

BRITISH SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

MEDICAL SOCIOLOGY GROUP

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 28 September 2002 at the University of York.

Forty members of the BSA Medical Sociology Study Group attended the meeting. Nicola Gibson (BSA Conference Administrator who took the minutes) was in attendance.

1. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the AGM held on Saturday 22 September 2001 were approved.

2. Matters arising

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

3. Convenor's Report – Hannah Bradby

[a] The committee, who had, as usual, spent time away from organising their departments, research projects and teaching schedules during the year, to put together the 2002 conference, were thanked. Their active presence during the course of the conference ensured the smooth running of the programme and was gratefully acknowledged.

[b] Thanks to: Clare Williams, Jane Sandall and Nina Hallowell managed to shoe horn a remarkable number of papers into the available time frame; Cath Exley for the varied programme of entertainment; Nina Hallowell who organised both the newcomers' reception and Jo Campling; Edwin van Teijlingen who oversaw the finances on behalf of the group; Michael Traynor who had the task of dealing with the teething problems of having PowerPoint in all rooms; Davina Allen (unable to attend this conference) who had responsibility for publicity and people with special needs.

[c] Susan Turner and Emma Rowley, the student helpers this year, were thanked for their hard work and good cheer in the office and on the registration desks.

The BSA office had been courteous and efficient throughout the year and the committee's gratitude for fielding most of the enquiries the conference generated was noted. The key person in this was Nicola Gibson who, not only maintains a high level of customer care and service to the group, but also has a remarkable memory for the details of the conference that keeps the committee on track. The committee was grateful for her knowledge of conference organisation and commitment to the Group.

The committee were grateful to the York conference office staff, who had made it an easy place to organise a conference and had, when there were problems, done their utmost to respond to them quickly.

[d] At this year's conference there were one hundred and ninety-nine abstracts submitted, two plenary papers, 4 workshops and 11 posters. All of the abstracts had been accepted but, as of September, there had been 15 withdrawals. Since the programme was published further withdrawals had occurred, leaving a programme of 184-scheduled oral presentation (compared with 189 oral presentations in 2001).

[e] Registrations for the annual Conference numbered 334, of a similar size to the previous year, when there had been 354. There were 38 non-UK based delegates - 2 from Ireland, 3 from Denmark, 1 from Finland, 16 from Norway, 3 from Sweden, 4 from Australia, 4 from Canada, 1 from New Zealand, 2 from USA and 2 from India. These make 11% of the conference total compared to 5% in 2001. The trend towards becoming an increasingly international conference was welcomed.

One hundred delegates identified themselves as newcomers and/or postgraduates, which is similar to 2001. Twenty-nine UK subsidy bookings were made this year, compared with 40 last year, which seems to be due to people no longer being prepared to sleep in non-en-suite rooms. The group had, as advertised on the website, another subsidy which is a £50 refund for people whose institution does not meet all of their financial expenses, for which one person applied in 2002. Despite this low uptake, it was suggested that this subsidy be kept available.

[f] The international student bursary which includes travel expenses up to £500, now in its fourth year, had been awarded to three applicants in 2002. The bursary was given delegates from India, Canada and Sweden. A fourth successful applicant withdrew from the conference due to her changed employment circumstances. Four other applicants were given the reduced registration, meals and accommodation, (i.e. the subsidy rate) but no travel expenses.

The group now offers a complex selection of subsidies for attendance at the conference.

[g] As promised, more conference information has been put on the website this year, with delegates able to download a large PDF version of the programme prior to their arrival at York. Overseas delegates had found this particularly useful. PowerPoint was made available in every presentation room, resulting in some teething problems, which we hope will disappear in subsequent years, as this becomes standard.

[h] Throughout the year the BSA Office staff continue to support the work of the group to a greater extent than they did four years ago. The provisional figure offered at the last AGM of the cost of these services was just under £9,000. The actual figure for 2001 of £13, 842 with the discrepancy largely due to the considerable number of enquiries generated by the Medical Sociology conference, with which the office deals. A sum of £11, 212 is specifically covers conference administration. The total projected figure for BSA office services in 2002 is £13, 000, which for the committee this figure represents a bargain. The hope was expressed that the AGM would continue to support this way of organising the work.

[i] Other initiatives undertaken by the committee and reported at the 2001 AGM included the idea of having some free student places, specifically aimed at Universities that did not send many delegates or did not send return delegates to the conference. Both the University of the West of England and the University of Central England put together bids to have three students places for three years. Three students were indeed present at the 2002 conference from the University of the West of England, arranged by Margaret Miers. David Cox of University of Central England had been unable to find students to take up the places, but hoped to fill the places at future conferences. The free places run for another two years when the group will assess if it has been a useful way of spending money. The students that attended the 2002 conference will write a short report for Medical Sociology News.

