

### Reflections, in lieu of coursework, on the 1<sup>st</sup> HCRC Summer School 'Managing Healthcare communication: Going beyond a skills approach'

Thank you HCRC for organising the intensive 1<sup>st</sup> Summer School. The course team – Karin Aronsson, Ellen Barton, Chris Candlin, Celia Roberts, Barry Saferstein and Srikant Sarangi – were not only very expert, but were also very accessible and generous with their time and advice to the thirty or so healthcare professionals and researchers who attended. Thank you also Lucy Brookes-Howell who worked hard organising us all.

My reason for attending was that, although experienced in doing and teaching healthcare communication as a GP and medical teacher, I was about to begin my analysis of healthcare communication data with an uncomfortably minimal level of experience as discourse analyst. The opportunity to hear presentations from the experts followed by supervised group work was therefore very timely and relevant for my purposes.

I found the breadth of focal themes discussed by the presenters, although set in specific and problematical healthcare sites, illuminated aspects of my own experiences in primary care medicine in that most doctor-patient consultations contain implicit or explicit talk about risk, the giving of information and advice, resistance to or acceptance of medical advice and a decision-making process, all of which are influenced by ethical considerations and are made even more complex if doctor and patient are from different cultures.

I found that the discussion by Srikant Sarangi about the need to select a discourse analysis methodology to suit the level of detail we are interested in analyzing rather than a 'one

size fits all' approach, which may remove context or obscure important details, very helpful in my own selection of a methodological approach. I particularly enjoyed the small group work, where we attempted a hands-on analysis of transcribed excerpts of the presenters' own data using their chosen methodology.

It was an invaluable learning experience for me as the group members variously agreed with or challenged each others' interpretations of what was going on or what was meant by the utterances in the transcripts. The feedback we received about our interpretations from the researchers underlined the importance of doing analysis that is informed by collaborating with the health professionals whose discourse we are analyzing if we are to go beyond a skills approach which enables us to describe interaction to a point where we are able to make interpretations that have practical relevance. This point was made even clearer to me through the interesting personal and professional experience of hearing how the

discourse in a problematic consultation in primary care, which is my own area of professional practice – I was surprised at the motives attributed to the doctor, whose communication made sense to me and another GP attendee, because we were able to draw on our understanding of how a doctor would see her professional responsibilities in that clinical situation. I have taken this experience into account in my data analysis as I proceed with caution in interpreting the discourse of oncologists, who work in a healthcare context that is different from my own.

Congratulations on a successful Summer School. I look forward to the next one.

*Libby Bassett  
Macquarie University, Sydney*

#### ANNOUNCEMENT

2<sup>nd</sup> HCRC Summer School  
02 - 06 July 2007

Ethics and Healthcare  
Communication

for full details, visit  
[www.cardiff.ac.uk/encap/hcrc](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/encap/hcrc)



The summer school was a packed program extending over 3 days with the provision of excellent food for the brain and palate. The weather was sunny and hot, which was appreciated by many of the international participants, who came with a range of health communication experiences from research to training to actual engagement in clinical encounters.

The course team was diverse and experienced, as they explored a number of focal themes in a range of healthcare settings with direct application of different methodological approaches. The individual sessions proved very engaging and useful in promoting discussion and debate.

One of the highlights was the gala dinner at St David's Hotel which was a beautiful venue with excellent service and food. Many of the delegates arranged visits and contacts with each other after the summer school. A number of the delegates stayed in Cardiff for the COMET conference which allowed good working relationships within the emergent community of health communication researchers. Overall this was a very worthwhile well organized event and we hope to see this become a yearly feature in the calendar.

*Tina Gambling & Samina Syed Afzal  
School of Healthcare Studies  
Cardiff University*

Who's who?: Participants at the HCRC Workshop 'Responsibility & Decision-making', 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2006.



Thanks to the efforts of Srikant Sarangi, I spent the month of June, 2006, as a Visiting Fellow at Cardiff University based in the HCRC. My research area, broadly defined, is the linguistic analysis of medical communication, and I am currently working on two projects: the analysis of end-of-life discussions between physicians and families of patients in intensive care units, and the analysis of invitations to participate in clinical research in cancer medicine.

