

COMET 2008 tabled at Cape Town

The 6th International Communication Medicine and Ethics (COMET) Conference was held in Cape Town between 2nd-4th July 2008. It was hosted by the Health Communication Project in the School of Human and Community Development at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

The Conference venue (CTICC), ideally located against the backdrop of the charismatic Table Mountain and the exquisite Waterfront, provided world-class facilities for delegates from 15 countries (Wales, England, United States, Canada, Australia, Ireland, Switzerland, Sweden, China, South Africa, Lesotho, Italy, Taiwan, Croatia, Nigeria). In total, 55 papers and 7 posters were presented. Among disciplines represented were: medicine, nursing, ethics, linguistics, philosophy, law, speech pathology, audiology, sociology, psychology, social work and communication studies. The conference programme was evenly balanced, with local and international participation, to maximise opportunities for delegates to interact.

The three keynote speakers were Gita Ramjee from the Medical Research Council, who spoke about 'HIV prevention research



ethics and communication'; Douglas Wassenaar (UKZN) who reflected on the topic of 'Ethical issues in social science research'; and Sue Goldstein (Soul City) who shared her community-based experience under the title 'Communication for social change: Successes and challenges'. Several colloquia addressed a wide range of topics, including: Cancer, HIV/AIDS, Genetic Counseling, Intercultural Communication, Patient involvement in Healthcare and Patient-Provider relationships.

The conference received excellent media coverage. There were broadcasts on SAFM 702 and Cape Talk and press coverage in the Cape Times, The Star, Business Day, the UN plusnews website and the Sunday Times. In addition, the Word of Mouth (SAFM) has subsequently broadcast interviews with Claire Penn, Srikant Sarangi and Lauris

Kaldjian covering a range of conference themes.

The conference fulfilled the conference organizers' goals of showcasing South African research and the quality of methods and solutions to local issues. It also was a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate the unique opportunities afforded by a multidisciplinary approach to the problems of health communication.

Jennifer Watermeyer
University of the
Witwatersrand
South Africa



ANNOUNCEMENT

COMET 2009

**The 7th COMET
conference**
will take place at
Cardiff University
June 25-27, 2009

The experiences of 3rd HCRC Summer School live on...

Thank you HCRC for a wonderful 3rd Summer School in Cardiff (15-17 July 2008). I have practiced as a clinician in Speech and Language Therapy, trained Health Professionals and more recently taught Health Communication for Health practitioners. The HCRC Summer School was the best opportunity this year to learn, experiment and interact with international health practitioners, exploring and analysing communication in Public health and Healthcare settings.

In my current job as Head of School of Communication, I have valued this learning experience even more, as I attempted, with colleagues in Nursing, Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions, to make sense of health communication interactions.

Srikant Sarangi provided such an accessible framework for analysing health discourse and in such a supportive setting, we found ourselves more confident and vocal in our interpretations of the transcribed interaction.

Support from the course team, Srikant, Peter Schulz and Michael Brannigan gave us more in-depth understanding of methods and context but in this setting, we also gained so many personal and professional insights from each other.

We worked in small groups on analysis of interviews, content analysis of health media reports and complex ethical healthcare challenges.

How has this changed

my approach, methods and practice?

Most of all, I have expanded my range of tools and approaches from sharing with colleagues with a common interest in developing, understanding and improving the health-care environment, for patient and provider. We have recently completed a project with oncology nurses who were training to analyse their interactions with patients about to commence their treatment.

It was clear to me, from discussing the issues with Srikant, that beyond the generic communication skills, health practitioners need to learn how to analyse and interpret their interaction. The process is valuable in itself, but follow-up interviews with these nurses revealed a greater depth of understanding and reflection than they had acknowledged at any stage in their training. As they 'analysed' the discourse we later reflected on further interpretation from professional and patient perspectives. While challenging, there was a real drive to discuss and consider the practical implications for effective clinical interaction with these patients and their families. Another application from health content analysis was invaluable in working with Health Promotion practitioners who were required to evaluate mass media health messages in nutrition communication, smoking cessation or health and wellbeing adverts.

Most recently though, I had personal experience of

poor and effective health communication interaction, as my father was admitted to three of our local hospitals, over the last five months. The subtle interpretations became even more real as we struggled to get any explanation for his deteriorating condition. The barriers and frustrations of a fragmented, inconsistent approach to communication became more real with every insensitive or conflicting comment.

