

# Health Economics Unit

## Welcome to the Christmas edition of HEUnews

We hope that you enjoyed the first edition of our newsletter, and are pleased to send you this second issue to provide a light Christmas read! We are coming towards the end of a successful first term of this academic year and there have been a number of highlights. It was, first of all, a delight to welcome 33 new students to the MSc in Health Economics and Health Policy at the end of September, and the course is now in full swing. A second highlight was Tracy Roberts' inaugural lecture on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, more about which you can read below. And finally we have had a number of successes within the College of Medical and Dental Sciences here in Birmingham, including the award of 'best paper' in October to work conducted by Pelham Barton and Lazaros Andronis – you can read more about this on page 2.



We also have some news of changes within the Unit from January onwards. After three years in the role, I will be stepping down as Head of Unit to make time for other activities (more of which in future HEUnews) and I am delighted to let you know that Tracy will be taking over this role in which, I am sure, she will be superb. As a consequence, Tracy will be relinquishing her role as Director of Teaching and Pelham Barton will be taking this on. Tracy has made huge improvements to the MSc during her time as Director of Teaching for HEU, and the increase in new student numbers from 16 in 2007 to 33 this year speaks volumes for the quality and success of the course. I am sure Pelham will continue this upward trajectory.

### What's new in HEU...

On 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2011, Tracy Roberts gave her inaugural lecture entitled "Sex, Scarcity and Serendipity: Health Economics and Women's Health". The lecture which described how Tracy first became involved with her specialist area of women's reproductive and sexual health, was inter-woven with photos and anecdotes from childhood and her unusual career route via Nursing at Bart's, a Commodities Consultancy followed by a stint in the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies. Tracy told a story of saving lives whilst making "god-awful" cups of tea for famous actor patients; how rubber (her commodity) was anything but mind stretching; and that lubricants (Oil & Energy) did not ignite the career flame. She was saved by academia and health economics at the National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit, Oxford, before finally moving to Birmingham.



Tracy with Paul Stewart (Dean of Medicine)

With very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year. 'The Coast is clear!'

Jo Coast

Head of Unit

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## Keele collaboration

The Health Economics Unit and the Arthritis Research UK Primary Care Centre at Keele University have collaborated on research projects for several years, and this link was formalised in 2009/10 with dedicated funding to employ a Senior Lecturer (Sue Jowett) and a Research Fellow (Raymond Oppong). HEU's contribution is to facilitate and conduct health economics research alongside the substantial portfolio of musculoskeletal research undertaken at Keele. We support Keele in all aspects of health economics research including conducting economic evaluations, both model-based and alongside clinical trials, exploring cost and quality of life outcomes for patients with musculoskeletal diseases, and tackling methodological questions particularly pertinent in musculoskeletal research.

The research portfolio covers a number of musculoskeletal conditions, including osteoarthritis, shoulder impingement, tennis elbow and back pain. Much of the osteoarthritis and back pain research forms part of two separate NIHR programme grants in those conditions. In addition, two PhDs co-supervised by HEU are well underway. Jesse Kigozi is investigating the measurement and valuation of productivity costs in economic evaluation for musculoskeletal interventions, and Jerome Wulff is using a Markov decision model in his research to determine the most cost-effective strategy for managing osteoarthritis patients in primary care.

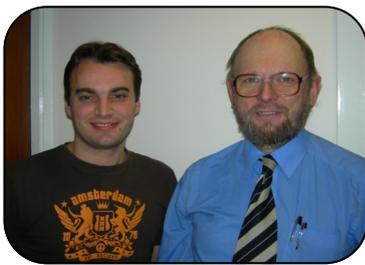
A new project to commence in 2012, funded by the National School of Primary Care Research, considers patient and public involvement (PPI) in research in primary care. This includes work to capture the broad costs and consequences associated with PPI, from the perspective of patients and researchers, and contains an exploratory Willingness to Pay study.



Sue Jowett and Ray Oppong

## Population wide interventions for primary prevention of cardio-vascular disease

A paper published in the British Medical Journal in July has been awarded a College of Medical and Dental Sciences Paper of the Month Prize for October 2011. The authors of the paper are Pelham Barton and Lazaros Andronis of the Health Economics Unit, together with three members of a Programme Development Group formed by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE).



