

South East Trials Unit



...from conception to completion

SETU, the new University of Kent trials unit was recently launched at CHSS. The unit supports and conducts randomised controlled trials. The unit provides an infrastructure for the design, conduct and analysis of trials across the health and social care sectors. Leadership for methodological design, trial management and co-ordination, data management, randomisation and statistical analysis are all key functions of the unit.

The director Professor Simon Coulton said, 'SETU can help with all aspects of designing, managing and analysing randomised controlled trials...from conception to completion. Expertise encompasses pre-trial planning, including literature and systematic reviews, prevalence studies, methodological development, sample size calculation and outcome measurement through to the application for

funding and study management. Our new randomisation service is also very exciting. It is a state of the art international twenty four hour service that provides remote, secure allocations to research groups, this sort of service has never been available in Kent before.'

The trials unit has been welcomed by the local health and social care community and has already played a part in a number of applications for research funding for studies based in Kent. The unit actively encourages clinicians, practitioners and academics to collaborate in the development of scientifically rigorous methodological approaches to the evaluation of health and social care interventions.

In January 2008 Dawn Primarolo, Minister of State for Public Health supported the development of clinical research networks to support trials throughout England. The role of clinical networks aims to boost the numbers of patients taking part in clinical trials and to improve the speed, quality and co-ordination of trials across England. Also

launched in January – a new section of the NHS Choices website, which is designed to give patients and members of the public more information about how to get involved in clinical trials.

Dr David Smithard, Clinical Director of the Kent and Medway Comprehensive Local Research Network said, 'The backing of the University of Kent for the South East Trials Unit is a great boost for research in Kent and Medway. We hope it will generate new collaborations and new trials that the network can help recruit patients for. With the new research and development strategy there are some great opportunities for health and social care research. I hope together we can get Kent on the research map and offer our full support to this new venture.'

Simon Coulton, an experienced and successful researcher in the area of clinical trials was appointed to the Centre for Health Service Studies in January 2008.

For further information go to:
www.kent.ac.uk/chss/setu



Simon Coulton

Professor Simon Coulton brings a wealth of experience in setting up and running randomised controlled trials as well as experience in epidemiological and quantitative research.

Possessing a background in psychology and psychosocial interventions, particularly for trials of interventions for alcohol and substance misuse, Simon Coulton has been involved with many large-scale studies that have impacted on the way in which healthcare is delivered in the UK. His previous research has encompassed a variety of clinical areas including screening for deafness in young children, reducing surgical interventions for glue ear, the management of back pain and self-management of patients with heart failure.

His current research includes funding from the Medical Research Council, National Institute of Health Research, Department of Health and European Union. This funding includes £987,000 from the NIHR HTA to examine the relative effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of stepped care interventions versus treatment as usual for older alcohol users in primary care. He is also a principal investigator for the largest study of interventions for alcohol use disorders ever

conducted, Screening and Brief Intervention Pilots funded by the Department of Health.

Andy Alaszewski, Professor of Health Studies and Director of CHSS, said: 'We are delighted to have Simon in CHSS. His skills complement the unit's growing ability to conduct mixed methods research and trials. We are very pleased to have him at the University of Kent and look forward to his developing research partnerships here with health and social care organisations and agencies.'

For further information contact Simon Coulton on 01227 824535 or email s.coulton@kent.ac.uk



Health and Social Survey Unit

Hospice patient survey

The CHSS Health and Social Survey Unit are running the Hospice Patient Survey again for 2008 and 2009. The survey is conducted on behalf of hospices nationally and co-ordinated through the charity Help the Hospices. It measures patient satisfaction with hospice services.

Linda Jenkins, who has managed the survey on behalf of CHSS for the last two years said 'We're delighted to be asked to do the survey again because it provides great value for money. Hospices appreciate getting reliable results in a convenient format to engage managers at all levels from the board downwards, and it gives service users the opportunity to make their voices heard.'

You can see the results of previous surveys at: www.helpthehospices.org.uk/index.asp

For further information contact Charlotte Hastie on 01227 823690 or email, c.l.hastie@kent.ac.uk

Caring in Kent

A picture of caring in Kent was published recently by the Health and Social Survey Unit in conjunction with the University's Tizard Centre. The 'Caring in Kent' 2008 report draws on the results of a Kent wide 'Health and Lifestyle Survey' conducted in 2005.

