

**BRITISH SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION  
MEDICAL SOCIOLOGY GROUP**

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 17 September 2004 at the University of York.**

Forty-one 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 27th September 2003 were approved after the amendment of the miss spelling of glitches on item 7e.

**2. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising which were not covered elsewhere in the agenda

**3. Elections**

[a] **To the Group Committee** (3 vacancies [1 was a re-election])

Kim Clarke had completed her first two-year term of office and was seeking re-election for another two-year term of office. The nominees for the 2 new vacancies were David Rankin, Louise Woodward and Chris Yuill. A ballot was conducted and results were to be announced later during the AGM.

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

The nominees were Kathryn Backett-Milburn, Sarah Earle, Hilary Thomas and Jonathan Tritter.

A ballot was conducted and those elected were to be displayed on the conference notice board later that evening.

**4. Convenor's Report – Davina Allen**

[a] It had been an interesting year for Cath and Davina as joint convenors of the Group. They had began their term of office at the very moment that the Group's finances became a cause for some concern and much of their effort had been directed at making some changes to the conference organisation to ensure that the group at least broke even. Cath Exley was going to discuss finances during the AGM.

[b] The 36<sup>th</sup> medical sociology conference programme comprised of 170 oral presentations (there were 16 withdrawals before the programme was published and a further 8 after the publication of the programme), 2 plenary presentations, 6 workshops and 16 posters. The group were delighted to host the ISA sociology of health and illness research committee interim meeting and had marked this with an additional stream of oral presentations dedicated to international issues.

[c] Registrations for the annual Conference numbered 281 delegates, of which 229 were UK-based and 52 were non-UK based. There were twice the number of non-UK

based delegates attending the conference compared to last year, and it would seem that hosting the annual meeting of ISA RC15 had boosted numbers. Of the non-UK delegates attending the conference this includes: 7 delegates from Australia; 4 delegates from Canada; 3 delegates from Denmark; 3 delegates from Finland; 1 delegate from France; 3 delegates from Germany; 1 delegate from Italy; 1 delegate from Japan; 2 delegates from Luxembourg; 3 delegates from New Zealand; 7 delegates from Norway; 1 delegate from the Philippines; 1 delegate from Poland; 5 delegates from Republic Ireland; 2 delegates from Taiwan; 1 delegate from Netherlands; 7 delegates from the USA.

Eighty-four delegates identified themselves as newcomers or postgraduates, the same as last year.

[d] This year the group had been able to offer three international bursaries to Nicky Welch from Australia; Sarah Stewart from New Zealand and Virginia Romano from Italy. Half funded by the Group and half funded by the SHI Foundation. The group continues to struggle to elicit applications from developing countries.

[e] The Group were very pleased to welcome one student from the University of West England and two from the University of Central England under the widening access free student places initiative. Recipients will be expected to write a short report of a publishable quality to go in MSN. This is the final year of this scheme and, along with the trustees of the SHI Foundation, the group would review future it's options in the light of its success and the Group's financial position after this years conference.

[d] Edwin van Teijlingen reported that with current financial constraints he had considered producing an electronic copy of the medical sociology group register, which would be a simple word document that could be loaded on the Public Health Department at the University of Aberdeen website. There had been recent discussions with SHI who may fund the register on its website. The register production required further discussion.

[e] Davina gave thanks to those people who had worked to support the Group over the year. Firstly, thanks went to the members of the Committee for their contribution to the conference organisation. Thanks to: Nina Hallowell, Gill Bendelow, Kim Clarke who put together the programme; Julia Lawton and Kim Clarke who took responsibility for the publishers and for organising the our new style publishers' workshop; Michael Traynor who had responsibility for delegates with special needs and the creche and who along with Paul Godin also organised the book prize. Paul also coordinated the regional and study groups and worked with Edwin in taking responsibility for technical and audio video elements of the conference. Clare Williams took responsibility for publicity and acted as committee secretary over the year by taking the minutes at our meetings. Gillian Bendelow had been responsible for entertainment.

[f] Clare Williams and Edwin van Teijlingen had completed two terms of office (a four-year total) and were thanked for their unwavering support for the group with a little token of appreciation for their contribution to the work of the committee. The group's gratitude was marked with a presentation and applause.

[g] The committee had greatly benefited from the support of the staff at the BSA office. Nicola Gibson merited a special mention, Davina could not express how grateful Cath and her were for Nicola's unwavering support for the year and has the font of all knowledge she had been invaluable in terms of them getting to grips with the various aspects of the convenorship. The group's gratitude was marked with a presentation and applause.

Thanks was also given to the student helpers: Wendy Martin and Kerry Allen.

