

# **BRITISH SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION MEDICAL SOCIOLOGY GROUP**

## **DRAFT minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2005, 5:30pm in room P/L001 at the University of York**

Fifty-one members of the BSA Medical Sociology Group attended the meeting. Apologies were given by Davina Allen, co convenor of the Medical Sociology Group. Nicola Gibson (BSA Conference Manager) took the minutes.

### **1. Minutes of the meeting**

The minutes of the AGM held on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2004 were approved.

### **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 and 2 re election)**

There were two members standing for re-election Paul Godin and Julia Lawton, both of whom wished to stand for a further two years. Three people had come forward to stand for the committee, which meant no election was required. The following three new members were welcomed to the committee; Oonagh Corrigan University of Plymouth, Richard Tutton University of Nottingham and Richard Compton City University.

#### **[b] To the editorial board of Sociology of Health and Illness [2 vacancies]**

The nominees were Clare Williams, Mike Dent, Marina Barnard, Lai Fong Chiu, Fiona Pollard, Dana Rosenfeld and Jane Sandall. Clare Williams and Marina Barnard are at the end of their first term and were up for re-election to the board.

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

### **4. Convenor's report**

[a] Cath Exley gave the convenor's report on behalf of herself and Davina Allen. The 37<sup>th</sup> medical sociology conference programme comprised 175 oral presentations (there were 12 withdrawals before the programme was published and a further 6 after the publication of the programme), 2 plenary presentations Ellen Annandale and Graham Scamber on Saturday, 2 workshops, 3 special interest group meetings and 4 posters.

[b] This year a total of 262 delegates registered for the conference, of which 219 were UK-based and 34 were non-UK based. Of the non-UK delegates attending the conference this includes: 4 delegates from Australia; 1 delegate from Barbados; 1 delegate from Belgium; 4 delegates from Canada; 1 delegate from Denmark; 2 delegates from Germany; 7 delegates from Ireland; 2 delegates from Italy; 1 delegate from New Zealand; 8 delegates from Norway; 1 delegate from Portugal; 1 delegate from Taiwan and a delegate from the US.

[c] 81 delegates identified themselves as newcomers or postgraduates, which is the same as last year. This year we were also able to offer 2 international bursaries, funded jointly by the Group and the SHI Foundation. These were awarded to: Joana Ribeiro from Portugal, Michelle Kealy, Australia.

[d] The Group were very pleased to welcome 1 postgraduate student from Glasgow Caledonia University and 2 postgraduate students from the University of Plymouth under the SHI foundation and Medsoc Group widening access free student places initiative. The aim of the scheme was to increase access to the annual conference to postgraduate students who are registered at a post 1992 Universities. Previous surveys of conference delegates revealed this sector to be under-represented. In consultation with the trustees of the SHI Foundation the scheme had been revised for this year. 6 places were made available but these were open to all post 1992 Universities rather than restricted to two Universities for

three years, as had been the case in the past. The new scheme, open to all postgraduate students in post 1992 Universities, was advertised through the jiscmail list and a flyer posted to all HoDs of post 1992 institutions and followed up by an email. Whilst the committee had a good response to the scheme in general, only three were actually from post 1992 universities so the committee had awarded places to all applications received. The committee was to look at ways of encouraging more applications in the future. Recipients of the free student places are expected to write a short report on their experience of attending the conference, which is sent to the medsoc convenors and the chair of the SHI Foundation Board of Trustees.

[e] Above and beyond the work involved in conference organisation much of the Group's activities this year had been directed at reviewing the policies and procedures relating to the group's activities and prizes. This had been necessary in order to ensure that the group complied with the requirements of charitable law.

[f] A further area of work had been in relation to the Register.

Michael Traynor reported on the progress of the medical sociology group register. The idea was to have a public register of medical sociologists. The scheme was to involve a web based listing of medical sociologists where people could update their own details and areas of research. Areas of research would then be searchable on the web by members and the general public. The SHI foundation agreed to host this facility on their website. The specification is to be drawn up for the SHI web programmers to put this facility into place. Once in place the categories of research areas would be listed. There would be an initial set up cost but thereafter members would update their own records so that there would not be any further cost implications. This facility would replace the outdated hard copy register.

[g] Cath Exley gave thanks to those people who have worked to support the Group over the year.