While at the HCRC, I presented this work in a variety of forums, including the 1<sup>st</sup> HCRC Summer School and the HEADS Seminar Series, where audiences gave me excellent feedback on my work. The HCRC Summer School was a very special experience, with participants from universities worldwide, and the interaction among the participants and faculty was especially collegial.

I met many of Cardiff's students and researchers in the interdisciplinary area of communication and medicine, and I learned about many ongoing projects, at Cardiff and at other universities in Europe, Asia, Australia, and USA.

While at Cardiff, I also presented a talk at the Marie Curie Institute, where the Hospice Unit conducts research and provides care to patients with cancer and other terminal illnesses. This talk was video-conferenced to Marie Curie's other hospice site in Aberystwyth.

My visit culminated in the COMET '06 conference, where I organized an invited colloquium on Communication in End-of-Life settings. Four speakers presented research from a variety of sites of end-of-life care including clinician-lay discussions in clinical care,

team planning sessions, and palliative care units in the UK and Europe. The respondent for the colloquium was Daniel Callahan, founder of the Hastings Centre for research on bioethics. COMET '06 was a wonderfully interdisciplinary experience – I was able to talk to scholars and researchers in medicine, communication, sociology, philosophy, and other fields. It is my hope that this Visiting Fellowship will lead to future collaboration and research as well as possible links between Cardiff University and my home university, Wayne State.

Srikant Sarangi and I are discussing a new collaborative project focusing on how ethical issues emerge in consequential discussions in medicine such as genetic counselling. I also hope Srikant will visit me soon to explore some possibilities for collaborations with other faculty and academic units at Wayne State. I would like to thank everyone at the HCRC for a wonderful visit. Special thanks go to Lucy Brookes-Howell, who facilitated my stay in so many ways.

*Ellen Barton  
Wayne State University, USA*



Ellen Barton (left) with two Summer School participants, Dinah Sweet (opposite) and Barbara Heifferon (behind) at National Museum of Welsh Life.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Cardiff Lecture was delivered on 29 June by Professor Daniel Callhan on the topic 'Progress, Equity and Health in the Media'. Professor Callahan is best known as the co-founder of The Hastings Centre which was launched in 1969 as an independent, non-partisan and non-profit bioethics research institute to explore fundamental and emerging questions in health-care, biotechnology, and the environment. Professor Srikant Sarangi, Director of HCRC, welcomed and introduced Professor Callahan to a packed audience, which included the COMET participants.

The lecture and the discussion that followed stressed the role media plays – and the side it takes – in representing socially acute healthcare issues. This is very much a communicative activity, which inevitably includes what is not communicated. Professor Callahan issued a direct challenge to the media profession about their reporting practices.

Vote of thanks was given by Professor Søren Holm, Professorial Fellow in Bioethics, Cardiff Law School. A drinks reception and buffet dinner followed. We hope that the written version of this year's Lecture will soon be posted at the HCRC website.



'Killing two birds with one stone' is real, not proverbial

I am an applied linguist working at the National Centre for Fetal Medicine at St.Olav's University Hospital in Trondheim, Norway. Presently I am studying communicational and ethical aspects of ultrasound technology in pregnancy care for advanced midwives working in bush hospitals in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa.

I stayed in Cardiff for a few weeks with my family following the COMET conference and participated in three key events: the HCRC Workshop, the HEADS seminar and supervision meetings with Professor Srikant Sarangi. The HCRC Workshop included many of the invited speakers from the COMET conference, as well as Cardiff-based scholars, and we had some very engaging presentations and discussions. The participants of the HEADS were local researchers and professionals responding to three presentations, including mine, which were works in progress. Professor Sarangi gave important input to my Ph.D. project, both during the supervision sessions in Cardiff and during his stay in Trondheim in October 2006. The Research Group in Health Communication in Trondheim appreciated his participation in various seminars & workshops.

These events have been significant for my work, both intellectually and socially. The broad international and local network of researchers, scholars and professionals surrounding the HCRC is impressive and inspiring and I look forward to continuing my communication with the HCRC.

