

Health Economics Unit

Welcome to the Summer edition of HEUnews!



Whilst we eagerly await the promised scorching July weather, I am pleased to present the current news and report that the outlook for capacity development in Health Economics at Birmingham is certainly looking bright. First, we welcome Jinyu, Rebecca and Benjamin, our 3 new interns (see page 4) recruited from a highly competitive process from within the undergraduate community of Birmingham's Department of Economics. I am also delighted to report that the Unit in conjunction with colleagues from within the School of Health and Population Sciences has been successful in winning two PhD (1 +3) studentships through the School competition (see below). The successful candidates will join the Health Economics and Health Policy MSc run by HEU in September.

Our research section focuses on HEU's interest in issues concerning the wider costs and benefits in health economic research. Jesse, who is near completion of his PhD, has been looking at the methodological challenges associated with measuring productivity costs for use within economic evaluation. In contrast, as part of the ongoing BALLSEYE project, Louise is exploring the challenging wider issues associated with valuing outcomes for STI's (see page 2). The conference season is well underway and having just returned from another stimulating HESG meeting in Warwick, HEU colleagues Paul, Sabina and Jo are off on their travels again! Paul is off to Paris to present his PhD work on the capability approach and Sabina and Jo are off to Australia. Sabina is presenting her PhD work on the use of willingness to pay in chronic conditions at iHEA and will then be undertaking a month long placement at Deakin University; and Jo will be presenting her work on the EU funded End of Life Project also at iHEA and at the International Choice Modelling Conference. It's a

hard life and of course I know they will be absolutely gutted to miss the promised heat-wave here!

Tracy Roberts
Head of Unit

What's new in HEU...?

Research studentship success.

Researchers within HEU have successfully teamed up with other members of the School of Health and Population Sciences to win doctoral studentships.

Emma Frew and **Lazaros Andronis**, along with Miranda Pallan and Wolfgang Höglger have been successful in securing a MSc/PhD research studentship for a student to take a one year MSc in Health Economics and Health Policy and to spend three years conducting doctoral research to evaluate prevention strategies for vitamin D deficiency from a global perspective. The PhD titled "Modelling treatment strategies for Vitamin D deficiency from a global perspective" will have a strong public health focus and will provide the opportunity for the successful student to develop skills within health economics, decision-analytic modelling and value of information analysis.

Hareth Al Janabi and **Sue Jowett**, along with public health professor Kate Jolly, have also recently secured a school PhD studentship on "The inclusion of health externalities in economic evaluation". The studentship provides fees and a stipend for a student to undertake an MSc in health economics and three years focused research. The work will build on the unit's ongoing work in measuring externality effects by determining methods for including such effects in economic evaluation. This exciting project will draw on ideas from economics, medicine and potentially sociology, with the appointed student developing expertise in survey research and econometric and decision-analytical modelling of the data.

The successful students will start September 2013.

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Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) in young people are continuing to rise, with an estimated annual cost to the NHS of untreated chlamydia infection of around £100 million. The National Chlamydia Screening Programme was introduced in 2003, however screening uptake in men remains poor. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has recommended that contact and treatment of the sex partners of people with sexually transmitted infections (STIs) needs to be improved; this is particularly the case for male partners.

Louise Jackson is funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) as part of the BALLSEYE programme of research to improve the sexual health of young men in the UK. Louise is currently evaluating the cost-effectiveness of two interventions which form part of this programme. The first involves evaluating new models of partner notification to rapidly contact and treat the male sex partners of people with STIs in primary care (Accelerated Partner Therapy - APT). The second is concerned with the cost effectiveness of a novel intervention to increase STI screening amongst young men (SPORTSMART).



This intervention involves popular opinion leader promoted STI testing in amateur football clubs. For both interventions, the health economics will analyse the costs and resource use associated with alternative strategies and develop economic models from the perspective of the health service. **Tracy Roberts** is the lead health economist on these projects.

