

Welcome to the April 2018 HERU News

In this issue of the newsletter we highlight our attendance at the awards ceremony for the Queen's Prize for Higher and Further Education at Buckingham Palace in February. The University of Aberdeen received the award in recognition of the health economics and health services research undertaken in HERU, and at our sister unit the Health Services Research Unit, over the last forty years. In sadder news, we also feature a short tribute to Professor Alan Maynard who made a significant contribution to the development of HERU. Staff involvement in public and policy engagement activities are highlighted, we feature a recently completed project examining ICU referrals and welcome new staff and students to HERU. We also highlight recent and forthcoming events 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).

HERU recognised with Queen's Anniversary Prize award

In our January Newsletter we reported that the University of Aberdeen had been awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education in recognition of the world-leading research undertaken at HERU and the Health Services Research Unit (HSRU) over the last forty years. We were recognised for our world leading research and teaching, leading to improvements in academic and clinical practice and delivery of healthcare.

In February, we celebrated this fantastic achievement with a delegation from the University of Aberdeen, including HERU staff and students, heading to London. Current and former HERU and HSRU staff attended a meal at Guildhall to begin the celebrations. This was followed by a

visit to Buckingham Palace where we were presented with the award by the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall.

HERU Director, Mandy Ryan said, "This award is a fantastic achievement for HERU and HSRU. It 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". Well done to us all!



Professor Mandy Ryan proudly holding the Queen's Anniversary Prize, with Professor Ian Diamond (Principal), Professor Craig Ramsay, Director of HSRU, and the Very Reverend Professor Ian Torrance, Pro-Vice Chancellor



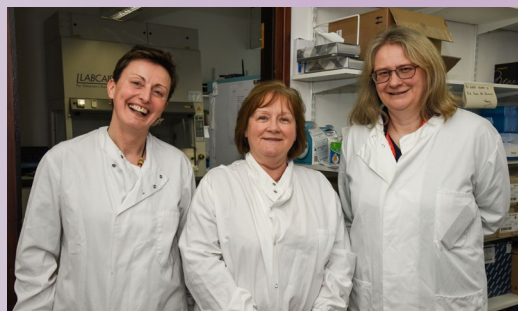
Staff and PhD students from HERU and HSRU outside Buckingham Palace following the award ceremony



Current and former directors and staff of HERU and HSRU, and colleagues from the University of Aberdeen, at Guildhall

Scottish participation in the 100,000 Genomes Project – health economic analysis

Our health economics analysis of Whole Genomic Sequencing for rare disorders continues to attract interest. Maureen Watt MSP for Aberdeen South and North Kincardine, and the Scottish Government Minister for Mental Health, visited the Scottish Genomes Partnership at the University of Aberdeen, meeting Professor Zosia Miedzybrodzka, Professor of Medical Genetics and Clinical Lead for NHS Scotland Genetics Consortium, and HERU Director Professor Mandy Ryan. Zosia leads the Scottish participation in the 100,000 Genomes Project and heads the North of Scotland Regional Genetics Service. Mandy is leading a project on the economic analysis of the costs and benefits of whole genome sequencing for families with rare genetic disorders in Scotland. We look forward to updating you on the progress of this project in future Newsletters.



A scientist for the day: Professor Mandy Ryan with Maureen Watt MSP and Professor Zosia Miedzybrodzka

Admission to intensive care units (ICU): what matters?

The first quarter of this year has seen the completion of our National Institute for Health Research-funded project investigating referral decisions to Intensive Care Units (ICUs). In collaboration with the University of Warwick, we aimed to understand ICU referral decisions and develop a decision support framework for consultants. As the project drew to a close we held a dissemination day at The Shard (London), where we presented our results to the main stakeholders.

ICUs are specialist hospital wards that provide treatment and monitoring for people who are very ill. The decision whether to admit a patient to ICU can be challenging as ICUs provide lifesaving but invasive treatments. Often ICU consultants make admission decisions in situations of clinical uncertainty and under time pressure. Substantial variability in admission decisions

has been observed among consultants and across hospitals.

Nicolas Krucien and Mandy Ryan led the discrete choice experiment (DCE) component of the project, looking at the impact of different factors on referral decisions. Of the factors investigated in the DCE, patient's age was ranked as having the largest impact on admission, followed by the views of their family, and severity of their main co-morbidity. Physiological measurement indicating severity of illness, measured by National Early Warning Score, had less impact than the Gestalt assessment by the ICU registrar.

