's talk reflected on valuation of health and healthcare in a UK context, criticising the current health outcome focus and highlighting the importance of taking a patient-centred approach to valuation. Mandy drew on both her extensive research in this area and her personal experience as a patient. For more information on this plenary and topic contact Mandy on m.ryan@abdn.ac.uk.



Professor Mandy Ryan delivering her plenary presentation at ISPOR 2017

Research presented at MRC discussion on economic evaluation in clinical trials



Graham Scotland took part in the 'Economic Evaluation alongside Clinical Trials Meeting' organised by the Medical Research Council (MRC) Hubs for Trial Methodology Research Network. The event took place at the University of Bristol on 21st November and Graham gave a presentation entitled 'Extrapolating cost-

effectiveness beyond the time horizon of surgical trials: early lens extraction for angle closure glaucoma' which presented work from the 'Effectiveness in Angle closure Glaucoma of Lens Extraction' (EAGLE) trial.

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/heru/research/assessment-of-technologies/techadoption/eagle/>

HERU at the NHS Research Scotland (NRS) Conference

Staff from HERU attended the 2017 NHS Research Scotland (NRS) Conference. The theme of the conference was 'Realistic medicine: the value and impact of research and innovation.' The HERU delegation to the conference were able to attend a variety of engaging presentations and help with the

HERU exhibit stand. The conference gave us a great opportunity to meet staff from the NHS and promote our work and research. In particular, the training we provide through our workshops and MSc in Health Economics for Health Professionals prompted interest.

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



HERU staff at the NRS Conference

New research study

Evaluating minimum unit pricing for alcohol in Scotland

The Scottish Government have announced that minimum unit pricing (MUP) for alcohol will be introduced in May 2018. This follows the decision in November 2017 by the UK Supreme Court that the policy is lawful. HERU are collaborating with researchers across Scotland on new research 'Evaluating possible intended and unintended consequences of the implementation of Minimum Unit Pricing of Alcohol in Scotland: a natural experiment.'

The study aims to determine the impacts of alcohol MUP on selected acute health

harms and unintended consequences that may occur. It will assess changes in alcohol-related attendances, and changes in the extent of hazardous and harmful drinking, in emergency departments in Scotland compared to Northern England. This will help establish whether MUP achieves its stated aim of reducing health harms.

Surveys will also be undertaken in Scotland and Northern England to detect whether MUP results in a change of source of alcohol or substitution with other drugs, as well as how it changes drinking patterns,

particularly for young adults. The team aims to understand the experience of MUP and explore the potential mechanisms that may result in unanticipated benefits and harms and how these may differ between groups.

For more details, visit the project page on the NIHR journals Library website.

<https://www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/programmes/phr/11300540/#/summary-of-research>

Other News...

Welcoming a new member of staff and visiting PhD student

Blanca Moran started as a Research Fellow in HERU in January 2018. Blanca has a PhD in Economics from the University of York. She is working on our Scottish Genomics Partnership project evaluating the efficiency of whole genome sequencing (WGS) as an intervention within NHS Scotland. Blanca will also work on our exciting eye-tracker research, exploring how individuals process risk information within the context of WGS.



Mesfin Genie (centre) with Nicolas Krucien and Mandy Ryan

Mesfin Genie, a PhD student from the University of Venice, joined HERU in October for a six month visit. While at HERU, Mesfin is receiving support on his PhD concerned with the application of discrete choice experiments (DCEs) in health. Mesfin is exploring how individuals process information when responding to DCEs. He is working on two PhD papers: the first will explore whether individuals create meta-attributes when responding to DCEs, and the second will investigate how individuals process the cost attribute within a DCE, drawing on eye-tracking methods.

Mesfin said: "My visit to HERU has been truly pleasant and enjoyable. HERU have provided all necessary facilities that I required during my stay, from excellent research supervisions to opportunities for presenting our research work at seminars, all within a supportive and simulating environment that helped foster my research work".



Blanca Moran (centre) attending her first Scottish Genomics Partnership Health Economics Group meeting

Visitors to HERU

We welcomed Professor F. Reed Johnson from Duke University School of Medicine to HERU on 9th November 2017. Professor Johnson presented at the Institute of Applied Health Sciences seminar series on 'Putting economics back into health economics: utility-theoretic generalised QALYs from discrete-choice experiments.' He also met with several members of the team from the Methods of Benefit Valuation research theme in HERU.

Dr Benjamin Craig, Associate Professor of Economics at the University of South Florida, also visited the Methods of Benefit Valuation team in November. Ben met staff and students from the Theme and updated us on developments at the International Academy of Health Preferences Research (IAHPR).

External seminar presentations

Dr Trine Kjaer, Associate Professor at the University of Southern Denmark, visited HERU on November 7th. Dr Kjaer presented a seminar on 'Preferences for QALYs at end-of-life: an empirical study' and met with members of the Unit.

On the 12th December Dr Silvia Mendolia, Senior Lecturer in Economics in the School of Accounting, Economics and Finance at the University of Wollongong in Australia, visited HERU. She gave a presentation on joint work with Professor Paul McNamee on 'Partners' mental health and individual well-being: a compensating income variation approach.'

New funding...

Anne Ludbrook of HERU is a co-applicant on a grant from the National Institute Health Research (NIHR) on 'Evaluating possible intended and unintended consequences of the implementation of Minimum Unit Pricing of alcohol in Scotland: a natural experiment.' The project will run for 36 months and was awarded £1,136,612. Alastair Leyland of MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit at the University of Glasgow is lead investigator on the grant.



Gary MacFarlane, (University of Aberdeen) and **Paul McNamee** (HERU), along with other colleagues, have recently secured a research grant from the British Society for Rheumatology. The funding of £1,174,473 has been awarded for a 60-month study on a 'Biologics Register for Psoriatic Arthritis (BSRBR-PSA).'

Diane Skåtun, Attakrit Leckcivilize (HERU) and John Skåtun (Business School, University of Aberdeen) were commissioned by the Scottish Terms and Conditions Committee (STAC), the body which negotiates terms and conditions issues relevant to NHS Scotland, to research the impact of pay restraint that has been imposed on the public sector since 2011 and its specific impact on the health-care workforce and were awarded £20,000.

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