Firstly, thanks to the Committee for their contribution to the conference organisation. Thanks to: Gill Bendelow, Kim Clarke and Paul Godin who put together the programme and organised the chairs; Julia Lawton and David Rankin who were responsible for the publishers and the publishers' workshop which again was a great success; Nina Hollowell took responsibility for delegates with special needs and the crèche; David Rankin and Michael Traynor organised the book prize; Nina Hollowell and Julia Lawton have also co-ordinated the regional and study groups; Micheal Traynor and Louise Woodward have been responsible for audio visual and technical support; Paul Godin has been responsible for publicity; Louise Woodward has been responsible for that evenings entertainment.

[h] Nina, Gill and Michael all completed two terms of office, having spent four-years on the committee. They were thanked by Cath, on behalf of herself and Davina, for their unwavering support for the group and their contribution to the work of the committee with a small token of appreciation for their efforts. The group's gratitude was marked with a presentation and applause.

[i] As always the group greatly benefited from the support of the staff at the BSA office. Nicola Gibson merits a special mention, her support for the group is unwavering. The group's gratitude was marked with a presentation and applause.

Cath gave thanks to Wendy Martin and Kerry Allen, the group's conference student helpers.

[j] Thanks were given to Helen Rothwell in the York conference office who had continued to respond to the groups needs. In particular thanks were given to Michael, the allocated York University AV Technician who had done a sterling job.

[k] Over the year the group have developed a very productive relationship with Roisin Pill and the trustees of the SHI Foundation for which the committee were very grateful. Thanks were given for their support over the year.

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

[m] The committee were grateful to all those who have agreed to chair sessions. Ellen Annandale deserved a special mention, for agreeing to chair the publishers' workshop, particularly straight after her plenary.

[n] Thanks were given to the editors of MSN who had worked very hard work over the last year.

## **5. Financial report**

[a] Last year the group had to carefully review finances as it had reached a position where they could not reduce reserves any further. In order to comply with charitable law the group had to have sufficient reserves to cover its liabilities, which would be the conference costs, should there be a cancellation. Last year, the group had put in place a number of measures to bring the finances under control. These included:

- Increasing the registration fee for the conference
- Reducing entertainment expenses
- Reviewing our arrangements to support delegates who would like publishing advice – no individual appointments but a new Publishers' workshop
- Exploring options for income generation

The group were pleased to say that these measures resulted in us making a small surplus last year.

[b] One reason for the Group's changed financial position was a slow reduction in conference attendance since 2002. Last year the conference had 281 delegates (260 paying delegates). Unfortunately this year the group have seen a further decrease. This year we have 262 delegates (236 paying delegates) attended. Interestingly there was no decrease in the number of oral presentations, although this year the group had seen a drop in the number of posters from 16 to only 4 this year. Obviously the group was disappointed to see another reduction in delegate numbers. There were a number of possible explanations for this: clashes with another conference, last year the conference hosted the ISA RC15 meeting. There is an issue over people getting funding to attend conferences and making strategic choices about where they want to go and there is of course the 'York factor'.

[c] In response to delegate feedback, the committee had been exploring alternative venues. It was hard to find an alternative venue at short notice that could accommodate the conference size under one roof and in a reasonably nice city and the committee were pleased to announce that next year the conference will be held at Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh. Although the University is outside the city the committee were hoping to, if the AGM agreed, to host a conference dinner in the centre of the city. Heriot Watt is close to the airport for people who are flying. In terms of other years the committee had booked York whilst looking at other places. The committee liked Manchester but could not book it until 2009. Currently the committee were looking at other cities around the UK including Belfast, Bournemouth, Brighton, Cardiff, Glasgow, Liverpool and Newcastle for subsequent years.

[d] With regard to this year's financial position, in response to the situation last year the committee had spent some time carefully planning the budget for this year's conference to ensure we broke even. This would have been achieved, however, York's cost were raised again this summer. These increases have meant that, unfortunately, the 2005 conference is estimated to make a loss. Clearly the increasing conference costs are a further stimulus for looking further a field

[e] Cath broke her report to ask for comments from the floor regarding views on increasing the fees if it means to get nicer accommodation and nicer food.

Gillian Bendelow (incoming convenor) asked for feedback from members regarding the proposed conference dinner in the city centre. Dynamic Earth had been provisionally booked. It is a domed building, next to the Scottish Parliament and under Arthurs Seat. With transport to the dinner and back the estimated cost of next years conference dinner is £50. £35 is the current charge at York.

Member comments included

- Being against a rise in price or better food as current facilities at York were adequate
- Give thought to those who do not get institutional funding i.e. students
- The dinner being an optional extra
- Having a Ceilidh. The Committee agreed to take the ceilidh option to it next committee meeting.
- Members had a show of hands for those interested in the dinner being optional and show of hands to include the dinner in the price. The dinner is to be included in the price.
- Members were asked about costing and changes and informed that a distribution of paper copies of the booking form (as suggested last year) had not increased attendance.