Four distinct decision-making patterns were identified and defined by the relative importance given to the different factors. This variability in ICU admission decision-making helps explain observed medical practice



Mandy, Nicolas and research team colleagues at the project dissemination meeting at the Shard in London

variations. We have developed two 'ICU admission simulators' to help consultants reflect on their referral decisions.

<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/med/research/hscience/sssh/research/intensive/>

Engage Researchers' Academy



Patricia and colleagues engaging with the Public as part of Explorathon '17. For more on this event, please see <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/heru/engagement/>

Congratulations to **Patricia Norwood** (right), HERU lead for public engagement, who has been 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. The first Engage Researchers' Academy cohort will meet in Bristol for three two-day sessions with the first session on the 5th–6th June.

We look forward to hearing about Patricia's experiences in the Academy, and to improving our engagement with the public.



Global Food Security – Early Career Researchers



Policy Lab on the determinants of food choice for healthy and sustainable diets

Ourega-Zoé Ejebu, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, HERU

The economics of food choice is a growing area of research interest for HERU, and one where we feel we can make a difference.

In February 2018, I applied for a place on the Global Food Security (GFS) programme. The topic related to the determinants of food choices and the combination of interventions that will lead to healthier and more sustainable diets.

I was privileged to be among the delegates selected to participate and contribute to the Policy Lab. It took place in the heart of London in the prestigious Strand Palace Hotel and involved three intensive days (19th–21st March) generating creative ideas. It brought together 20 early career researchers (ECRs) from different disciplines ranging from consumer psychology; environmental sciences; public health and nutrition, plant science and, of course, health economics!

On day one, we were introduced to the complex concepts and definitions

of the global food system; as well as the challenges in meeting global food demands in a sustainable manner. On day two, random groups of delegates were formed and we were asked to answer questions relating to the economic, social, physiological, psychological and environmental determinants of food choice and what type of policies could contribute to increase healthy diets without compromising the environment.

Creative thinking intensified on day three. We were asked to think and develop policies that could contribute to healthier and more sustainable diets. Various ideas on policy emerged and were reflected on, leading to three main topics emerging: (i) interventions in primary school for healthier diets, (ii) double-duty interventions, and (iii) stealth interventions to shift consumption from meat to plant-based proteins.

After identifying topics of interest, the final groups were formed and the remainder of the third day consisted of developing further policy on stealth interventions, submitting a proposal and presenting it to the rest of the delegates. The group I was part of were awarded the grant (£5000) and the opportunity to write a policy-report, starting May 2018 and finishing October 2018.

I found the whole experience extremely humbling, enriching (and exhausting!). From the onset, I discovered other aspects of writing for a competitive grant process. I learned greatly from interdisciplinary collaboration and enjoyed working on developing what seemed like a vague idea at first to a clearer and more-focused project. I met many inspiring early career researchers and hope this may lead to future collaborations. I am very excited and looking forward to working on the stealth interventions report.

Remembering Professor Alan Maynard

(1944-2018)

We were all saddened to hear of the untimely death of Alan Maynard. Whilst most of Alan's distinguished academic career was spent at the University of York, he was an External Adviser to HERU for many years and was, for a short period, Acting Director. Alan played a leading role in the development of health economics as a discipline and its application to the NHS and health policy. He founded the York MSc in Health Economics, from which a number of graduates have worked in HERU, including our current Director.

Alan received an Honorary Doctorate (DSc) from the University of Aberdeen in 2003 in recognition of his outstanding achievements internationally as well as nearer home. Alan was an inspiring teacher who encouraged critical thinking from his students and his address to the graduates at this ceremony contained advice that was typical of his approach, "may they bear in mind always the need for scepticism in the absence of evidence, and compassion in the face of avoidable misery."

As well as his very sharp wit, Alan brought a great sense of fun to every endeavour. He will be sorely missed by family, friends and colleagues.



*Professor Alan Maynard (left) with
Professor Cairns-Smith (UoA) following Alan's
Honorary Doctorate award at Aberdeen*

Announcement: Next Expert Workshop

Our next DCE Workshop – Using discrete choice experiments in health economics: theoretical and practical issues, will take place from **21st to 23rd November 2018** in Aberdeen.

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

Save the Date...

Health Economics Network Scotland (HENS) Workshop

Our 2018 workshop 'Identifying, appraising and applying health economics evidence for public health will run on **1st November** in Edinburgh.

For further details see: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/heru/courses/workshops/hens-workshop/>

Other News...