[h] The York conference office had also continued to respond to the groups needs. The committee were sorry, this year, to say goodbye to Neil James who had moved on to pastures new and they wished him well in the future. The committee looked forward to working with Claire Bennett, his replacement.

[i] Over the past year the group had enjoyed a very productive, and supportive, relationship with Roisin Pill and the trustees of the SHI Foundation and looked forward to building on that and working closely with them in the future.

[j] Many thanks were given to Mildred Blaxter, who once again, chaired the committee of judges for the book prize.

[k] The committee were very grateful to all those who had agreed to chair sessions. It is always really difficult to get chairs and the roll of chairs is vital in terms of the smooth running of the conference. Robert Dingwall deserved special mention, for agreeing to chair the publishers' workshop as it had clashed with the SHI drinks reception.

[l] Finally the editors of MSN had worked very hard work over the last year. They had the unenviable task of being editors on the newsletter at a time when budgetary issues had come under increasing scrutiny.

[m] Davina gave some signposts as to the priorities that the group would be focusing on over the next year: The groups processes and procedures needed to be looked at to ensure that they were absolutely transparent in order to meet the requirements of charitable law; and obviously the finances will be under close scrutiny next year.

## **5. Financial report – Cath Exley**

[a] Cath reported that much of their first year has been taken up with matters financial. A slide was shown displaying income and expenditure of the past seven conferences.

[b] Last year the conference made a loss of just short of twelve thousand pounds. The slide displayed that between 1997 and 2002 the group had always generated enough income to cover its costs and indeed in the earlier years had made a significant surplus. Those members who had been at previous AGMs will knew there had been long discussions about how the group could pursue a policy to reduce its reserves. Last year the group reached a position where it could not reduce its reserves any further, because in order to comply with charitable law it must ensure it had sufficient reserves to cover the groups liabilities, which in this case would be the conference and

its associated costs. At present the reserves target is sixty thousand, and as shown from the slide the groups reserves were just marginally over sixty thousand and this would be kept under annual review as conference costs go up.

[c] Cath questioned what happened? The group generates the vast majority of its income through its conference. Looking at delegate numbers from 1997 to 2002 the attendance at the conference was between 330 and 350, with the exception of the joint conference in 2000, which had attracted 441. However, last year delegate numbers dropped to 288 and this year the conference had 281 people attending. Actually taking into account what Davina had said earlier by hosting the ISA RC15 conference overseas delegate numbers had increased, if it wasn't for them the conference could have been down another 20 or 30 delegates and would look at more 250 delegates in attendance.

[d] Cath questioned why numbers had reduced. Last year they thought the reduction in delegate numbers might have been due to a clash with another conference but this conference had clashed with other conferences before. This year the conference had clashed with the Society for Social Medicine conference, although the committee did go to some lengths to avoid this clash but had not been possible to avoid it.

[e] During the last year Davina and Cath had worked closely with the Lesleyann Pinkerton at the BSA office, who had been a huge support, to try to develop a strategy to ensure the committee maintained sufficient reserves to cover its liabilities.

[f] At the meeting of the Medical Sociology Group Committee in February this year they looked at how they could save some money as well as trying to continue widening access and support of the regional and study groups. They came up with a plan which included:

- Increasing the registration fee for the conference, which had remained static for a couple of years and was not covering costs though that was not a problem in the past .
- The committee decided to reduce entertainment expenses – there would be no drinks' receptions this year funded by the group, and most controversially no disco. It was reported that last year the committee received feedback on how dreadful the disco was. The committee did arrange for the bars to be open longer and delegates could dance to the duke box if you wanted to
- The committee reviewed their arrangements to support delegates who would like publishing advice and this year had not had any individual appointments but had a new Publishers' workshop, which has been a huge success and had had lots of positive feedback. The committee felt it had been a good new initiative and a thanks was given to Kim and Julia for arranging it and to Robert and all those others involved.

The group had explored options for income generation

- Taylor and Francis again sponsored the Publishers' Reception, which the group were very grateful for.
- Davina had a productive meeting with the SHI Foundation who had agreed to sponsor an additional international bursary, as well as contributing a further £500 to support regional sub-groups which had been very welcomed. The SHI Foundation also reiterated to the group that sub-groups and individuals could apply directly to them for up to £1,500 to support symposia.

[g] The committee were currently reviewing its guidance to all convenors of its regional and study groups to ensure that they operate within their annual budget. The committee made decisions based upon last years booking figures and everything had been done to ensure they had broke even, which hopefully they would based on lesleyanns projections. For the forthcoming year the group will continue to keep finances under close scrutiny.