Underpinning this work, Louise and Tracy are involved in methodological research which aims to explore appropriate techniques for the measurement and valuation of health benefits for interventions aiming to improve sexual health. They have recently completed a systematic review of published economic evaluations and primary studies concerned with *Chlamydia trachomatis*. They are currently developing primary research to measure and value the health states associated with chlamydia infections.



Tracy Roberts and Louise Jackson

Economic evaluations performed from a societal perspective typically should include productivity costs. Although common practice in the United Kingdom is to restrict the conduct of economic evaluation studies to the National Health Service payer perspective, ignoring productivity costs could lead to the pursuit of less efficient policies for society as a whole.

Jesse Kigozi, for his doctoral research (supervisors, **Pelham Barton**, **Sue Jowett**, **Jo Coast**, Martyn Lewis), is investigating alternative approaches to estimating productivity costs. He is focusing on the application of the friction cost approach, using low back pain as a case study. Back pain is a very common and costly condition, and is one of the main causes of long-term sickness absence in the UK. The friction cost approach aims to capture the real costs of productivity loss, allowing for replacement of workers and taking account of factors such as other workers compensating for the absent person. It should also take account in a similar way of workers who are present but unable to work fully because of illness (a concept known as presenteeism). Applications of the approach in the UK however remain limited.



Jesse Kigozi

Jesse is working with researchers at Birmingham and Keele to address some of the key methodological issues in measuring productivity using the friction cost approach. Individual studies include validation of a presenteeism measure among low-back pain sufferers, estimation for the UK of the length of friction periods by occupation, and estimation of the cost-effectiveness of a stratified care model for treating low back pain patients in a clinical and routine care setting with applications of the friction cost approach. Ultimately, Jesse hopes this research will be valuable in advising future applications of the friction cost approach in estimating productivity costs, and, more generally will contribute to the debate on the role of productivity costs within the United Kingdom.

Pelham's Pen

Two clinicians and two Health Economists are travelling together by train to a conference. When they meet at the station, the economists ask the clinicians how many tickets they have bought. The clinicians say "two" and the economists say "we have only bought one between us". The clinicians are puzzled by this, but the economists say that all will become clear on the train.

When the ticket collector comes in sight, the economists get up and lock themselves into the toilet. When the ticket collector knocks on the toilet door, the economists pass the ticket under the door, the ticket collector stamps it and passes it back, and thus the two economists travel on one ticket.

On the return journey, the four of them again compare notes at the station. This time, they find that the clinicians have followed the economists' example and only bought one ticket, but the economists have not bought a ticket at all. Again, the economists say that all will become clear on the train. When the ticket collector appears, the two clinicians lock themselves into a toilet. One of the economists knocks on the toilet door, picks up the ticket passed through by a trusting clinician, and then the two economists go and lock themselves – with the ticket – into another toilet.

Moral: Do not use economists' techniques unless you really understand them.

Have you heard...

...about the conference season?

Members of HEU are travelling the length and breadth of the UK this summer, as well as to some far flung locations. Among the shorter travels were a number of papers at the Warwick HESG at the end of June. These included papers led by **Hareth Al-Janabi** (on health spillovers to family members), **Adrian Gheorghe** (on enhancing the generalizability of trial-based economic evaluations), **Phil Kinghorn** (on the value of time at the end of life), **Cristina Penalzoza-Ramos** (on best practice in decision analytic modelling) and **Sabina Sanghera** (on valuing outcomes in chronic conditions with periodic symptoms). There was also a paper from a previous MSc student, Micah Rose, on structural uncertainty in economic modelling, in conjunction with his dissertation supervisors, **Pelham Barton** and **Lazaros Andronis**.

Also in the UK at the end of June, **Deirdre O'Brien**, **Hugh McLeod** and Mohammed Mohammed, presented a paper at the UK National Smoking Cessation Conference on the impact of payment for results on addressing health inequalities.