The University of Aberdeen in a Post-Brexit World



Left, Professor Craig Ramsey and Professor Mandy Ryan at the Westminster event

Hosted by Kirsty Blackman, Aberdeen North MP, a delegation from the University of Aberdeen attended the House of Commons to highlight the importance of our world leading research in a post-Brexit world. Hot off the heels of celebrating the Queen's Anniversary Prize at Buckingham Palace, Professor **Mandy Ryan**, and Professor Craig Ramsay (Director, HSRU) attended this Westminster event, highlighting the ways that the work of the units has changed millions of lives all over the world.

We welcome:



Luis Enrique Loría Rebolledo as a Research Assistant. Luis is working with **Verity Watson** and Dr Rainer Schulz from the Business School (University of Aberdeen) on a project using air pollution modelling and house price indices to estimate the value of reducing air pollution.



Xuemin Zhu who commenced her PhD on: *'The role of the physician's risk and time preferences and personality in clinical decision making'*. Xuemin is supervised by **Professor Marjon van der Pol**, Professor Anthony Scott (University of Melbourne) and Dr Julia Allan (Health Psychology, University of Aberdeen).



Mélanie Atunes who is studying for her MSc in Health Economics at the University of Paris-Est Créteil Val de Marne. Melanie is working with **Verity Watson** and Dr Rainer Schulz on an empirical analysis of the location of General Practices in Scotland.

Congratulations to **Gin Nie Chua** who, following the birth of her daughter Eilidh, submitted her PhD with very minor changes. We look forward to see her graduate in the summer.



Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS), HERU, HSRU and NMAHP co-sponsored 6th Annual Research Symposium

Our annual symposium, organised in collaboration with Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS), the Health Services Research Unit (HSRU) and the Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions (NMAHP) Research Unit, focused on *'Evidence for Integration: What can research tell us about health and social care integration and its role in improving outcomes?'* HERU attendees, **Mandy Ryan**, **Diane Skätun**, **Shona Christie**, **Paul McNamee** and **Attakrit Leckcivilize**, chatted to delegates at the HERU stand. Paul and Attakrit's work on: *'What can research tell us about health and social care integration and its role in improving outcomes?'* was presented. Mandy chaired the afternoon sessions. The symposium provided information about research across Scotland on health and social care integration, and opportunities for future collaborative research.

Health Economics Research Unit

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

Return visit funded by Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies...

During March and April, **Dr Verity Watson** spent two weeks in Canada visiting Dr Dean Regier of the British Columbia Cancer Research Centre and School of Population and Public Health, University of British Columbia. Verity's research visit was funded by the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies. This was the return visit following the month Verity spent in Canada in 2015. During her time in Vancouver, Verity and Dean continued their collaborative research developing ways to identify respondents who provide the most reliable responses to stated preference surveys. Verity also attended a meeting of Vancouver-based health economists and led a journal club about experimental health economics, and presented a seminar at the School of



Verity Watson and Dean Regier

Population and Public Health. Verity is grateful to the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies for supporting both research visits to UBC.

While in Canada, Verity visited Professor Deborah Marshall at the University of Calgary for a week, discussing future DCE workshops being held in Canada and presenting a seminar as part of the Network of Alberta Health Economics (NOAHE) rounds.

HERU staff invited to give a plenary...

Boyers, D. 'Improving the predictive validity of dental care DCEs, an application to the Improving Quality of Dentistry (IQuaD) study', *Keynote Lecture to the Centre for Oral Health Research (COHR)*, Newcastle University.

Ryan, M. 'Towards better patient focused outcomes', *National Healthcare Outcomes Conference*, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Dublin.



Mandy Ryan presenting at the National Healthcare Outcomes Conference in Dublin



Our 2018 external seminar series continued as we warmly welcomed Professor Aki Tsuchiya from the University of Sheffield who presented *'An exploration of the non-iterative time trade off method to value health states'*.

NEW NIHR Funding...

With colleagues at the University of Manchester, **Dwayne Boyers** secured funding from NIHR for *'A randomised control trial to evaluate the clinical and cost effectiveness of prescribing high concentration fluoride toothpaste to prevent and treat dental caries in high risk older adults (REFLECT Trial)'*. This trial will run for 57 months and was awarded £827,812.

Along with colleagues at the University of Sheffield, **Aileen Neilson** secured funding from the Health Delivery and Research Programme for a project entitled *'Multiple Symptoms Study 3: pragmatic trial of a community based clinic for patients with persistent (medically unexplained) physical symptoms'*. This project was awarded £1.2m and will run for 42 months.