[h] Cath broke her report to ask for comments from the floor to help the group plan for next year. Suggestions from the floor included:

- reverting back to including a hard copy of the booking form with MSN to prompt members to book for the conference
  - criticism was given to the many links on the website before reaching the conference page and it was suggested that the conference be more prominent.
- it was suggested that the demographics of the conference be looked at. The data had been looked at some years before with only three years worth of data to work with and at that time it was clear that a lot of the people attend the conference once only and do not return. With follow up interviews it was largely related to people on short-term contracts who were unable to obtain funding. There was only a smaller group who attend the conference annually.
- the timing of the conference was raised but it was noted that it was impossible to please all of the people all of the time
  - it was suggested that the group make more of advertising to previous conference delegates to encourage participation in the conference
  - though there were many good reasons to hold the conference at York it was suggested that the group re look at alternative venues that attendees may be tiring of York.

[I] Finally Cath needed the group to approve a charge of £16,570 to the BSA office for administration (an increase from £14817 - £16521), which they regarded as being excellent value for money. Without the help of Nicola Gibson, in particular, the task of organising the conference would be so much more difficult for the committee. However, more generally thanks was give to Judith Mudd and in particular to Lesleyann Pinkerton for all her hardwork, patience and good humour when assisting with the financial strategy. The management fee was proposed and seconded and a show of hands approved it.

## **6. Prizes**

### **Phil Strong Memorial Prize 2004 - 2005**

There were 4 applications for the Phil Strong Memorial Prize, all of which had met the eligibility criteria. The number of bursaries they were able to award every year was based on the interest from investments, which this year was £1400 which meant they were able to make one prize. Members were reminded that as long as submissions met the criteria the prize was allocated randomly. The winner was Sarah Ryan.

### **The Sociology of Health and Illness Book Prize**

There were 6 nominations for the *Sociology of Health and Illness* book prize which were all reviewed in MSN. Professor Mildred Blaxter had been invited to announce the SHI book prize. Mildred Blaxter said this was one of the more pleasant and easier

tasks. It had been a great pleasure to read all the books. A very good list had been nominated and delegates should have seen them all outside. Members were recommended to at least look at them. The committee were absolutely unanimous that one of the nominations was outstanding because it was really truly original in both form and content and really scholarly so with great pleasure Mildred awarded the book prize to Ann Marie Mol for the 'Body Multiply'. Ann Marie was present to accept the award.

### **SHI New Writers Prize**

Clive Seale made the announcement on behalf of the sub committee of the editorial board who had made the award, Judy Green, Elizabeth Ettore and Jonathan Tritter. They had accessed the new writers in the journal sociology of health and illness. The committee agreed that the new writers prize should be awarded to Evett Jean for her paper 'Inclusive intake screening; shaping Medical Problems into specialist cases'. They liked the use of a mix of data interviews and conversation analysis to explore the work of front line staff in US doctors of offices. The analysis of their screening work is located within the broader picture on people processing work. Jean suggested that the kind of inclusive screening that front line staff does in non-urgent settings should be theorised in the broader phenomenon of rational which is usually applied to restrictive screening practices. Clive encouraged everyone to read the paper, the best by a new writer for 2004 in the journal.

## **7. Sociology of Health & Illness – Editors' Report**

[a] The editors of sociology of health and illness were delighted to report continuing high level of submissions to the journal. In fact in the last year they had seen a fairly major increase. They had received 203 new submissions, 75 re-submissions. That compares with 123 new submission the previous year and last year 58 re submissions. Alongside the roughly fifty percent increase in subscriptions they had also seen a continued extension in the journals global reach, with a number of papers from mainland Europe doubling. The number of US submissions had gone up by fifty percent and in addition their had been considerable more papers submitted to them from countries outside Europe, North America and Australia and Asia for example they had received papers from Bolivia, Brazil, Hong Kong, India, Kuwait, Mexico, Iran, Namibia and South Africa.

[b] Of course the increase in submissions had meant they needed more and more help from their long suffering referees and they took the opportunity to thank them all for helping them deal with the large increase in the volume of papers that the had been handling.

[c] The journal had, this year, enjoyed a rise in its ISI ranking and it is now ranked four in the sociology rankings. Whilst they were of course delighted with this and with the associated rise in the journals impact factor they were very aware that these rankings do seem to be subject to a random fluctuation year on year so they were not holding their breath that they would be number one next year.

[d] As many already knew they had been operating a system of electronic refereeing for some time now and members many remember they had concerns that online submission might discriminate against authors in developing countries. Whilst they

had been encouraging on line submissions they had been willing to accept hard copy submission. In practice it seemed that far from discouraging submissions from the developing world on line submission had been associated with a rise in those submissions and so the editorial board had agreed that all submissions should be made through the on line editorial office. The editorial office will continue to provide support for authors who need help with uploading documents and will continue to offer hard copies of submissions to referees who would prefer to see them in that format.

