

BRITISH SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
MEDICAL SOCIOLOGY GROUP

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 27 September 2003 at the University of York.

Forty-six members of the BSA Medical Sociology Study Group attended the meeting. Nicola Gibson (BSA Conference Manager) took the minutes.

1. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the AGM held on Saturday 28th September 2002 were approved.

2. Matters arising

[a] Car parking charges on campus

Car parking charges on the York University campus are currently £2.50. There are no plans for the conference to subsidise this cost, particularly in view of the large numbers of delegates who arrive by public transport.

[b] Delegates staying off campus

Concern that a number of delegates not staying on site due to the quality of the accommodation on offer was a worry since it could jeopardise the sound financial basis of the conference. Although a feature of other conferences that the BSA run it has not happened at the Medical Sociology conference. A constant number of about fifty people choose not to stay in University accommodation.

3. Elections

[a] **To the Editorial Board of The Sociology of Health and Illness** (2 vacancies)

Four members were thanked who had completed their three-year term of office, Davina Allen, Linda McKie, James Nazroo and Andrew Webster.

The nominees were Davina Allen, Paul Bellaby, Linda McKie, Elizabeth Meerabeau, James Nazroo and Hilary Thomas.

A ballot was conducted and those elected were to be announced during the Sociology of Health and Illness Editors' Report.

[b] **To the Group Committee** (5 vacancies [3 were re-election])

Jane Sandall and Cath Exley had reached the end of their second term of office (a four-year total) on the Medical Sociology Group Committee. They were thanked for their continuous support of the group, and for the serious consideration given to individual members' interest

within the conference and within the other work the group does, such as the prizes and bursaries. The group's gratitude was marked with a presentation and applause.

Gillian Bendelow, Nina Hallowell and Michael Traynor had completed their first two-year term of office and were seeking re-election for another two-year term of office. The nominees for the 2 new vacancies were Julia Lawton, Paul Godin, Stephen Brindle and Fiona Poland.

A ballot was conducted and results were to be announced later during the AGM.

4. Convenor's Report – Hannah Bradby

[a] The committee were thanked for their work towards this conference. Thanks to: Jane Sandall, Gillian Bendelow and Nina Hallowell who put the programme together this year; Cath Exley who had organised the entertainment; Nina Hallowell who had taken care of Jo Campling and Gillian Bendelow who had organised the publishers. Other members of the committee had staffed other aspects of the conference as well as doing other committee work.

[b] The committee were grateful for the help of Emma Rowley and Sarah Rhiannon Smith, the student helpers this year, who have both staffed the conference desk with good cheer.

The committee were grateful to the staff at the BSA office for their continued and highly professional support of the group. The biggest debt of gratitude was to Nicola Gibson who has continued to manage a great deal of the conference, with her extraordinary ability never to forget the list of jobs to be done and their precise timetabling. A gift was presented to Nicola Gibson accompanied by a round of applause.

The York conference office had continued to respond to the group's short term and long term demands and thankfully, had got the Roger Kirk Centre built in time for the conference. They were thanked.

[c] The conference this year comprised of 162 submitted paper abstracts, two plenary papers, 6 workshops and 7 posters. All of the abstracts had been accepted but, as of September 2003, there had been 8 withdrawals. Since the programme had been published there had been further withdrawals, leaving a programme of 149 scheduled oral presentation (compared with 184 oral presentations in 2002).

[d] Registrations for the annual Conference numbered 288. There were fewer paper presentations and fewer bookings compared to last year. The relative drop in bookings may have been due to the ESA running their conference in Spain at the same time.

Compared to previous years, a similar percentage non-UK based delegates were represented, with delegates from Ireland, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Australia, Canada, USA, India, New Zealand and South Africa.

Eighty-four delegates identified themselves as newcomers and/or postgraduates, which is 29% of the total attending delegates, a similar proportion compared to last year.

[e] There is now a complex array of bursaries on offer to delegates and compared to last year there has been a greater up take.

[f] The group were very pleased to welcome to the conference 3 students from the University of the West of England and three students from the University of Central England on free student places.

[g] The conference programme included a workshop run by Ivor Gaber on dealing with the media.

Another new feature of the programme conference was an in house conference dinner in the Roger Kirk Centre. Most of those who had registered for the conference had also registered for the dinner. The other work the committee had been doing over the year included promoting the book prize for its second year. The winner Eric Klinenberg 'A social autopsy of disaster in Chicago - Heat Wave' was announced during Fridays' plenary.

There was another teaching workshop at the conference, which was something that the group wanted to promote.

[h] The Medical Sociology News editorial team based at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical medicine based team were thanked for all their work: Judith Green, Geraldine Leydon, Geraldine Barrett, Nicki Thorogood, Michael Traynor and Kelly Lawless. Responsibility has been handed on to a team based in Aberdeen in 2003. They were thanked in advance; Maureen Porter, Lydia Lewis, Karen Forrest, Fiona French, Chris Yuill and Edwin van Teijlingen.