Lazaros Andronis and Pelham Barton

HEU's involvement was as part of a Collaborating Centre with the Centre for Public Health Excellence at NICE. We developed a pair of linked spreadsheet models to predict the overall effects of population wide interventions for primary prevention of cardio-vascular disease (CVD). CVD includes myocardial infarction, stroke, and angina (chest pain of cardiac cause).

Pelham describes how the models worked: "First we predicted the cost savings and quality adjusted life years (QALYs) saved for any primary CVD event prevented, according to the age and gender of the individual and the type of event. Then we averaged over the age-related incidences to find the expected cost saving and QALY gain for an average CVD event, still stratified by age and gender. Next, for any individual age, gender, and 10-year CVD risk, we plotted the expected probability of CVD events with and without an intervention. We then aggregated across the whole population.

"Our results suggest that simply reducing everyone's CVD risk by 1% would result in cost savings nationwide equivalent to £30 million per year. We estimated that reducing dietary salt intake by 3g/day would save approximately £40 million per year, and that reducing intake of industrial trans fatty acids by 0.5 g/day would save approximately £230 million per year. These cost savings would be accompanied by substantial health gains."

The paper attracted considerable interest in the media. Pelham Barton was interviewed on the BBC West Midlands breakfast programme on the day of publication of the paper.

## Seminar Series

Dates and speakers for the forthcoming **Health Economics Unit** monthly seminars are as follows:

**18 January**  
Kirsten Major  
(NHS North West)

**23 February**  
TBC

**22 March**  
Aki Tsuchiya  
(University of Sheffield)

**19 April**  
Katherine Payne  
(University of Manchester)

**24 May**  
Amanda Owen-Smith  
(University of Bristol)

**28 June**  
Helen Dakin  
(University of Oxford)

If you would like to attend any of these seminars, please contact Helen Evans.

## Have you heard...

### ...about the Health Economics education website?

In January 2010, the HEU took over the responsibility of updating and managing the Health Economics education (HEe) website. The **core aims** are to:

- 1) encourage and support teaching and learning in health economics;
- 2) create a community of health economics teachers; and
- 3) promote health economics to potential students.



Whilst the website currently contains valuable resources for health economics teaching, we are working hard to improve on this with a major re-design in process. The website re-design is being undertaken by Hema Mistry and Raymond Oppong and led by Emma Frew. The website has 2 user groups: students and teachers.

The **student section** will have information on the different types of health economics courses available (short courses, post-graduate taught and research). Each course will have details on: the target student population of the course; the strengths and weaknesses of the course; and why the course is unique. This will be cross-referenced with information on careers in health economics, including academia; government; NHS; NICE; consultancy; and the pharmaceutical sector. Each career choice is accompanied by a description from a health economist working in that field explaining their roles and responsibilities.

The **teacher section** has been designed to provide inspiring up-to-date teaching resources for health economics lecturers. This part of the website has been created to aid the teaching of health economics and to operate as a 'virtual colleague' providing teaching advice, materials and innovative ideas for junior and experienced lecturers alike. This section will be split by the different topics areas and each section will include: up-to-date lecture slides covering all key health economics topics for both undergraduate and postgraduate students; audio-visual materials designed to provide short, insightful discussions of key health economics concepts to help enhance lectures and tutorials; downloadable group exercises that can be incorporated into lectures and tutorials; assessment material to encourage new and alternative methods of assessment; and updated reading lists to guide students towards the relevant literature.

For more information see: <http://www.economicnetwork.ac.uk/health>

## Pelham's Pen

Three members of the Health Economics Unit are giving lectures in different parts of the University. The first one, teaching Health Economics masters students, starts by saying "good morning". All the students say "good morning" in reply, and the lecture continues.

The second one, teaching medical students, also starts by saying "good morning". There is no reaction at all from the audience, and the lecturer carries on anyway.

The third one, teaching Economics undergraduates, also starts by saying "good morning" ... and everyone writes it down.

## Staff news...



Congratulations to **Hareth Al-Janabi**, who was recently awarded a Birmingham Fellowship.