[f] Cath asked the group to approve the management fee paid to the BSA for the invaluable administrative support it received. This year the management fee will be £17578, which is an increase of £1000 since last year. The group reiterated it's thanks to the BSA office, in particular, Nicola. But also the committee was indebted to Lesleyann Pinkerton for all her hardwork, patience and good humour when dealing with the committee. Sadly Lesleyann is leaving the BSA office to take up a post as an Administrative Assistant in the Communications Department at Gateshead Council. The group gave thanks for her work over the last two years and wished her well in her new appointment. The management fee was proposed and seconded and a show of hands approved it.

## 6. Prizes

### **Phil Strong Memorial Prize 2005 - 2006**

This year there was only one application for the **Phil Strong bursary**, from Wendy Martin, Department of Sociology, University of Warwick who is being supervised by Simon Williams, to whom the group were delighted to award the prize.

### **The Sociology of Health and Illness book prize**

Those who attended the first plenary would know already that *The Sociology of Health and Illness* book prize was awarded to Adam Hedgecoe for: "The politics of personalised medicine: pharmacogenetics in the clinic" and was awarded by Mildred Blaxter.

It was noted that this year the committee had a real reduction in the number of people applying for prizes. The committee had received three applications out of the six free postgraduate student places from post 1992 institutions. The committee had received one application for Phil Strong and only two books were put forward for the SHI book prize. Publicity is via the jiscmail list and advertised in MSN. Colleagues were asked for comment/suggestion on how to improve applications to the prizes.

It was suggested that the book prize be opened up to publishers. There should be a limit so publishers do not send all their sociology books. It was suggested that the committee look at taking forward this suggestion but limiting it to the publishers that attend the conference.

## 7. Sociology of Health and Illness – Editors' report

[a] Nicky James gave their report in the format it had been given during the board meeting that was held on the Thursday of the conference. For new attendees SHI is the members' journal and it depends on members to contribute and many members to referee it.

[b] The journal remains very healthy and submissions continue to come in from various parts of the world, although to the relief of many members, the rise that had been going on since 2002 is beginning to plateau out now, reducing referring duties. Enormous thanks were given to those who have been refereeing.

[c] Submissions in the last 6-month by country were listed as 56 from the UK and 63 from other parts of the world, of which half were from North America. In the equivalent period last year there were 74 submissions from the UK and 69 from the other parts of the world. It was not known if it were a reflection of the recent RAE.

[d] The journal has an online editorial office so members' can check and track the stages of their own submission. It is possible for the editors to anticipate backlogs. Members were asked to note, and inform other colleagues, that the journal estimates 45 slots currently free that will be in print by the next RAE.

[e] It was noted that being both an author and a referee was significant. Many members have two complete systems regarding submissions, as an author members' expect a two week turn around with a full referee report and can get distressed if this does not happen. As a referee one leaves it longer as it is not on the top of their list of priorities. Members were reminded that authors and referees were all the same people. Referees were encouraged to be as efficient as possible.

That said it was noted that the journal has the most wonderful referees who give helpful comments and are particularly sensitive to new authors in the field who are learning their way and the journal is enormously grateful for their efforts.

In the future submission acknowledgements will be expected to explain their source of funding.

[f] Members of the editorial board go to the American Sociological Association every year. This initiative began with the Royal Holloway team of editors. Robert attended in 2005 and it is a really positive development and initiative, which can be seen from the number of submissions coming in from North America.

[g] Finally two points were raised:  
The first was to highlight the current call for proposals for the Ethnicity Monograph. Hannah Bradby will be circulating the call and noted that proposals had to be submitted for the Easter board in March or April. Proposals are short and further information and enquiries should be directed to Hannah Bradby.

Secondly the SHI foundation is very generous in funding bursaries. However, like Medsoc, SHI has had trouble getting members to recognise there are bursaries to be had. Robert Dingwall has a flier on the 2006 World Congress of Sociology. There are four post-graduate bursaries for the congress in Durban on 23<sup>rd</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> July 2006. These are to the value of £500 with additional support to the maximum of £750. Members' were encouraged to think about people going to the congress and how these bursaries might help members' postgraduates attend.

Lastly it was reported their colleague, Alison Pilnick had given birth to her son, Jude in July of this year. The new arrival was welcomed and loved into the family and members of the board were delighted for her.