[I] Finally the group had received six applications for the Phil Strong prize, which represents an increase compared to the number received in 2002.

5. Financial Report – Edwin van Teijlingen

[a] For new members to the conference, and perhaps for everyone else, the group was reminded that the Medical Sociology Group is part of the registered charity that is the British Sociological Association. The Medical Sociology Group's finances are run from the BSA office and the group's accounts are audited through the BSA. The statement relating to the group taken from the overall BSA accounts was referred to for the year ending September 2002.

[b] Most of the group's income, as always, was generated from the conference. There was a small amount of income generated from publishers and subscriptions to Medical Sociology News. Regional income has been higher in the past due to the activities of the groups. The income from investments is £2,277 and this is allocated to the Phil Strong prize. A full set of the audited accounts was distributed for comment and information.

[c] Expenditure is mainly allocated to the conference. The group continues to sponsor Medical Sociology News for around £1,000. Medical Sociology News had near £3,000 income and their expenditure was £4,000.

The small accountancy fee and bank charges were highlighted.

[d] In 2001 the group had £65,000. At the end of 2002 the group had £66,000. The group was still attempting to reduce the reserves.

[e] Attention was drawn to the fee of £14,000 paid to the BSA for administration of the conference, including responding to individual queries. The BSA proposed to increase their fee by £700 compared to last year. The group felt the BSA was undercharging them and was conservative in its estimation of the proportion of time spent on the Medical Sociology Group. The increase in the management fee was proposed, seconded and a show of hands approved it.

[f] Next year funds will be slightly down in view of the loss of income from the drop in conference delegate numbers. In general the Medical Sociology Group finances are very healthy.

6. Prizes

Phil Strong Memorial prizes 2003-2004

There were 6 applications for the Phil Strong Memorial Prize. Members were reminded that as long as submissions met the criteria the prize was allocated randomly.

The Group's interest is now consolidated with the BSA funds and for 2003 it was just over £2,000. There would be 2 Phil Strong Prizes worth £1000 each.

The following were winners for the 2003 prize, Kerry Allan who was supervised by Ellen Annandale at the University of Leicester and Tanwen Edwards who was supervised by Sarah Oerton at the University of Glamorgan.

7. Sociology of Health and Illness – Editors' Report

[a] The outcome of the elections to SHI board were announced. The two elected nominees were James Nazroo and Davina Allen.

The editorial board were thanked for their hard work and support.

[b] SHI were delighted to report that there continued to be a healthy number of submissions to the journal. In the year since the last conference there had been 123 new submissions, 58 re-submissions, totalling 181. This represented a marginal increase on the previous year's submissions. Of those submitted 42 papers had been accepted.

[c] The editors were encouraged by the number of overseas authors who were choosing to submit to the journal. Just over half the submissions in the last year were from outside the UK, predominantly from the USA, Continental Europe, Australia and Asia.

[d] It had been reported last year that SHI is listed on Medline. This had enhanced the attractiveness of the journal to overseas authors. It had improved journal choice for forthcoming authors of medical sociology.

[e] A major development for the journal this year and for the medical sociology community has been the going live of the electronic submissions and refereeing system. The current situation is that just under 90% of all new submissions to the journal were via the electronic system. This percentage was increasing month by month. Some members, as had happened to the editors, had experienced minor glitches with the software. The editors were delighted to report the ones they knew about had been sorted out and were grateful to Blackwells for getting the system up and running. In general the feed back from users of the system had been very favourable.

[f] The referees have been very positive about the system and most have been happy to referee using the on-line system. They continued to offer referees the option of a hard copy and intended to do so for the foreseeable future.

[g] The editors had found a number of advantages using the electronic system, not least that referees could let them know decisions more promptly. It had improved the time lapse between sending papers out, receiving refusals and getting back to the author.

[h] The editors were enormously grateful to the goodwill and co-operation shown by the people in the community during the transition to electronic reviewing. As always they wanted to thank their referees for their diligence and co-operation in carrying out reviews, as they could not function without their support.

[i] The editors are conscious that colleagues often move in terms of their research interests so they planned in the early autumn to email all the referees held on their database to request updated information on their key research area. Again, this would speed up the process by preventing submissions being issued to inappropriate referees.

[j] The highlight of the year was their very successful day conference to celebrate the journal's 25th anniversary, attended by 200 people. A special thanks was given to the organisers Judy Green, Sarah Nettleton, Robert Dingwall, Kelly Lawless and Clive Seale. Also thanks to the authors and referees who kept to deadlines which made it possible to prepare a printed version of proceedings to be issued at the conference. Thanks to the discussants that participated.

[k] Most people would be aware that there had been six issues of the journal and that this had increased to seven for 2003 to take into account the special anniversary. Blackwells had agreed that the journal could continue producing seven issues a year, including the monograph.

