

## Welcome to the October 2017 HERU News.

Since our last Newsletter HERU staff have been busy finalising our new 'Online Postgraduate Programme' which went live in October, our research has been presented at conferences in Scotland and beyond and we participated in a public engagement event in Aberdeen. You can read about these activities, and project and staffing updates in this issue of our newsletter.

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 page ([http://twitter.com/HERU\\_Abdn](http://twitter.com/HERU_Abdn)).

## Our NEW Online Postgraduate Programme goes live...



Shelley Farrar

HERU has launched a new Online Postgraduate Programme in Health Economics for Health Professionals (HE4HP). The programme is for health professionals who would like to improve their understanding of health economics and research methods. The part-time online programme is ideal for students unable to study full-time or wishing to avoid relocating to study. The new programme builds on our long-running Post Graduate Certificate in Health Economics. It offers students the opportunity to study to Certificate, Diploma or MSc level and extends study choices to include our newly developed Economics of Health Behaviour course and a range of generic health research methods courses.

We are delighted to welcome a professional and geographically diverse cohort of more than 40 students studying with us in 2017/18.

**Shelley Farrar** coordinates the HE4HP Programme, five of the offered courses are developed and coordinated by HERU researchers and the remaining four are coordinated by health science specialists in the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition at the University of Aberdeen.

Further details are on our website <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/heru/courses/pgcert/> and there is a short YouTube video about the course: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwJ4KB\\_wUBE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwJ4KB_wUBE)



## Public Engagement I'm a Health Economist, ask me what I do...

HERU took part in the Explorathon'17 activities in Aberdeen city centre in September. We had an exhibit at the European Researchers event in the Bon Accord shopping centre. As part of the exhibit members of the public were asked to decide which of four personalised health scenarios they would choose to fund.

The event aimed to get the public thinking about health economics and funding decisions, and six HERU staff and PhD students were on hand to discuss the choices and the work of the Unit.

You can read more about the options offered and the views of the public on what to fund on our website ([www.abdn.ac.uk/heru/engagement](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/heru/engagement)).

## Capacity Building...

### University of York, MSc 3-month placements

HERU hosted two MSc placements over the summer.

Xuemin Zhu researched the 'Relationship between individuals' time preference and Time Trade Off (TTO) values', supervised by **Marjon van der Pol**. We are pleased that Xuemin has been awarded an Elphinstone PhD Scholarship for research on the 'Role of economic preferences and personality in clinical decision making'. Before commencing her PhD studies at HERU in January 2018, Xuemin will work on the NIHR funded **INTERVAL Trial** along with **Dwayne Boyers**.

Chenxue Liang (Tracy) looked at the impact of including a cost attribute within a discrete choice experiment. She was supervised by **Nicolas Krucien** and **Mandy Ryan**.

### PLACES AVAILABLE

Health Economics Network Scotland (HENS) Workshop, 22 November 2017

**'Identifying, Appraising and Applying Health Economics Evidence for Public Health'**

The course provides an introduction to the identification, appraisal and application of economic evaluation in health care. No prior experience in economic evaluation is required.

**To register your interest in the course please contact Lesley Innes at, [l.innes@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:l.innes@abdn.ac.uk)**

## New Funding

### Making every contact count: assessing the impact of a lifestyle intervention (ActWELL) in women attending NHS breast screening clinics

The incidence of breast cancer in Scotland is predicted to rise by 27% by 2030. It is recognised that weight reduction has the potential to reduce the incidence of breast cancer in post-menopausal women. In Scotland, 72% of women aged 55 to 74 years have a BMI >25kg/m<sup>2</sup>.

The ActWELL trial is a four centre, 1:1 parallel group RCT of a 12-month weight management intervention initiated in breast cancer screening centres and delivered by trained Breast Cancer Now ActWELL coaches. The trial will randomly allocate 545 women with a BMI >25kg/m<sup>2</sup> to intervention and control groups.

The ActWELL trial will assess the benefits, costs and acceptability of a community delivered, weight management programme in women attending routine breast cancer screening clinics. The research will address how the ActWELL feasibility protocol should be altered in dose and duration to optimise the intervention in order to support behaviour change from 12 weeks (feasibility follow-up) to 12 months (RCT follow-up).