*Heidi Gilstad  
Norwegian University of Science  
and Technology (NTNU) Norway*

- Farewell and many thanks to Lucy Brookes-Howell who has taken up the post of Senior Research Fellow at the Department of General Practice, Cardiff University.
- Welcome to Aileen Doyle as HCRC Administrative Assistant.
- Many thanks to Cecilia Joseph, HCRC Project Assistant, for her help with COMET.
- Congratulations to Dr Diane Hemmings and Dr Annmarie Nelson on successful completion of their doctoral research.
- Farewell and good wishes to Mark Finn who left HCRC in December.
- Between May and July, HCRC hosted Professor Chris Candlin on his fourth and final visit as Leverhulme Visiting Professor and Professor Ellen Barton as Cardiff Visiting Fellow.
- The annual HCRC workshop took place on 2 July on the theme of 'Responsibility and Decision Making'.
- A series of HEADS seminars took place during the calendar year on a wide range of topic areas. Presenters included visitors and research students.
- HCRC has been awarded a grant by Cardiff University for undertaking a scoping exercise regarding communication teaching at postgraduate level across a range of medical and healthcare curricula.
- An evaluation study is currently in progress, in association with the Postgraduate Deanery, Cardiff University, looking at the language and communication needs of Wales Asylum Seeking and Refugee Doctors (WARD).
- Srikant Sarangi's itinerary in 2006 included Polytechnic University of Hong Kong, University of Basle, University of Lausanne, University of Southern Denmark and Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). These visits were partly aimed at forging strong links in the pursuit of a mutual research and training agenda.

# COMET 2006 in CARDIFF

June 29th 2006 saw the Interdisciplinary Conference on Communication, Medicine and Ethics, or 'COMET' come full circle, back to Cardiff where it all started in 2002. In the intervening years COMET was hosted in Linköping, Sweden, and in Sydney, Australia, both venues and organisations that underscore the truly international and interdisciplinary nature of this stimulating conference. Three years on from its inception, Cardiff COMET showed a continuing proliferation of themes and topics, as represented in the wealth of individual papers, workshops, colloquia and plenary sessions on offer.



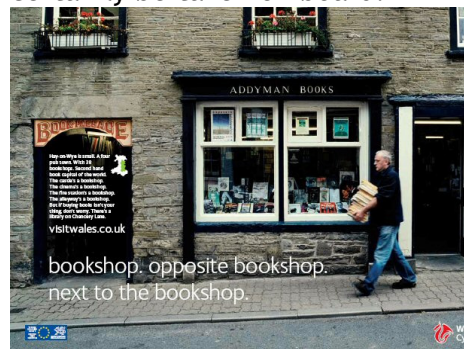
COMET 2006 had a distinctively 'Welsh flavour' with the conference dinner held at St David's Hotel and Spa, which provided not only delicious food but also spectacular views of Cardiff Bay. Moreover, those who just could not get enough of the Welsh atmosphere could spend the final conference afternoon at St Fagan's National History Museum, enjoying a heady mixture of history, culture and high tea.

The feedback received by the conference organisers, true to tradition, was very positive, with the majority of delegates not reluctant to apply the adjectives 'good' 'very good' and 'excellent' to categories as varied as 'academic programme', 'website information' and 'conference venue'.

Of course, there were some critical notes as well, mainly related to catering and accommodation which, unfortunately, at times did leave something to be desired.



However, the main problem many delegates faced was that whereas Hay-on-Wye's 'bookshop opposite bookshop next to bookshop', may make it difficult to decide which den of delight to enter, COMET's many concurrent sessions made it very hard if not impossible to decide which presentations to attend and which to forego. Suggestions for improvement ranged from the straightforward 'fewer parallel sessions', to extending the conference programme by half a day. Such considerations will certainly be taken on board.



Content and presentation of most sessions were rated highly, although inevitably with a conference of this size and breadth 'steep steps and tall stories' were also commented upon. Quality control is an ongoing concern for the COMET conference organisers and will no doubt figure prominently in the preparations for COMET 2007 in Lugano.



With technical support being described as 'excellent, flexible, and untiring', and the welcoming and friendly nature of the conference repeatedly referred to, a fair summary of COMET06 is provided by one delegate who wrote: 'Excellent conference! Lovely to visit Cardiff! Welsh cakes good!'

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

COMET 2007 in Lugano  
28-30 June  
visit [www.comet.unisi.ch](http://www.comet.unisi.ch)

COMET 2008 in Johannesburg  
2-4 July

The Cardiff Lecture 2007  
7pm, Monday 2nd July  
PETER HARPER  
Genetics and Medicine:  
Successes and Disasters

[www.cardiff.ac.uk/encap/hcrc](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/encap/hcrc)

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