Finally, we encountered a cardiac consultant who had been working on improving staff communication to patient and family. I can confirm that understanding the discourse does make a real difference, from every perspective, to the experience and quality of the service. Thank you again to such a committed, generous and welcoming team. I will continue to strongly recommend this experience and opportunity to colleagues, practitioners and students of Health Communication.

Diane Hazlett
University of Ulster, Belfast
Northern Ireland

ANNOUNCEMENT

The 4th HCRC Summer School takes place between 22nd and 24th June 2009

For details, visit the HCRC website

ICIC and Research on Health Discourse

Back in July of 2005, the Indiana Center for Intercultural Communication (ICIC) at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (USA) hosted an interdisciplinary think tank on health discourse, with Srikant Sarangi as one of the fifteen participants. The goal was to formulate an action plan for research at the center devoted to compelling topics in health discourse.

From that beginning has sprung the center's Division for Research on Health Discourse, along with the creation of an interdisciplinary research team. ICIC's Division for Research on Health Discourse is currently providing linguistic solutions to problems arising in relation to the processing, comprehension, and interpretation of health-related communication.

The center's team of applied linguists, discourse analysts, physicians, pharmacologists, sociologists, intercultural specialists, and communication theorists are working in groups on research as varied as prescription medication labeling, medication adherence, physician-patient interaction, and the effect of health beliefs on management of chronic diseases.

One large project currently underway and funded by the Eli Lilly Company Foundation, Inc., involves the interviewing of type-2 diabetes patients. The purpose of this research is to explore the effects of literacy, patient life attitudes, health beliefs, and demographic factors upon

adherence to prescribed medication. At the time of this writing, 43 interviews have been completed, yielding a wealth of both quantitative data on demographics, medication adherence, diabetes knowledge, and literacy practices, and qualitative data from recorded patient narratives of their diagnosis, treatment, and experiences with self-management.

Analyses are being directed into three different areas : 1) the relationships among information sources, knowledge creation, and action as determined by literacy practices and the patients' own accounts; 2) identification of linguistic realizations of constructs such as locus of control, agency, and affect, and their relation to adherence; 3) examination of linguistic and cultural differences between American-born and immigrant patients in health literacy practices and related adherence and non-adherence

The Division for Research on Health Discourse has seen frequent activity as the center's associate research fellows from other universities visit for consultation and collaboration. Heidi Hamilton, the well-known health discourse analyst from Georgetown University, attended research meetings at the center on October 1 and 2, 2007 and again on January 7 and 8, 2008. Viviana Cortes of Iowa State University, who is the center's consultant on Spanish-language discourse and on text corpora,

participated in a research meeting at the center on March 18, 2008.

Srikant Sarangi visited ICIC from May 24-30, 2008, and, in addition to joining the center's weekly research team meeting, gave a public lecture titled '*The intercultural imperative in health care delivery: Insights from communication research for practice*'. The center is seeking funding for other projects involved with health discourse. The center's Website URL is <http://www.iupui.edu/~icic/>

William Rozycki
Indiana University Purdue
University, Indianapolis
USA

HCRC Workshop on Risk and Uncertainty

Following from the theme of the Cardiff Lecture, the HCRC workshop on 'risk and uncertainty in healthcare settings' was held on 18 July at Aberdare Hall. Beginning with an overview from Kenneth Calman, the presentations covered a range of sites (primary care, genetic counselling, public health and narratives of illness experience).

The presenters included: Michelle Edwards, Myfanwy Davies and Adrian Edwards; Peter J. Schulz; Michael C. Brannigan; Tom Horlick-Jones; Barry Saferstein and Srikant Sarangi. As in previous years, there was a lively environment for discussion and debate.

Patient Education Workshop in Skagen, Denmark

On 16-17 June 2008, twelve dedicated, cross-disciplinary health communication researchers were brought together for a patient education workshop in the picturesque town of Skagen in Denmark. Skagen is famous for its sandy beaches and impressive dunes, its small, yellow town houses with their distinctive red brick tiles, its community of 18th century Skagen artists (painters and writers), and of course the sandy, shifting headland, "Grenen" (the branch) which is the northernmost point of Denmark where two seas meet.

But to Danish artists, researchers, and scientists Skagen is also known for its 'refugium' or retreat called "Klitgaarden". And the venue for the patient education workshop was of course Klitgaarden, the impressive, yellow villa, which used to be the summer residence of the Danish royal family but is now trust-owned and converted into a retreat for researchers and artists who come here all year long to enjoy the relaxed, tranquil, and down-to-earth atmosphere of the place and find the time to work on a research paper, finish a book manuscript, write-up a project proposal, etc.