The primary outcome will be the impact of the

ActWELL programme (compared to usual care) at 12 months follow-up on changes in body weight and physical activity. In addition, the trial will inform whether the ActWELL programme is worthwhile to the NHS in terms of balancing any benefit in health outcomes to women against the added costs (cost-effectiveness) – expressed in terms of incremental costs per quality-adjusted life year (QALY) gained at 12 months follow-up.

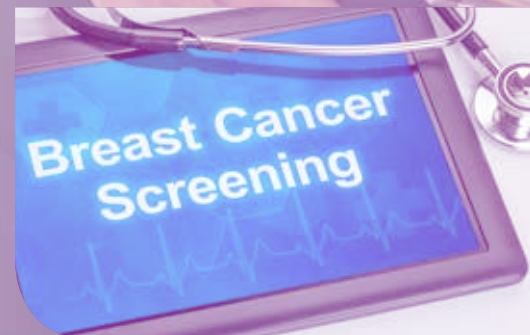
The intervention offers potential to endorse and facilitate weight management at a potentially teachable moment. The Scottish Government has already made a commitment to roll out the intervention if the RCT has positive results.

**This project is funded by the Scottish Government, Population Health Directorate, Health Protection Division.**

**Research Team:** Led by A Anderson, A Craigie (University of Dundee), S Trewick, **A Neilson** (University of Aberdeen), N Mutrie, C McAdam (University of Edinburgh), R O'Carroll, M Stead (University of Stirling), N Sataar (University of Glasgow), EJ Macaskill (NHS Tayside)

**For further information on this project see:** <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/heru/research/hbi/projects/actwell/>

Or contact **Aileen Neilson** at [aileen.neilson@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:aileen.neilson@abdn.ac.uk)



## Completed Research

### Updating the Staff Market Forces Factor

The Market Forces Factor (MFF) recognises that the costs of providing care are not necessarily the same for different parts of the country. These geographical differences in the cost of providing (and therefore commissioning) healthcare services are "unavoidable" in that the commissioner/provider of the healthcare is, by definition, restricted to its geographical location.

The Staff Market Forces Factor (sMFF) is the largest element within the MFF and relates to unavoidable variation in non-medical staff costs. Within the English NHS it is used in the formula to allocate funding to clinical commissioning groups, with the national tariff within the Payment by Results system and within the formula that allocates funding to GP practices for providing primary care services. In Scotland its use has been limited to allocating resources for primary care services.



HERU has been involved in researching issues relating to the

sMFF since 2005 with a preliminary study commissioned by the Department of Health leading to a full review of the sMFF in 2006. This research provided evidence of the association between the degree of regional pay variation in the NHS and the private sector and regional variations in recruitment and retention of particular NHS staff groups. It produced recommendations on the preferred way to capture these within an index and the recommendations were subsequently integrated within the construction of the sMFF index.

The current sMFF is based on estimates of spatial wage differentials using 2007–2009 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) data. These figures were provided by a research team led by HERU along with collaborators at the universities of Glasgow, Manchester, UCL and York. In 2016, HERU were commissioned by NHS Improvement and NHS England to provide a new updated Staff MFF index based on the latest data available from ASHE. This ensures funding and pricing reflects the current labour market conditions faced by commissioners and providers of healthcare.

The updated sMFF index was recently completed with the new figures available to be incorporated into the various funding mechanisms that use the MFF correction factor. To further understand the changes within the sMFF index, HERU is continuing with its research on spatial wage differentials and investigating in more detail the changes in the patterns of regional wage differences in the UK in the period since the global financial crisis.



**For further information on this project see:**

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/heru/research/worc/projects/updating-the-mmff/>

or contact **Diane Skåtun** at [d.skaton@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:d.skaton@abdn.ac.uk)



## New funding secured



Professor Shaun Treweek, from our sister unit – the Health Services Research Unit (HSRU), **Aileen Neilson** (HERU) and colleagues have been awarded a Scottish Government, Population Health Directorate, Health Protection Division award to undertake 'A randomised control trial to assess the impact of a lifestyle (ActWELL) intervention in women attending NHS breast screening clinics'. This project was awarded £74,174 and will run for three years.



Professor Gary McFarlane (Epidemiology, University of Aberdeen), **Professor Paul McNamee** (HERU) and colleagues secured funding of £184,561 from Arthritis Research UK to investigate 'Fibromyalgia optimal management in patients with axial spondyloarthritis (FOMAxS)' over two years.