[j] The website had now been managed on a day-to-day basis by Alyson Jenkins of Swansea in collaboration with the BSA office. Hannah reported that the BSA website was being re-designed with a new version due on line in October. Part of the re-design would include thinking about how to get a web based register on line. Edwin was invited to discuss this further.

Edwin reported that a new version of the register was overdue, the last one having come out in 1998. The BSA wishes to produce a register, which might work in conjunction with the Medical sociology register. However, since this is not currently possible, a simple file to go on the website represents an interim measure. It would be set up like a database that Alyson could update. Edwin presented a template of the form, similar to the fields included in the previous register, but with an additional field to detail web page addresses. Edwin was interested to know if the group was happy with the proposal and stated all members of the group would be sent a request for information over the next few months.

Lastly Hannah reported, probably for the last time, a thank you to David Hughes on behalf of the group who had remained loyal and faithful in supporting the Medical Sociology Group's efforts to get on the internet. The site hosted by Swansea should be closed down now apart from a link to the BSA site.

[k] The group's debt of gratitude to the team that produces Medical Sociology News was expressed. Judith Green, Geraldine Leydon, Geraldine Barrett, Nicki Thorogood, Michael Traynor and Kelly Lawless were thanked and the AGM was reminded that a call for new editors has gone out as their term of editorship had almost expired.

The jiscmail list, an adjunct to Medical Sociology News that allows speedy notification of jobs and research, is well used with a wide range of people posting notices to it.

The list has a circulation of 270 people – all those who pay their Medical Sociology News subscription. It is a closed list open only to those who have paid their Medical Sociology News subscription. The list's moderator Simon Carter was thanked for his work and it was noted as a highly valued aspect of the Medical Sociology Group.

[l] The book prize launched at the 2001 AGM had gone well with an enthusiastic response and members were urged to nominate books for the 2003 prize. The rules have been slightly changed, to limit people to nominating a single book.

Questions were taken and a member of the group raised the issue that given the fees charged by York, the supplementary parking charges, currently £1, should be waived for the Medical Sociology Group conference delegates. Hannah agreed to raise this with the York conference office.

A member of the group thought it a pity the books nominated for the book prize had not been available to purchase at the conference. Hannah said the committee had tried to make the books available and would try again for the 2003 conference. Part of the problem had been that not all of the publishers had been British based. Hannah hoped members could purchase the books in their local bookstores.

Judith Green thanked the committee for, as always, providing a fantastically well-organised conference.

4. Constitutional amendments

[a] There were two constitutional amendments proposed at the AGM. The first was to bring the constitution in line with the changes that had happened in the division of editorship of the journal from the foundation for the Sociology of Health and Illness (SHI). The proposed amendment had been distributed with the August issue of Medical Sociology News. A copy of the proposed amendment had also been circulated at the AGM. Robert Dingwall seconded the proposal and the meeting passed the amendment.

[b] The second proposal, issued with the conference pack, would enable the committee members to expand the means by which they could circulate notices. The proposal was to update the constitution since the group now had a jiscmail list and website, allowing notices to go out through all 3 media, but without making all 3 obligatory. Cath Exley seconded the proposal and the meeting passed the amendment.

Hannah thanked the AGM for accepting the amendments.

In the 2001 meeting it stated there might have been another amendment reference co-opting committee members relating to the convenor and treasurer roles. The treasurer's job has become less onerous slightly because the group is no longer responsible for its own accounts. There will however be no constitutional change, since the committee wishes to retain two convenor type roles on the committee.

5. Financial Report – Edwin van Teijlingen

[a] A three page financial report had been circulated at the AGM and Edwin explained his role in overseeing the finances that are handled by the BSA office. Edwin was to summarize the financial report and stated the report was signed by the BSA and not by the Medical Sociology Group.

[b] Edwin asked the AGM to look at the 2001 accounts on page one and to note the £89,000 pounds income and the expenditure of £82,000. On the final page the projected income for 2002 was the same but there was £10,000 pounds more expenditure. Edwin said given the problem of excess reserves, the projected expenditure for 2002 was welcome and was largely related to the annual conference. Income had not changed much but expenditure was rising and Edwin raised the question of whether the group should increase the fees next year or the year after, to stay in line with inflation and venue charges.

[c] A minor issue, (minor in relation to the amount of money) reported by Edwin was the small drop in administration costs and in Medical Sociology News income.

[d] Income generated by regional study groups had increased dramatically percentage wise. Expenditure has also risen but not as much.

[e] The amount of money spent on prizes had increased dramatically. Income had come from the Foundation. The Medical Sociology Group had not increased that much. Compared to last year band interest charges had increased.

The committee ran a budget for the first time for planned expenditure, which will be revised in November. A new budget will be set for the next year to keep track on the group's finances.

Edwin said the BSA Executive were to meet in October should any member want to direct any concerns or comments to that meeting regarding the finances. Edwin closed his report by stating the finances of the group were healthy.

[f] There was a comment raised by a member of the AGM regarding the suggestion to increase conference costs to cover increased expenditure. They stated there was a dilemma every year of how to spend the group's profit, and one of the solutions was to allow conference fees to remain static. There were said to be a couple of delegates who had booked into hotels in York because it was cheaper than staying on campus. The concern was that any increases would decrease the numbers of delegates on campus and the group were urged to lessen the surplus by keeping costs static.

Hannah reported that the various bursaries offered by the group had reduced the surplus. The Phil Strong Prize has been set up to distribute interest. Hannah acknowledged that conference costs should be kept to a minimum and noted that York remained one of the cheapest venues to run a conference. Hannah agreed the group wanted to avoid delegates staying away from on campus.

Hannah thanked Edwin for his report.

6. Prizes

a) Phil Strong Memorial Prizes 2002- 2003

The Group's interest is now consolidated with the BSA funds and for 2002 £2,000 were available for distribution in 2 Phil Strong Prizes worth £1000 each.

There were 4 applications to the Phil Strong Prize. This shortened dramatically the odds of winning compared with the 14 applicant of the previous year. Hannah asked supervisors to take note and to encourage applications for next year or the year after. Members were reminded that as long as submissions met the criteria the prize was allocated randomly.

The prize was designed to be a lottery and of the four names that were submitted, the following winners, Helen Liebling who was supervised by Gillian Bendelow at the University of Warwick and Emma Pitchforth who was supervised by Edwin van Teijlingen at the University of Aberdeen were drawn at random.

b) Book Prize

Mildred Blaxter was invited to address the AGM regarding the book prize. Mildred was pleased to present the first SHI Book Prize. It had been a pleasure reading the long list and especially the four short listed books. The four short listed books were advertised on the Medical Sociology Group Website and in the conference programme. Members were urged to read all entries for the prize.

The winner of the 2002 Sociology of Health and Illness book of the year was Margaret Lock (2002) for her book *'Twice Dead. Organ Transplants and the Reinvention of Death'*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Mildred added it was a beautiful book; it was scholarly, interesting, well written, very readable and a good representative of the discipline. Margaret Lock was unable to attend the conference and Ronnie Frankenberg received her prize on her behalf, reading a prepared speech.

Carol Emslie, in her capacity as one of the book review editors stated next year one of the issues will run book reviews on all four short listed books and that would tie in with advertising the 2003 book prize.

7. Sociology of Health and Illness – Editors' Report – Veronica James

[a] Veronica James reported that news from SHI was all essentially good. They had 165 submissions over the last year with 30 acceptances. This had happened in the previous two years. The journal remained particularly strong on North America and there had been a growing interest in Europe, namely in Israel. It was noted that Israel had named SHI as an approved journal for academic tenure.

[b] Having taken information from Blackwell's subscriptions report, Veronica noted the institutional subscriptions to volume 24 of SHI were 98% renewed in comparison with the

2001 volume. This was an excellent performance and well ahead of industry averages of around 95%. Veronica reported that SHI was very buoyant and members were thanked for their submissions and reviews. SHI continues to thrive despite its informality.

[c] The money generated from SHI, members should have gathered, goes through the Foundation. The Foundation stated they were keen to re-invest the money back into the Medical Sociology Community. It was proposed that a website be set up so that information can be more readily available and that this would happen in the coming year. Comments were welcomed on this proposal. Mike Bury stated on behalf of the foundation that the website would not cut across the group and they were listening closely to what had been suggested about the rise of different media.

[d] Veronica highlighted the forthcoming 25th Anniversary Celebration of SHI on 25th April 2003 at London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine team Members were encouraged to attend to look at the past through a series of presentations and discussions and a look at the future too to include new and more senior experienced members.

[e] Veronica reported that SHI submissions would go electronic in January 2003 using the system Scholar I. Two demonstrations had taken place at the conference, with another demonstration planned for the 2003 Medical Sociology Group Conference. Leaflets are available on how it works. There had been a lot of discussions with the board. Raising concerns from the community regarding transfer of costs, particularly from reviewers who would now have to print information themselves and the concerns over what will be involved. Two of the editors, namely Veronica and Elizabeth have asked for hard copies where possible. Comments were welcomed by members once the system was up and working.