The purpose of the patient education workshop was to bring together a group of prominent Danish and UK researchers dedicated to the field of patient education and patient empowerment, offering them the opportunity to present and discuss

recent research activities within the area, to explore different ways of approaching patient education and empowerment (e.g. from a linguistic, anthropological or psycho-logical point of view), and, finally, to exchange ideas about where to take the concept of patient education in the future.

Among the invited speakers were Prof. Srikant Sarangi, Cardiff University, and Prof. Jonathan Charteris-Black, University of the West of England, who sparked off the discussions in the workshop by offering challenging and interesting plenary talks on issues related to patient education.

Prof. Sarangi began his presentation with a conceptual mapping of two currently dominant and distinctive ideologies – patient education and patient involvement – and examined how these discourses are manifest in the communication ecology of real-life healthcare encounters.

Prof. Charteris-Black addressed the issues of methodologies and data, presenting his use of comparative keyword analysis and metaphors analysis for interrogating the meanings in interviews and internet forum postings; dealing with people experiencing depression or suffering from a serious illness.

Each plenary was followed by group work sessions where all the workshop participants were given the opportunity to discuss and comment on the

issues raised by the plenary speakers. The group work sessions generated lively debates among the participants as to questions of research design, discourses of health (and sickness), conceptualisations of key terms, etc. and the discussions benefitted from the diverse research areas, methodologies and backgrounds of the participants, who were rooted in disciplines like linguistics, communication, anthropology and pharmacology. After two days of explorative presentations, intense discussions, and great networking, the participants had to leave Klitgaarden again.

The purpose of the workshop had indeed been fulfilled. Nonetheless, all the participants were convinced that the workshop had laid the foundation for something else – something which looks like the beginning of a long-lasting and fruitful research cooperation between researchers in the UK and Denmark who share an interest in patient education and health communication.

The workshop was organized by Dr. Inger Askehave, Aalborg University, Denmark, and sponsored by Det Obelske Familiefond and the Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation. For more information on Klitgaarden see:

<http://www.klitgaarden.dk/uk/index.htm>.

Inger Askehave
Aalborg University
Denmark

The KIVOS Network of Communication Research, Sweden

In February 2007, the School of Health Sciences, Jönköping University, Sweden hosted the first KIVOS network meeting (in Swedish: KIVOS = Kommunikation i vård, omsorg och socialt arbete). This meeting was the starting point of an interdisciplinary network with a focus on health, social care and social work discourse.

One of the goals of the network is to provide a venue for local researchers in Swedish universities to formulate an action plan for the development of research and teaching on communication in health and social care settings. Since this kick-off meeting the KIVOS network has organized several activities by bringing together an interdisciplinary research team, co-ordinated by Dr Christina Baggens (Linköping University), Dr Berith Hedberg (Jönköping University) and Dr Eva Lidén (University of Gothenburg).

The team views communication as interactional and relational, which means that the main focus is on encounters and their functions as well as their structures, contexts and prerequisites. The focus is also on the relations between the participants and how these relations influence the dynamics of the communicative process. The group's main interest is on face to face encounters between patients/clients and professionals but also on mediated encounters (for example by telephone).

The network's members are working in groups and as individuals on research

as varied as social case officers-elderly clients interaction, pain talk in elderly care contexts, narratives of subarachnoid haemorrhage incidents, talk between cancer patients and physicians, interaction during discharge planning conferences in hospital, talk between the insured and different professionals at the Swedish Social Agency, telephone consultations between patients and nurses and talk and interaction between families and nurses in child health care.

The KIVOS-network actively encourages collaboration and sharing of ideas, facilitated by visiting other members' universities for course exchanges and by offering co-supervision to associate research fellows. As a supportive gesture, Professor Srikant Sarangi (HCRC, Cardiff University) participated in the KIVOS-network meeting on 11 November 2008. In addition to taking on a mentoring role, he outlined some of the challenges facing health care researchers in a talk titled *"Health Communication Research: Mapping a Future Agenda"*. He also gave a public lecture on *"The Interface of Insider-Outsider Perspectives in Interpreting Healthcare Encounters"*.