Professor Phyo Myint, Institute of Applied Health Sciences, University of Aberdeen, **Professor Paul McNamee** (HERU) and colleagues have been awarded £178,075 by the Scottish Government, Chief Scientist Office, Health, Improvement Protection and Services Committee. The award is for a pilot study over two years to investigate 'Oral iron: intravenous iron or discontinuation of therapy for older adults with treatment-unresponsive iron deficiency anaemia'.

## Staffing News



**Maria Dimitrova**  
*Research Assistant*

**We welcomed Maria to HERU in August 2017 as a Research Assistant working in the Assessment of Technologies theme.**

Maria is working with **Dr Graham Scotland** on a five year follow-up of the Comparison of Laser, Surgery, and Foam Sclerotherapy (CLASS) trial. Maria completed a HERU internship in the summer of 2016 and successfully completed the MSc Applied Economics (Health Pathway) at the University of Aberdeen this summer.



**Terry Porteous**  
*Research Fellow*

**Terry joined HERU in September 2017 as a Research Fellow working in the Workforce and Organisation of Care theme.**

She is working with Dr Diane Skatun on a collaborative project with the Centre of Healthcare Education Research and Innovation (CHERI), University of Aberdeen. Her research is applying discrete choice experiments to better understand doctors' retirement decisions.

Terry has collaborated with HERU over a number of years, working on the application of discrete choice experiments in Pharmacy.

We look forward to working with her on this new and exciting collaboration.

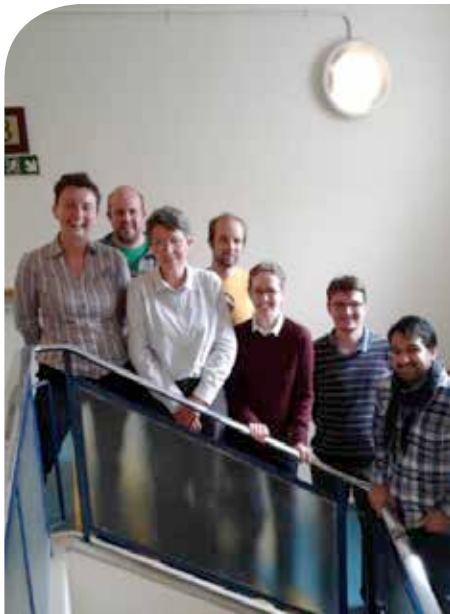
## Other News



Liam McMorrow

### Congratulations to Liam

**Liam Mc Morrow**, a PhD student at HERU who now works at the Health Economics Research Centre at the University of Oxford, recently won the runner-up prize in the KickStart section of the Converge Challenge 2017. The Converge Challenge is a Scottish-wide company creation competition for staff, students and recent graduates of Scottish universities and research institutes. Liam's company, Adelle Health, aims to make life easier for people self-managing chronic diseases and he was nominated for development of the Insulin PenPal to help diabetes patients administer more accurate insulin doses. More information on Liam's company is available at <http://adellehealth.com/>.



### Recent Visitor to HERU

Professor Deborah Street from the Centre for Health Economics Research and Evaluation (CHERE), University of Technology Sydney visited HERU in September. Professor Street is renowned for her work on the construction of designed experiments. Professor Street met with members of the Methods of Benefit Valuation team during the visit and presented a seminar titled "What can simulations tell us about DCE performance?"



### Supporting our PhD students...

In September, **Alastair Irvine** and **Marjon van der Pol** attended the European Health Economics Association (EuHEA) PhD Student-Supervisor Conference in Lausanne. The conference draws students, supervisors and early career researchers together to enable new entrants to the field to receive detailed feedback on their work from more experienced colleagues. Alastair presented the pilot results from his experiment on *doctor decision making with time inconsistent patients*. The discussion, by Dr Sara Machado (London School of Economics and Political Science), and comments from the floor were very

pertinent and will feed into the design of the main study.

Marjon discussed a paper by Philipp Hübler (University of Augsburg) on *the heritability of time preferences using a twin study*. She praised the paper's contribution to a developing area of time preference research.

It was great to see so many young researchers and old friends from around the world at the conference. Many thanks to the organisers Mark Dusheiko and Dominique Actis for a great couple of days.

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