In early July, the action moves overseas. **Paul Mitchell** will be presenting his work on the sufficient capability approach in economic evaluation at the New Directions in Welfare conference in Paris, whilst **Jo Coast** and **Sabina Sanghera** will be presenting at conferences in Sydney. Jo will be presenting at both iHEA and the International Choice Modelling Conference on the valuation of a new instrument for measuring the impact of care at the end of life, the ICECAP-SCM, and Sabina will be presenting at iHEA on the use of willingness to pay for valuing outcomes in chronic conditions. We hope that all our HEUnews readers enjoy the presentations from HEU members if they are attending any of these events.

Research news...

Recent (Greek) PhD success

Two members of staff, **Lazaros Andronis** and **Ilias Goranitis** have recently joined the ranks of PhD holders within the Health Economics Unit.

Lazaros' doctoral project, titled "Analytic approaches for informing research funding decisions: an exploration of their role and value using case studies of cancer clinical trials", was funded by a NIHR Doctoral Researcher Fellowship award and was supervised by **Dr Pelham Barton** and Professor Lucinda Billingham. Lazaros explained that the starting point in his study is the acknowledgment that health care research is a public good and, just as in the case of treatment adoption, research funding decisions should be guided by explicit numerical estimates of the cost and the potential benefits of alternative research programmes. On this basis, Lazaros reviewed alternative approaches and models put forward for assisting research funding decisions, and, by applying the most prominent frameworks - 'payback of research' and 'value of information' - to 'real world' research proposals, he looked at the frameworks' usefulness, feasibility and practicality, validity, theoretical and methodological soundness, and potential to fit into current funding processes. Lazaros concluded that, under certain conditions, analytic approaches can be useful tools in ensuring that research resources are allocated efficiently. As a next step, Lazaros is planning to look at barriers that preclude the use of analytic approaches for research funding decisions, and to explore the scope for routine use of estimates of the "cost-effectiveness of research" when deciding on priorities for publicly funded research.

Ilias was awarded the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Health Care Management-Health Informatics by the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens on the 29th of March. Under the supervision of Professor L. Liopoulos, Professor Em. Velonakis and As. Professor D. Kaitelidou, Ilias completed his doctoral thesis, titled "The Effect of Institutional, Political and Administrative context in Reforming the Health Care sector in Greece", with Distinction. Drawing on political theories of change and the analysis of national and international experience on health care reforms, Ilias developed a framework for studying and analysing health care reforms, a model for their classification and a strategy for reforming health care systems like the Greek NHS and those of Southern Europe.



Lazaros Andronis & Ilias Goranitis

Seminar Series

The health economics monthly seminar series continued successfully in 2013. Invited speakers included: Richard Smith, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, who gave a talk on medical tourism and the implications for the NHS; Richard Brooks from the EuroQol group talked about the work of the Group over 25 years, with particular emphasis on the role of EQ-5D in the valuation of health-related quality of life for the purpose of economic evaluation, the talk was based on the book "The EuroQol Group after 25 years"; Jing Shen from Newcastle University gave a talk on oral inequalities in the UK; and Manuel Gomes, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine gave an overview of methods for the economic analysis of cluster randomised trials.

Details of the dates and speakers for the new seminar series which starts in September 2013 will be available in the next edition of HEUnews.

If you would like to attend any of the seminars or would like to contribute, please contact us via our email address.

EconEndLife advisory group meeting & EU funding visit

We were extremely pleased to welcome members of the EconEndLife Advisory and Ethics Groups to Birmingham in April for the second Advisory Group meeting for this project. Members came from across the UK, the Netherlands and Australia, to hear presentations on the progress of the project, discuss its on-going work and provide their valuable input into the future plans.

Two months later, in mid-June, we were further delighted to receive a visit from Elisabeth Renney from the European Research Council who are funding the work. This was an extremely helpful visit, again providing valuable input into future plans. We are extremely grateful to all these people for giving up their time to help take this important work forwards.