Some of the members have visited other universities for consultation and collaboration. Ulla Hellström Muhli, Berith Hedberg, Felicia Gabrielson-Järhult and Mia Jormfeldt have attended the HCRC Summer Schools in

2007 and 2008. Ulla Hellström Muhli was also a Visiting Scholar (Sep – Dec 2007) at HCRC. She also participated in the doctoral course organised by the Health Communication Group in the Department for Language and Communication Studies at NTNU in Trondheim, Norway.

Planned and forthcoming activities for the KIVOS-network include organisation of a colloquium on "Multiparty talk: negotiating needs, capacities and experiences" at the COMET conference in June 2009 at Cardiff, and a workshop in autumn 2009 on the consequences communication in different settings with a special focus on clients'/patients' comprehension and interpretation practices. The aim of the workshop is to initiate and develop joint research projects in order to enhance knowledge about communication in health, social care and social work discourse.

Christina Baggens
Linköping University
Sweden

We welcome news updates about other groups and events in the broad area of healthcare communication

Please contact Aileen Doyle (HCRC) at Healthcom@cardiff.ac.uk

Current Doctoral Research

Foetal images and talk about normality: Communicative practices surrounding obstetric ultrasound

I have a clinical background in diagnostic ultrasound and have sought to reflect my professional practice by paying detailed attention to how foetal wellbeing is accomplished at the communicative level between sonographers and pregnant women. My recently submitted PhD, jointly supervised by Dr Tina Gambling and Professor Srikant Sarangi, has explored the communicative practices surrounding foetal normality assessments with due attention paid to reassurance talk by sonographers.

As part of maternity care in the UK, every pregnant woman is offered two ultrasound scans within the NHS (between 11-13 weeks and 19-21 weeks gestation), which has a diagnostic and screening purpose. Particular technological developments and enhanced imaging over the last five years allow the expectant mother to see, during routine hospital scans, a live 2D ultrasound image of the foetus showing detailed movements, structural anatomy and biometry assessments for dating and growth. Women may also choose to have a private clinic scan 3/4D scan (increasingly popular) from 22-30 weeks gestation, which shows the detailed superficial anatomy of the foetus and gives excellent delineation of changes in

facial expression and body movements. The hospital scans have an institutional goal of assessing foetal normality in order to focus the obstetric management of women where foetal or pelvic abnormality is detected. Clinical encounters by their very nature are characterised in most healthcare settings as intense arenas. They may contain risk talk, formulations of uncertainty and explanations of normality/abnormality.

A close analysis of such communicative practices offers insights into how professionals frame their diagnosis by utilising certain interactional devices and how patients/clients interject, bring their own agenda and concerns to the encounter, resulting in nuanced scenarios. The communicative relationship between sonographers and pregnant women during routine stages of diagnostic ultrasound encounters remains an underresearched field. The corpus of data is comprised from some 50 (naturally occurring) audio recorded and video-recorded ultrasound encounters involving pregnant women of gestational ages ranging from 11-30 weeks.

The major challenge ahead is how micro-level communication analysis can inform professional practice in the long term.

Samina syed Afzal
School of Healthcare Studies
and HCRC
Cardiff University

Problem-based pedagogy in medical education

My study examines participation in Problem-Based Learning (PBL) tutorials in the fourth and fifth years of undergraduate medical studies. Applying Levinson's notion of activity type to the tutorial event, it takes a discursive approach to how students participate in this setting, specifically to the relationship between tutorial participation and the role of language in affording opportunities for learning. From the professional development perspective of the apprenticeship model of learning the study considers how good practices and robust or dubious accounts are discursively marked.

The tutorial constitutes a complex learning environment requiring that students take on multiple participatory and discursive roles in order to display their learning and professional expertise as they are about to enter the medical profession. Components of the tutorial activity in which these roles are enacted include the presentation of case histories, the production of differential diagnoses, clinical reasoning, and evidentiality and the management of uncertainty.

Influencing the interactional role dynamics are issues of status and formality, where participants re-negotiate and shift roles within and across the different components. The asymmetry of roles is

marked in the discourse through turn management, interruptions, repetition, and question and answer sequences.

Early examination of the discourse and the key role of questioning suggests that where tutors' questions function to seek claims and hypotheses, prompt lines of inquiry, evaluate student knowledge, and mark good practice, student-student questions appear to function largely to test hypotheses against information received.

Anne Storey

HCRC, Cardiff University and The University of Hong Kong

Young adults' experiences of chronic illness in relation to managing lifestyle issues

This thesis aims to investigate how young adults discursively construct their experiences of chronic illness, specifically in relation to managing the lifestyle issues that can arise from their condition. Type 1 diabetes and Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) are being used as case-studies, due to their multifactorial nature, and common occurrence amongst this age-cohort.