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

[a] Mick Bloor spoke on behalf of the SHI foundation. Rosin Pill is chair and Mick is a trustee. As well as the postgraduate funding to attend the Durban congress the SHI foundation also funds a number of symposia, which are coming up between now and Christmas, one of which is in Edinburgh. They were constantly looking for new ways to spend the foundation's money

and it reported it was difficult to give it away in an accountable way. It takes a while for schemes to be put into place.

[b] The funding to put the register on line had already been mentioned. The foundation will be looking at archiving online, some of the medical sociology classics (articles and books), which are now difficult to get a hold of. The foundation is open to new symposia bids and is also looking at funding a series of masterclasses, that would be hosted by a particular institution with a number of guest masters'/mistress' from the UK and from abroad.

[c] It had been agreed earlier that day to change their PhD scheme. In the past the foundation had part funded £1,500 for the student and £1,500 for the fee for a PhD and the same for MSc each year. The foundation did not receive any MSc applications as the sum offered was not enough and as it could not be increased all of the money has been put into a PhD award. Shortly, on the SHI website, the foundation will be asking for applicants for bids for a £6,000 award (£3,000 for the student and £3,000 towards the fees per year).

[d] The foundation had decided, as a one off, to fully fund a 4-year PhD studentship. This being all fees, fieldwork expense and recruitment costs. The potential supervisor applies for the award not the student. It is the same basis as the ESRC case award scheme. The foundation hoped that by funding this, as a one off, they would get more interest in the PhD applications. Those unsuccessful for full funding may get a part-funded award.

The foundation is interested to hear of new ways to spend its money. There is not a huge surplus but what they have they want to use as effectively as possible for the benefit of the discipline. Anyone with any ideas were welcome to contact the foundation trustees during the conference or via their website [www.shifoundation.org.uk](http://www.shifoundation.org.uk)

## **9. Medical Sociology News**

[a] Edwin van Teijlingen reported that the current team is coming to an end. Their last issue will be the December issue. The team had been running MSN relatively problem free for 3 years. The problem has been the decline in subscriptions and contributions for issues. There were less than 200 subscriptions for this year and 52 people had so far signed up for 2006 via the conference booking form. The team wanted to question members as to whether MSN had run its course as the jiscmail had taken over part of it. Aberdeen have covered the postage, the envelopes and had money available for secretarial fees in the first year. All this, as well as the editor's own volunteer time. There is a team from Liverpool that maybe interested in taking over MSN.

There were two questions to be asked of the members: firstly do people still want MSN and secondly if they do in what format. Notices, for instance, are already distributed quicker and faster via the jiscmail

Comments from the floor:

- There was a danger that you can get overloaded with email messages coming round, it is saturation and receiving a hard copy MSN was welcomed.
- A previous editor said they had received a third of subscriptions via the conference and though there was a fondness, people were busy and it was difficult to get anyone to take it on when their time was up.
- The general feeling is that people liked the hard copy, liked its current format and the reason for the web version is financial and the only way currently MSN can continue.

The intention was that MSN be re launched as an online version. On line webs page could have graphics and structure. MSN would be a PDF document so that members could still print it off if they so wish.

[b] Cath Exley said the committee knew how much work the Aberdeen team had put into it and the committee were very grateful to them. If the Liverpool team can take it on they may

look at changing its format. It was suggested the proposed new team consider approaching the SHI foundation for a set up grant.

It was concluded that the current team is coming to an end at the end of this year. The new editors had yet to be confirmed and if it continues, the format of MSN might change. Huge thanks were given to the Aberdeen team.

#### **10. Regional and special interest groups**

Regional groups and special interest groups continue to meet with varying degrees of frequency over the year. Thanks were given to those who convene and organise group meetings as they play an important part in promoting the discipline over the year.

Group reports had been received from 7 groups and these will appear in MSN.

The regional and special interest group guidelines, available on the website, had been reviewed this year as part of the committee's wider efforts to update its policies in line with charitable law requirements.

#### **11. Any other business**

Cath reported that Davina and herself had reached the end of their convenorship. They were to hand over the reins – and the files - to Gillian Bendelow and Nina Hallowell. Cath thanked the group for the support it had given them over the past two years.

Gillian Bendelow thanked Cath, on behalf of the committee and the broader community. The committee's gratitude was marked with a presentation and applause. Gillian Bendelow reported that Davina has been presented with a gift of thanks earlier that day.

The next AGM will be held at Heriot Watt University on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2006 during the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference.