

# BSA Medical Sociology Conference 2022 – Lancaster

## Special Events

Wednesday 14 September 10:45-12:25

### **Celebrating 10 years of the Cost of Living Blog, and looking to the future of Medical Sociology**

*The speakers are representing the much larger Cost of Living Collective, click here to find out more*  
<https://www.cost-of-living.net/>

The Cost of Living blog has provided a sociological perspective on global happenings relating to health for the last 10 years. Established to address issues relating to austerity measures in the UK it has developed to include international guest bloggers with an international view and as a result has an increasingly global reach. The collectively organised blog has weathered and commented on world-changing issues such as COVID-19, the health implications of geo-political events including Brexit, whilst also providing commentary on local food and sport access, matrimony, the provision of welfare and regional activism alongside reviews of contemporary media depictions of health and wellness.

In this panel discussion, members of the Cost of Living collective will distil an overarching narrative from the blog, reflecting on both blog content and audience engagement. We will discuss and debate the last decade of change and turmoil, contextualising this within the history of medical sociology as a discipline. The plenary will offer a forecast for what might come next for the blog as well as the world events it provides commentary on.

*Corresponding speaker: Ewen Speed - University of Essex*

**Panel members: Past and current members of the Cost of Living editorial collective**

Thursday 15 September 14:00-14:30

### **Race to recruit**

*Andrew Smart, Kate Weiner, Ros Williams, Francesca Sobande, Kate Weiner, Ros Williams, Francesca Sobande, Lijiaozi Cheng*

(Bath Spa University)

Efforts to 'recruit', 'enrol' or 'conscript' people from minority ethnic groups into clinical research and related health interventions have become particularly visible in the wake of prominent public protest about racial discrimination and COVID-19's unequal impact on racially minoritised people. Such racialised enrolment, recruitment (Epstein 2008) or conscription (Montoya 2011) can face a tension between balancing the imperatives for addressing ethnic variations in health with concerns about the production, reproduction and reconfiguration of racialised thinking (e.g., Epstein 2007, Pollock 2010). This session will examine examples from clinical trials, stem cell donation, sperm and egg donation and COVID-19 research and vaccination. Such contributions allow us to explore and develop Epstein's (2008) notion of 'recruitmentology' - which discusses racialised enrolment of minoritised groups to US clinical studies - by using a wider range of biomedical endeavours in the UK context. Alongside the sociology of health and illness we will draw insights from Science and Technology Studies, media studies and health services research. Contributors will consider the practical efforts to make clinical research and health interventions more 'representative', and reflect on how racialised subjects are constituted, problematised, and approached. The papers in this session may provide opportunities to further theorise racialisation (Omi and Winant 1986; M'charek 2014) in the context of health and medicine (Smart and Weiner 2017). In particular they highlight intersections with other social locations, like gender and age (Crenshaw 1989); they point to connections to racialising practices in adjacent social fields, such as social and 'traditional' media

(Malik 2002; Saha 2017); and they underscore that intersections of 'biosociality' (Rabinow 1996) and racialised affiliation can create repertoires for mobilising participation in health projects based on 'ethico-racial' imperatives (Williams 2021).

*Andrew Smart, Kate Weiner, Ros Williams, Francesca Sobande, Kate Weiner, Ros Williams, Francesca Sobande, Lijiaozi Cheng*

(Bath Spa University)

During the COVID-19 pandemic UK citizens from minority ethnic groups have been targeted for participation in research and vaccination with endorsement videos from celebrities and public figures. These were distributed via mass media and social media, including a video that was aired simultaneously on multiple TV channels in Feb 2021. This strategy, its manifestations and its responses provide a useful case for examining ongoing debates about racialised categories in medicine (Smart and Weiner 2017), and an 'ethico-racial' imperative that has become evident in medical research (Williams 2021). This paper will analyse the content and discourse in a purposive sample of 10 videos that promoted COVID-19 vaccines and research in the UK. We will consider who and what people or 'communities' are being imagined, constituted and invoked; what are the imagined values and concerns of those people or 'communities', and how are these being represented; and how are the imagined values and concerns being addressed or responded to. The work will uncover the ways in which racialisation operates in this case, enabling a discussion about the potential benefits and limitations of the approach.

### **Race to Recruit Special Event**

*Heidi Gardner, Andrew Smart, Kate Weiner, Ros Williams, Francesca Sobande, Kate Weiner, Ros Williams, Francesca Sobande, Lijiaozi Cheng*

(University of Aberdeen)

The health Inequalities and Intersectionality seen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have made headline news, but they are not new. Health research has included people that are easy-to-reach for decades, meaning that the impact of that research benefits the easy-to-reach most. In order to tackle health Inequalities and Intersectionality, the trials community needs to do everything possible to make their trials relevant to the people that stand to benefit from their results (often patients) and those expected to apply them (often healthcare professionals). This talk will present completed and ongoing work to develop practical tools for trialists to ensure that their participant populations reflect everyone in our society.

### **Race to Recruit Special Event**

*Ros Williams, Andrew Smart, Kate Weiner, Francesca Sobande, Kate Weiner, Ros Williams, Francesca Sobande, Lijiaozi Cheng*

(University of Sheffield)

Stem cell registries, which provide cells for transplants in blood malignancy treatment, recruit donors partly through mobilising narrative. This is often via appeals from patients without matching donors who seek to encourage registrations from people who might go on to be their own, or somebody else's, donor. Registries have also historically underserved racially minoritised communities, who are less likely to locate matching donors. As such, appeals often come from racially minoritised patients. Prior research highlights the importance of narrative in health contexts, and donation in particular. However, the impact of stories on those telling them is underexplored. This paper fills this gap, providing analysis of a range of interview, media and documentary data. It sketches out the contours of appeal work, showing how patients' private lives become publicly exposed. It highlights how appeals might be understood as collective action on behalf of racially minoritised communities, flagging how those most affected by inequity often become central to the fight to redress it. Through this, the paper extends an emergent 'sociology of donation', arguing for acknowledgement of media's importance in contemporary donation contexts.