[l] Many have enjoyed the book review section of the journal. In the course of the year one of their book review editors, Carol Emslie, had had to step down. Thanks were recorded to Carol for the contribution she made in her term of office, making this section a success and sympathy was expressed to her and her family.

Thanks were offered to Gayle Letherby who stepped into the breach to work with Sue Gregory for the remainder of the term of office.

The editorial board had set up a search committee chaired by Judith Green to appoint a review editor or editors for three years from September 2004. Information will be issued through the usual channels, Medical Sociology News and the medsoc mailing list.

8. Sociology of Health and Illness – Foundation Report

(The editor continued to speak on behalf of the Foundation chair.)

[a] Members were reminded that the journal was owned by the Foundation for the Sociology of Health and Illness. The foundation is a charity and has responsibility for using funds from the Sociology of Health and Illness for the benefit of the medical sociology community.

The foundation had recently developed a website which was viewed during Friday at the conference. Visit the site at www.shifoundation.org.uk

This site would be useful not only to publicise the foundation but also to publicise the various foundation awards. The site had information on the postgraduate award that the foundation intended to fund. Mike Bury, in particular, was thanked for co-ordinating the work and developing the site.

9. Medical Sociology News – Editors' report – Maureen Porter

[a] The new editorial team had agreed to take over Medical Sociology News early in 2003 and produced their first edition, no. 29 in the summer of 2003. Thanks were given to the outgoing editors, Judith Green, Michael Traynor, Geraldine Barrett, Geraldine Leydon and Nicki Thorogood for their hard work during the last few years and for their support during the changeover.

[b] Their first edition was printed in London with the help of Kelly Lawless. Unfortunately they had not seen the proofs and were unhappy with the result. They had decided to change to printing the newsletter and administering the MSN subscribers' list from Aberdeen, with the help of their own admin assistant Liz Grant. Thanks were given to Kelly Lawless for her practical help and her support during the time they were taking over.

[c] The electronic version of MSN and the past editions are now on the BSA website rather than the LSHTM's website. Thanks to Michael Traynor for putting the edition on the web site in the past. In the future a pdf file of the latest edition would be sent straight from the MSN team to Julia Tanner at the BSA office.

[d] Simon Carter was thanked for his ongoing work running the jiscmail list and had agreed to continue for the foreseeable future. Simon had suggested that the time might now be right for opening the list up to those who were not on the mailing list for MSN and had asked that it be discussed at this meeting.

[e] The team could not at this stage comment on whether subscriptions have increased or declined as the data had yet to be brought up to date.

[f] The team thanked all those who had submitted copy to MSN in the past and emphasised the team were always looking for more contributions in the form of articles, letters to the editors or agony aunt, reviews and other material. Posters had been placed at strategic points around the conference and the team intended to ask people to contribute.

The convenor, Hannah Bradby, thanked Maureen Porter. It was suggested the editors should suggest a policy to the medical sociology committee regarding the suggestion not to restrict membership of the jiscmail to those who have paid a subscription. An executive decision would then be taken on behalf of the group.

No further questions were raised.

10. Regional and Study Groups

Reports had been received from the London Group, the North and East Midland Group, the West midland Group, the South West Group and the Wales group.

There had been no reports received from Scotland or the NorthWest.

Reports had been received from the Human Reproduction Study Group, the Social Aspects of Death, Dying and Bereavement Study Group and the Cancer Study Group.

There were no questions raised for discussion by regional or study group representatives.

11. Election Results

Hannah Bradby announced the results for the election for the medical sociology committee. Gillian, Nina and Michael were thanked for two years of work and welcomed back for another two years. Julia Lawton and Paul Godin were elected to the committee for their first term of office. Voters were thanked for their participation and congratulations to the newly elected committee members.

12. Any other business

Rose Barbour, in her capacity as secretary/treasurer for ESHMS flagged up a forthcoming joint congress with the Italian Medical Sociology Society in Bologna 2 – 4 September 2004. The call for papers would come at the end of February. Rose was the UK contact until the congress promotional website was live. Information had been issued in delegate packs.

Elizabeth Meerabeau raised the issue of the impact of the research governance on social science research. Though a concern by many for some time, a paper at the conference had raised the issue at this conference. Hannah stated the committee had found it difficult to respond in the short term to policy and political issues as the group only met three times a year. It was

accepted that this issue had to be raised with others either via the BSA generally or particularly with the ESRC.

Hilary Thomas asked, on behalf of those unable to attend the conference, for confirmation that the group still maintained the policy of avoiding Jewish holidays during September. Hilary was aware of at least one member unable to attend due to a clash with Jewish New Year. It was confirmed that the policy was maintained, but that availability of University premises for the conference was often highly restricted.

Cath Exley the occasion of her last AGM thanked Hannah, on behalf of the committee and the broader community, for her hard work and for being phenomenally organised. The committee's gratitude was marked with a presentation and applause. Hannah thanked the group for entrusting her with the reins.

The next AGM will be held at the University of York on Friday 17th September 2004 during the 36th Annual Conference.