The report gives a general profile of carers, levels and types of care-giving, carers' health, and the level and types of support they receive.

Carers provide unpaid care by looking after an ill, frail or disabled family member, friend or partner. The increasingly important role of the 'informal carer' is – in good part – due to the rising proportion of older people in the UK population. Not only do people live longer but many experience a number of chronic conditions; these require support from family members if the older person is to remain living in the community.

The report was commissioned by Kent County Council. The full report and summary, both in pdf format are available on the CHSS website.

For further information contact Charlotte Hastie on 01227 823690 or email, c.l.hastie@kent.ac.uk

CHSS to lead new South East Research Design Service

CHSS is putting the final pieces in place to lead the new Department of Health funded South East Research Design Service.

Since 2004, The South East Research and Development Support Unit has supported research capacity development in health and social care in Kent, Surrey and Sussex. Prior to this, CHSS ran the Kent and Surrey RDSU in an initiative started by Professor Mike Calnan.

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) is establishing a new network of Research Design Services (RDS) to help researchers develop and design high quality research proposals for submission to national, peer-reviewed funding competitions for applied health or social care research.

The new service will start on 1st October 2008 and will supersede the current

Research and Development Support Units. There will be an RDS in each strategic health authority.

The South East Research Design Service (SE RDS) will build on the current collaboration between the universities of Kent, Surrey and Brighton. It will cover the SE Coast SHA region.

South East RDSU Director Professor Andy Alaszewski said, 'The new RDS network committee rated highly the bid for the SE RDS. They applauded the way the tender had been built around the current SE RDSU and the emphasis on involving the patients and public in research. We will be making a formal announcement in October 2008, but in the meantime, we can say that

the RDSU continues until October, when it will be replaced by the new SE RDS and we look forward to being part of the new network.'

The NIHR RDS will offer advice and guidance on all aspects of research design and conduct to researchers from the NHS and social care. It will also help researchers to find appropriate collaborators – in universities and in the NHS including both patients, patient representatives and the public at all stages in formulating research questions, designing and carrying out research, and acting on research findings.

Each RDS will provide access to health advice, economic and statistical expertise, systematic review and research methodological expertise, and be able to draw on other expertise as necessary to provide guidance on the range of topics indicated above.

www.serdsu.org.uk



Mixed race people in Britain, 1920-1950

A new study will investigate who was considered to be of 'mixed race' between 1920 and 1950 and how this population was perceived and treated by officialdom, the media, and wider society. It will explore accounts of 'mixed race' people themselves and the terms of identity they used through the analysis of autobiographical recordings and other material held at places such as Liverpool's Cruel Sea Oral Reminiscence Project. By understanding how these

perceptions emerged it is hoped to make an assessment of their bearing on contemporary conceptualisations of mixedness in Britain today.

By the 1920s there were settled mixed race populations in British seaports, including Liverpool and Cardiff, brought about in part by visiting African and Asian seamen, and significant communities in other cities including London and Manchester.

From the mid-1920s to the 1940s the pathologisation of race mixing and stigmatisation of mixed race people in Britain was at its greatest, a process to which many major institutions and significant public figures contributed. The project is looking at notable collections of documents, including material at the National Archives on the social situation in British ports, the repatriation of Liverpool Chinese seamen in 1946, and the circumstances of the 'mixed' offspring of black American GIs and English women; material relating to the eugenics movement held at the Wellcome Library in London and the Eugenics Archive, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, New York; and previously neglected material held in film archives.

The British Academy funded project is being undertaken jointly by Peter Aspinall, Reader at CHSS, and Chamion Caballero, Senior Research Fellow at London South Bank University. It is hoped that the project will result in the largely invisible history of mixed race Britain being given a more prominent position in the contemporary study of race relations.

For further information contact Peter Aspinall on 01227 827576 or email p.j.aspinall@kent.ac.uk

Study aims to improve English language services for Bangladeshis in London

A new study led by Research Fellow Dr Ferhana Hashem aims to help improve language services for Bangladeshis in London – a group that, of all the 2001 Census-defined 16 ethnic categories, has the lowest levels of ability in the use of the English language.

The study, which has been funded by the Nuffield Foundation, will be supported by Peter Aspinall, Reader at CHSS.

Among their key lines of inquiry Dr Hashem and Peter Aspinall aim to explore what kind of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) training Bangladeshis require and what are the current barriers to accessing services. They also want to know how ESOL providers can best configure training for Bangladeshi community members from their own and community perspectives. This research is timely. In its final report, the Commission on Integration and Cohesion concluded that 'a lack of English language skills is one of the biggest barriers to integration' and called for 'more innovative ways of providing ESOL'

Dr Hashem said: 'We all know that not only does it make economic sense to help people communicate effectively but effective communication is also a precondition for social inclusion'. However, surveys undertaken in the 1990s indicate that while



three-quarters of Bangladeshi men can speak English fluently or fairly well, around only 40% of Bangladeshi women can do so, the latter figure falling to under 5% amongst 45-64 year-olds (*The Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities; Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Diversity and Disadvantage*. 1997. Modood, Tariq & Berthoud, Richard et al, London, Policy Studies Institute).

Dr Hashem added: 'Through this project we hope to understand the paradoxical position Bangladeshis face learning English: on the

one hand, they are not at all against the idea of improving their level of English – on the contrary – many actively pursue this; however, on the other hand, the low-skills and education base of this community has meant that many Bangladeshis do not have the opportunity to learn English'.

For further information contact Ferhana Hashem on 01227 824887 or email f.hashem@kent.ac.uk

Development of an evidence-based Hospice at Home scheme in East Kent

Pilgrims Hospices in East Kent are developing a hospice at home scheme and have commissioned CHSS to undertake a literature review to provide evidence to inform the design of a new crisis service and its subsequent testing.

The hospice at home representative groups, NICE (2004) and WHO (2002) make recommendations on home care services for palliative cancer care and provide examples of current UK services operating and information on how to develop programmes.

But for service providers there are gaps in the information about services for the final stages of life such as:

- Which models of palliative care are most effective?
- What are the appropriate outcomes of hospice-at-home schemes?
- Is palliative care equally beneficial to all patient groups?

Andy Alaszewski and Annette King are leading a study to identify:

- The most appropriate elements of the provision

- The organisation of the service and partnership working in geographical settings
- The location of the service and its optimum geographical spread
- Relevant outcome measures for monitoring and evaluating a future service

The literature review is co-ordinated by research assistant Laura Stosz with specialised input from the NHS Information Service.

For further information contact Professor Alaszewski on 01227 827645, email a.m.alaszewski@kent.ac.uk

Do you trust the NHS?

Do you trust the NHS? Recent NHS policies such as the clinical governance framework are meant to ensure that patients are safe and risks are managed. The framework brings together all the components of quality, including patient and public involvement and ensures each are placed high on the agenda. Research assistant Patrick Brown investigated trust in his recently submitted PhD.

Patrick conducted qualitative interviews with female gynaecological patients who were being cared for in centres that have been associated in the press with various failures in maintaining acceptable standards of care. He discovered that rather than institutional concerns affecting patients' abilities to trust, interaction with professionals was much more critical. The research was carried out in collaboration with clinical nurse specialist, Trish Swift and Dr Andy Nordin, consultant gynaecologist and gynaecological oncologist who leads the development of the East Kent



Gynaecological oncology centre at the Queen Elizabeth and the Queen Mother Hospital in Margate.

The findings underline the importance of effective and affective communication between professionals and patients in order to furnish trust and minimise anxiety. Patrick presented the findings at the British Gynaecological Cancer Society 'Quality of

Life Assessment in Gynaecological Oncology' conference in May where he won first prize for the best presentation.

Patrick has published two articles from the study which are available at: www.kent.ac.uk/chss/publications/index.html

Contact Patrick on 01227 824532 or email p.r.brown@kent.ac.uk

Medical records content

Professor Iain Carpenter is Clinical Lead on Records Standards for the Health Informatics Unit of the Royal College of Physicians. The unit has recently completed the first stage of defining the medical record content for all patients admitted to NHS hospitals in England.