[f] Members were reminded to submit two papers, an anonymous one to the referees and another one, not anonymous, to the editors. The editors would be available for discussion at any time. Veronica again added the electronic method was the future for journals but there would be hardcopies versions particularly for those people in developing countries with limited computer access.

The team was also transferring the card index of referees onto a database. It presently contains 450 names. Everyone on the index would be contacted to ask if they still want to stay on the database and this meets data protection needs. Reviewers were encouraged to reply to stay on the database.

Veronica gave a big thank you to the editorial board members who have continued to support the editors enormously throughout the year making a great difference to the running of the journal. The board members helpfully deal with issues requiring consultation. The editors were also pleased to accept the invitation to remain editors for another three years. Therefore the editors remain Robert Dingwall, Veronica James, Elizabeth Murray and Alison Pilnick.

The editors were particularly grateful to their wonderful editorial assistant, Allison Pearson for all her work. Allison had attended part of the conference.

Thanks particularly, to those members that were coming off the board, Elizabeth Ettorre, Sarah Nettleton and Clive Seale. Elizabeth Ettorre and Clive Seale were both been eligible for re-election.

8. Medical Sociology News – Editors' report – Judith Green

Judith Green reported that as already mentioned the forthcoming issue of Medical Sociology News was the last issue for the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine team. Judith had spoken to a few people who might wish to take on the editorship and emphasised it would

suit a small group of people, at the same or near by institution and it was fun to do. It was a means of getting to know everyone in the medical sociology community and anyone interested should contact any member of the editorial team, Judith Green, Michael Traynor, Geraldine Barrett, Geraldine Leydon and Nicki Thorogood.

Kelly Lawless, the editorial assistant, who had made the editors work so much easier was thanked, as was Simon Carter who ran the jiscmail list, which the editors felt was their best innovation.

Subscriptions had declined in 2002, due to printing and distributing of the subscription form. The printer had not been able to do any inserts, and the subscription form was photocopied onto the back page of Medical Sociology News. Not everyone had noticed the subscription form and some members, who had slowly noticed they have not yet received any issues of Medical Sociology News, were still submitting 2002 subscription payments.

Judith thanked all those who had contributed book reviews and 'Dear Marge' questions and answers over the last year. Judith said the nice thing about Medical Sociology News was that people actually read it from cover to cover and that she continues to receive, most weeks, requests to reprint articles. In particular requests for methods articles that would not normally be included in journals but were worthy of sharing with colleagues.

9. Regional Groups

Reports had been received from the North West, South West, London and the West Midlands. A change of contact had been received from the Wales group but no report. There had been no reports received from Scotland, the North East and Midlands Group or the Liverpool groups. Hannah asked that members confirm contacts for these groups.

10. Study Group reports

Reports had been received from the Death, Dying and Bereavement Study Group, the Cancer Study Group, and the Human Reproduction Study Group.

There were no issues raised for discussion by regional or study group representatives.

11. Elections

a) To the Group Committee (1 vacancy)

Davina Allen reached the end of her second term of office (a four year total) on the Medical Sociology Group Committee. The group was very grateful for the work done by Davina and since she was unable to attend the conference, Hannah had sent a present through the post on behalf of the group. Davina's work for the Group was characterised by taking a job, and not only doing the job properly, but also tidying it up to make it easier for the next person. Her place on the committee had become vacant but Davina would stay a member of the committee as she had agreed to be convenor elect.

Clare Williams and Edwin van Teijlingen finished their first two-year term of office and had agreed to stand for another two-year term of office. Kim Clarke was nominated for a place on the committee. Thus with 3 vacancies and 3 nominations, no election was required.

Davina was thanked for agreeing to take on the role of convenor from next year; Edwin and Clare were thanked for two years of work and welcomed back for another two years and Kim was welcomed onto the committee. The group's gratitude was acknowledged with a round of applause.

b) To the Editorial Board of The Sociology of Health and Illness

The nominees were Marina Barnard, Elizabeth Ettorre, Geraldine Lee-Treweek, Alan Petersen, Hilary Thomas and Clare Williams.

A ballot was conducted and the following were elected: Marina Barnard and Clare Williams.

12. Any other business

The committee's gratitude for Nicola Gibson's support of the committee's work was marked with a presentation and applause.

The next AGM will be held at the University of York on Saturday 27th September 2003 during the 35th Annual Conference.