[e] The membership of the editorial team has been largely stable over the last year. Sue Gregory and Gayle Letherby had been re appointed for a second term as review editors for the journal.

[f] Jon Gabe had indicated after a very long and successful association with the journal that he wished to step down as monograph editor and they were enormously grateful to Jon for his pioneering work in developing the monograph and indeed for his work as journal editor in the term immediately proceeding their own. Jon had agreed to see through the publication of monograph eleven, a one on 'Sociological Healthcare'. The board is inviting applications for the role of monograph editor for the beginning of 2005 and anyone who would like further information should contact Jon Gabe or Clive Seale. The closing date is the end of November 2004 and they hoped the person appointed would be notified before Christmas and would take up the role from the beginning of 2005.

[g] Judy Green had completed her three-year term as chair of the board and had been replaced by Clive Seale. The editors would very much like to record their thanks to Judy who had been enormously supportive to them. They looked forward very much to working with Clive.

## **8. Sociology of Health and Illness – Foundation report – Rosin Pill**

[a] Rosin wanted, on behalf of the other trustees, to thank the editors for another excellent year of the journal and in particular for the very good position they have achieved in the ISI rankings. The foundation benefits from the success of the journal. They are a charity and intend that the money be used to promote the discipline. Details of their aims, objectives and powers were on the website and members were encourage to visit [www.SHI.Foundation.org.uk](http://www.SHI.Foundation.org.uk) The website has details on the various initiatives they have taken to encourage people to apply for funding for symposiums, day conferences, workshops and also some initiatives they had taken for postgraduate awards. Full details are on the website, application forms and who to contact.

[b] The foundation were looking forward to working with the convenors of the Medical Sociology Group and at the moment help fund the book prize and in the past had helped with bursaries and free student places and would be very happy to consider re negotiation of those arrangements and consider any proposal for the online register and are open to any other suggestions for use if the funds.

[c] The foundation does not have a tremendous amount and wanted to keep in line with charity commission demands but were anxious to encourage consideration of any

proposals with an open mind. Members were encouraged to look at the website and apply for any funds available.

## **9. Medical Sociology News – Editors Report – Lydia Lewis**

[a] This year had been their second year as the editorial team for Medical Sociology News and they recently welcomed a new member Steven Brindle from the Department of Public Health at the University of Aberdeen.

[b] They had produced three issues since the last AGM, one in December, one in April and one in August and this included a memorial edition to professor Meg Stacy. Currently they had 250 subscribers and the 2005 rates had increased to overseas/institutions at £20, individuals waged at £15 and unwaged at £10. The rates were raised to cover increased costs of printing and postage. The publication had been opened to advertisements of Medical Sociology related books and journals in order to increase income.

[c] The publication was printed by Robert Gordon University printing services in Aberdeen. They had been happy with their services to date however they had some difficulties in securing administrative support for the newsletter, particularly in producing the final version of each issue to send to the printers and were currently looking at alternative options.

[d] There had been a debate about jiscmail this time last year and they had supported a decision to open the list to promote medical sociology and Simon Carter (list administrator) has reported that membership of the list had increased from 240 to 340.

[e] In order to keep MSN as an attractive option MSN issues will be delayed from being put on the website for one year. The editors are happy with Simon Carter's work in running the jiscmail list and he is happy to continue to do this.

[f] Finally the editors thanked all those who had sent a contribution to MSN in the last year and were always looking for articles, conferences, Phd reports, book reviews and problems for Aunt Marge.

[g] Two members of the editorial team had taken free places at the conference in order to promote MSN.

## **10. Regional and Study Groups**

The regional groups and study groups had continued to meet with varying degrees of frequency over the year. They play an important part in promoting the discipline and the committed thanked the groups' convenors for their largely invisible work in supporting the study groups and regional groups over the year.

Reports had been received from four of the groups Scotland, Wales, West Midlands and London. Their report will appear in the December issue of MSN.

The committee were pleased to announce the creation of a new sociology of mental health study group, convened by Lydia Lewis. The Group had its first meeting scheduled during the conference.

## **11. Election Results**

Davina Allen announced the results for the election for the medical sociology committee.

Kim Clark was thanked for two years of work and welcomed back for another two years.

Louise Woodward and David Rankin were elected to the committee for their first term of office.

Voters were thanked for their participation and congratulations was given to the newly elected committee members.

## **12. Any other business**

There was no other business

The next AGM will be held at the University of York on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2005 during the 37th Annual Conference.