The study aims to address the gap in research into people's experiences of illness, which has often overlooked young adults as an age-cohort.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 37 young adults ages 18-29, aiming to elicit lengthy, detailed narrative responses, in which the respondents would discuss issues that are salient within their own subjective illness experience. These respondents were recruited through various sources, such as advertising through Cardiff University and other nearby universities; IBD and diabetes clinics at the Heath hospital, Cardiff; and the NACC (national association for colitis and crohn's).

The interviews were transcribed in full, and the data is currently being coded for predominant themes, before more detailed, discursive analysis is carried out. Several macro and micro themes have emerged so far, with themes such as alcohol and social activity, disclosure, and social relationships being identified within the macro themes of normality, control and coping.

Ben Saunders

HCRC, Cardiff University

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The Cardiff Lecture 2009 will be delivered by Professor Richard M Frankel on 25 June 2009

For details, visit the HCRC website

The Cardiff Lecture 2008 was delivered by Professor Sir Kenneth Calman (Chancellor of University of Glasgow and former Chief Medical Officer in Scotland and in England) on 17th July titled "Why not tell the Truth? Communi-cating Uncertainty in Health and Medicine".

In introducing the lecture, Professor Srikant Sarangi, Director, HCRC, drew attention to the often neglected theme of uncertainty – its contingencies and consequences – in clinical, public health and policy settings.

The lecture developed a practice-based framework by emphasising the need for professionals to recognise the nuances of uncertainty as a precondition for helping patients and the public understand health/illness issues. It also drew attention to how trust may be seen as an essential – but not sufficient – part of the communication process. Baroness Ilora Finlay offered the vote of thanks. There was a buffet reception for guests after the lecture.

The lecture can be accessed via the HCRC website.



NEWS ETC.

Launch of The Comet Society

The COMET (Communication, Medicine and Ethics) Society has been officially launched at the 5th COMET conference at Lugano (Switzerland), 28th – 30th June 2007. The Society is aimed at strengthening and sustaining a multidisciplinary network of researchers, educators, healthcare professionals and research students. Its objective is to facilitate the exchange of ideas and the promotion of the study of communication-oriented research and development within the broad fields of healthcare.

The successful launch in 2003 of a series of annual international COMET conferences, together with the publication of the journal *Communication & Medicine* since 2004, provide two important grounds for the establishment of such a Society.

The COMET Society will increase visibility of this unique community of interdisciplinary scholars and their shared 'passions' through a carefully tailored free-access website that maximizes dialogue between research, education and healthcare sectors and the wider public.

The COMET Society is co-ordinated by Srikant Sarangi (Health Communication Research Centre, Cardiff University, UK), Peter Schulz (Institute of Communication and Health, University of Lugano,

Switzerland), Christopher N Candlin (Centre for Language in Social Life, Macquarie University, Australia), and Paul Crawford (Health Language Research Group, The University of Nottingham). Initially, the Health Communication Research Centre, Cardiff University, will act as the host institution for the Society.

For joining the Society go to:

<http://www.equinoxjournals.com/ojs/index.php/CAM/about/subscriptions>

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Beginning 2009, **Communication & Medicine** moves to Equinox Publishers. Visit <http://www.equinoxjournals.com/ojs/index.php/CAM>

For queries about submission, write to commed@cardiff.ac.uk

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COMET 2010

The 8th COMET conference will take place at Boston University, USA. **June 25-27, 2010**

- Goodbye to Diane Hemmings on the completion of the Wellcome Trust funded project, Explanations in Genetics.
- Congratulations to Dr Noor Aireen Ibrahim on her successful defence of the PhD thesis.
- The findings of the scoping exercise about curricular provision of healthcare communication at postgraduate level can be accessed via Cardiff University's website: <http://www.cf.ac.uk/learning/workshops/eventsarchive/0308sarangicomunications.html>
- Srikant Sarangi's itinerary in 2008 included Iran, The Netherlands, South Africa, Poland, Germany, USA, Norway, Denmark, Sweden and India. As evidenced in this issue of the Newsletter, the developing research networks in various countries are very encouraging.
- Progress has been made on the two book projects – Interpreter-Mediated Healthcare Consultations and Team Talk in Social and Healthcare Settings – with 2010 as the anticipated publication date.

If you would like to be added to the distribution list for future mailings of HCRC Newsletter please contact Aileen Doyle
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