These externally advertised fellowships are part of a University-wide commitment to attract "outstanding post-doctoral researchers who are on a trajectory to become the next generation of research and academic leaders". In the first round, the University received around 1400 applications and Hareth was one of 38 individuals (from across the University and externally) to be awarded a fellowship. The award runs for five years, and will provide extra funding to allow Hareth to build a programme of research on informal care when his current MRC fellowship ends in 2014.



**Tom Keeley** has been awarded a Postgraduate Researcher Overseas Travel Scholarship from the College of Medicine and Dentistry. Tom will travel to Melbourne, Australia to conduct a number of qualitative interviews assessing the validity and acceptability of the ICECAP Quality-of-Life Indexes amongst clinical trialists, research clinicians and research nurses. The award will allow Tom to collaborate with researchers at the University of Melbourne and Monash University, specifically Prof. Philip Clarke and Dr. Paula Lorgelly who were influential in helping to obtain this award. This research will contribute to Tom's PhD thesis and to the wider body of Quality-of-Life research being completed within the Health Economics Unit.

Welcome to **Lavanya Diwakar**, a clinician specialising in allergy and immunology, who took the MSc in Health Economics and Health Policy graduating last year. Lavanya has clearly been bitten by the HE bug as she has taken up a part time post (2 days per week) within the Unit. She is currently working with Tracy Roberts and Pelham Barton on the health economic analysis of PLUTO, a HTA funded neonatology trial.



## Capacity building news...

### West Midlands Research Design Service

The HEU provides health advice and support for the West Midlands Research Design Service (WMDRS). The WMDRS comprises three hubs: Birmingham, Keele and Warwick, with the HEU providing services for two-thirds of the region. The service provides help to local researchers including clinicians applying for NIHR research funds, in particular those applying for the Research for Patient Benefit funding. The team is led by Emma Frew with support from Billingsley Kaambwa and Hema Mistry.

The team have provided advice on a number of disease areas and the type of support provided has ranged from general study design comments to specific advice on the measurement of costs and outcomes. On occasion, and where appropriate, the RDS advisors become members of the bid research team either as advisors or as co-applicants.



Emma Frew, Hema Mistry, Billingsley Kaambwa

#### MSc Health Economics & Health Policy and

**associated short courses:** The MSc HEHP is ideal for new graduates hoping to pursue a career in health economics or for those currently working in the health care sector who wish to develop skills in health economics. The course explores the key principles and theories upon which health economics is based as well as developing practical skills for the conduct of empirical work. It provides a programme of carefully developed modules, with a number also provided as individual short courses:

- Introduction to Health Economics
- Policy and Economics of Health Care Delivery
- Economic Evaluation in Health Care
- Modelling for Health Economics

To learn more about the MSc or about the short courses, visit [www.mds.bham.ac.uk/healthconomics](http://www.mds.bham.ac.uk/healthconomics), contact Helen Evans 0121 414 7694 or email [healthconomics@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:healthconomics@contacts.bham.ac.uk)

### Selected recent publications

**Al-Janabi H, Flynn TN, Coast J.** QALYs and Carers.

*Pharmacoeconomics* 2011 DOI: 10.2165/11593940-000000000-00000

Bryan S, Dormandy E, **Roberts T**, Ades A, **Barton P**, Juarez-Garcia A, **Andronis L**, Karnon J, Marteau T. Screening for sickle cell and thalassaemia in primary care: a cost-effectiveness study. *British Journal of General Practice*, 2011, DOI: 10.3399/bjgp11X601325

**Mistry, H.** Systematic review of studies of the cost-effectiveness of telemedicine and telecare. Changes in the economic evidence over twenty years. *Journal Telemed Telecare*, 2011, DOI: 10.1258/jtt.2011.110505

**Oppong R, Kaambwa B**, Nuttall J, Hood K, Smith RD, **Coast J**, The impact of using different tariffs to value EQ-5D health state descriptions: an example from a study of acute cough/lower respiratory tract infections in seven countries. *European Journal of Health Econ*, 2011, DOI: 10.1007/s10198-011-0360-9

**Roberts TE, Tsourapas A**, Sutcliffe L, Cassell J, Estcourt C. Is Accelerated Partner Therapy (APT) a cost-effective alternative to routine patient referral partner notification in the UK? Preliminary cost-consequence analysis of an exploratory trial. *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, 2011, DOI: 10.1136/sextrans-2011-050176

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