Iain Carpenter said, 'I am delighted we managed to get all the specialities to agree because hospitals structure their records differently across the NHS. The standards can now be implemented in the Electronic Patient Record for the NHS in England. This is real a breakthrough for researchers too. It

will also enable significant improvements in clinical coding and service evaluation'.

Implementation of standardised records is essential for electronic patient records to work and ensure quality of care, patient safety and clinical information. The project, which is funded by Connecting for Health, is developing professional standards for the content structure of admission, handover and discharge records of patients admitted to hospital.

An extensive consultation process has ensured large scale clinical engagement and specialist contribution to the development of the standards. There was overwhelming support for standardised admission records with over 80% agreeing that there should be common documentation across the whole NHS.

The standards were approved by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges in April 2008, submitted to Connecting for Health for approval by the Information Standards Board and given to system suppliers for incorporation into the Electronic Patient Record.

For further information go to: <http://hiu.rcplondon.ac.uk/>





Jenny Billings £100,310 from the Big Lottery Fund

A new CHSS study aims to reduce obesity and promote wellbeing by encouraging increased physical exercise for 11 - 15-year-old girls.

The three-year study, which is being conducted by Jenny Billings, Ferhana Hashem and Jan Macvarish will first identify the issues that prevent or inhibit girls in this age group from engaging in regular physical exercise or sport. It will then recommend new and innovative ways to inspire increased regular participation in local programmes.

Wendy Davey, Thanet Schools Sports Co-ordinator, Claire Martin, Public Health Specialist with Eastern Coastal Kent PCT, and pupils from schools in Margate and Westgate will be working alongside the University.

Senior Research Fellow Jenny Billings said: 'The latest figures from the Health Survey for England show that 40% of 11 - 15-year-old girls are overweight or obese. This clearly shows that they are not taking physical exercise; however, we need to find out from them what sort of exercise they would like to do to get them interested and active.'

Wendy Davey said: 'It is an exciting opportunity for girls in Margate and

Westgate to tell us what stops them from exercising at the moment. The researchers will talk with small groups of girls in school and listen to their concerns and ideas. If we can find out what really stops girls exercising, we can work around the problems. Maybe there are some new sports that girls would like to try. We look forward to them telling the researchers about their ideas.'

Claire Martin said: 'The research will provide evidence of how to work with young girls, helping schools encourage girls to be more active.'

The study has been funded by the Big Lottery Fund. Every year the Big Lottery Fund gives out millions of pounds from the National Lottery to good causes. The money goes to community groups and to projects that improve health, education and the environment.

For further information contact Jenny Billings on 01227 823876, email j.r.billings@kent.ac.uk

Preparing for and conducting high quality research review in local councils and social care organisations

A new one day training course which aims to develop participants skills and knowledge to apply for and conduct sound research review within local councils and social care organisations is being offered by CHSS. It will be offered twice a year, with the first course on September 24th 2008. It is designed to improve research practice and raise research standards in social care.

A variety of teaching methods will be used including interactive sessions, group work and discussions. The speakers include Senior Research Fellow Jenny Billings, Professor of Law Hazel Biggs and independent trainer Dr Chris Russell.

CHSS has taught research methods and the ethics of conducting research to NHS research ethics committees at twice yearly courses at the Goodenough College, London, for the last five years. Experience gained in relation to health service ethics and governance systems and practice will be brought together with developments in social care systems.

For further information contact Jackie Newton on 01227 827851 or email j.r.newton@kent.ac.uk

For a copy of the course flyer go to the CHSS website at: www.kent.ac.uk/chss

Refugees and asylum seekers: a review of equality and human rights implications

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has commissioned a review of the equality and human rights of refugees and asylum seekers in Britain. The review will inform its future research and policy agenda. CHSS senior research fellow, Peter Aspinall and Dr Charles Watters Director of the University's European Centre for the Study of Migration and Social Care (MASC) will examine equality in relation to employment and unemployment; earnings, income and poverty; education, training and skills; health; housing; access to benefits; access to services; access to the legal system; and discrimination, disadvantage/deprivation and integration and cohesion.