Members of the EconEndLife Advisory group 2013

Capacity building news...

Summer Internships 2013

We are pleased to welcome our second cohort of summer interns to the Health Economics Unit. Jinyu Hou, Rebecca Saunby and Benjamin Silverblatt were successful applicants from a strong field of Birmingham undergraduate students. The internships provide an opportunity for undergraduate economics students to observe and experience working life in an academic health economics department with the intention of stimulating interest in a career in health economics. The internships will last for four weeks during June and July, and comprise work on projects relating to the family impact of illness, waiting times, value of healthcare and healthy ageing.



Jinyu Hou, Rebecca Saunby, Benjamin Silverblatt

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. The MSc provides a programme of carefully developed modules, with the following modules 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
- Statistics / Econometrics

To learn more about the MSc or about the short courses, visit <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/healthconomics>, contact Helen Evans on 0121 414 7694 or email healthconomics@contacts.bham.ac.uk

Congratulations to...

Sam Husbands has been successful in her application for a Universitas 21 PhD scholarship. This funding provides University of Birmingham doctoral students with the opportunity to conduct international research at a fellow Universitas 21 institution. Sam will be travelling to the University of British Columbia, Canada in October and will be hosted by Professor Stirling Bryan. Whilst there she will be conducting interviews with modellers at the UBC to gain their opinion on the process of building a model for the purpose of economic evaluation. The visit will be of great personal benefit to Sam as it will allow her to generate data for her PhD that will provide an international perspective, enhancing the generalisability of her research. Sam's visit will also act to enhance and extend the HEU's developing links with UBC in the area of economic modelling.



Cristina Penaloza has successfully passed the 'Effective Academic Practice in Higher Education (EAPHE)' Associate Module, becoming a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). The EAPHE is the second out of 3 modules of the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PCAP). Her work comprising four integral elements of pedagogic research applied to her academic practice was awarded a merit.



Selected recent publications

Al Janabi H, Keeley T, Mitchell P, Coast J, Can capabilities be self-reported? A think aloud study, *Social Science & Medicine* 2013, DOI: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2013.03.035

Carroll FE, Al Janabi H, Flynn T, Montgomery A, Women and their partners' preferences for Down's syndrome screening tests: a discrete choice experiment, *Prenatal Diagnosis* 2013, DOI: 10.1002/pd.4086

Jowett S, Crawshaw DP, Helliwell PS, Hensor EMA, Hay EM, Conaghan PG, Cost-effectiveness of exercise therapy after corticosteroid injection for moderate to severe shoulder pain due to subacromial impingement syndrome: a trial-based analysis, *Rheumatology* 2013, DOI: 10.1093/rheumatology/ket149

Kaambwa B, Frew E, Health economics in the UK: Capacity, constraints and comparisons to US health economists, *International Review of economics Education* 2013, DOI: 10.1016/j.iree.2013.04.004

Oppong R, Jit M, Smith RD, Butler CC, Melbye H, Mölstad S, Coast J, Cost-effectiveness of point of care C-reactive protein testing to inform antibiotic prescribing decisions, *BJGP*, 2013, DOI: 10.3399/bjgp13X669185

Owen-Smith A, Kipping R, Donovan J, Hine C, Maslen C, Coast J, A NICE example? Variation in provision of bariatric surgery in England, *BMJ*, 2013, DOI: 10.1136/bmj.f2453

Sutton E, Coast J, Development of a supportive care measure for economic evaluation of end-of-life care using qualitative methods, *Palliative Medicine*, 2013, DOI:10.1177/0269216313489368

Thorn JC, Coast J, Cohen D, Hollingworth W, Knapp M, Noble SM, Ridyard C, Wordsworth S, Hughes D, Resource-Use Measurement Based on Patient Recall: Issues and Challenges for Economic Evaluation, *Applied Health Economics and Health Policy*, 2013, DOI: 10.1007/s40258-013-0022-4