For further information contact Peter Aspinall on 01227 827576 or email p.j.aspinall@kent.ac.uk

CHSS Director joins Pandemic Flu Advisory Group



Experts around the world share the view that a global pandemic of influenza could develop and could cause millions of deaths. It is therefore imperative that the UK has robust preparations.

Professor Andy Alaszewski has been asked to join the governments Scientific Advisory Committee on Pandemic Influenza (SPI). Membership of the group was extended to include a wide range of scientific disciplines in order to plan for the far-reaching implications of a pandemic.

Professor Alaszewski explained that, 'Social scientists have a great contribution to make because it is vital to understand and plan for the way that populations behave in a crisis. You have to consider how people will behave. During the SARS epidemic, health workers were the most affected group and their willingness to continue exposing themselves to infection, an important issue.

There were huge economic consequences too as people stopped travelling. International mobility has a big impact on pandemic control and there are political consequences that need consideration as a result.'

Besides providing advice on specific questions, SAG will act as an information network for the government to ensure that it is informed of important developments in pandemic influenza related sciences, which could affect government policy.

More information on the Pandemic Preparedness activities of the Department of Health is available at: <http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/PandemicFlu/index.htm> or contact Professor Alaszewski on 01227 827645, email a.m.alaszewski@kent.ac.uk

Selected Publications 2007/08

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Aspinall, P. J., & Jacobson, B. (2007). Why poor quality of ethnicity data should not preclude its use for identifying disparities in health and health care. *Quality and Safety in Health Care*, 16(3), 176-180.

Aspinall, P. J., & Mitton, L. (2007). Are English local authorities' policies and practices on housing and council tax benefit administration meeting race equality requirements? *Critical Social Policy*, 27(3), 381-414.

Billings, J. & Cappello, R. (2007) *Let's Talk: Attitudes and values about sex and relationships among young people and professionals*. Findings from Phase 1. Canterbury: Centre for Health Services Studies.

Billings, J., Hashem, F. & Macvarish, J. (2007). *Looked-After Children's Views of Sex and Relationships Education and Sexual Health Services*. Canterbury: CHSS.

Billings, J., Hashem, F. & Macvarish, J. (2007) *Let's Talk: Attitudes and values about sex and relationships among young people and professionals. Phase 2: Development, Implementation and Evaluation of Two*

Open lecture on 24 October 2008

Professor Andrew Grey Professorial Fellow, North East Public Health Observatory, Editor of Public Money and Management and vice chair of County Durham Primary Care Trust will give the CHSS Open Lecture as part of the University's Autumn 2008 series. Professor Grey's interests are in the governance and management of public organisations as they struggle with the dilemma of being 'business-like but not like a business'.

His talk is entitled; 'Business like, but not like a business – the challenge for the NHS in Kent.' Professor Grey started his academic career at the University of Kent and it will be a great pleasure to welcome him back.

Open lectures are free and open to all. For further information please e-mail J.A.Henton@kent.ac.uk or go to: www.kent.ac.uk/whatson/lectures.html

Maria Kalli



Maria Kalli has joined CHSS as a lecturer in quantitative methods. Her main job is to teach and provide advice to the MPharm students at the Medway School of Pharmacy but her research interests include Bayesian Inference, Bayesian non parametrics, Monte Carlo Markov chain methods and time series and she aims to find applications of these in finance, and financial econometrics, clinical trials and biostatistics.

Maria has been a keen football fan since she was ten. She follows the Premiership, and the Cambionato and attends matches, including watching the Gills. She also enjoys the theatre and is mad about general knowledge quizzes.

Maria was born in Cyprus and her family live in the Southern part of the island.

Contact Maria on 01227 824908 or email M.Kalli@kent.ac.uk

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About CHSS

Centre for Health Services Studies is an interdisciplinary research centre of the University of Kent which has a programme of national and international health services research. The Centre draws together a wide range of research and disciplinary expertise, including health and social policy, medical sociology, public health and epidemiology, geriatric medicine, health economics, primary care, physiotherapy, statistical and information analysis.

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