

Recollections of Leverhulme Visiting Research Professorship @ HCRC

In recollecting on a very memorable series of extended visits to the HCRC over what was a three and a half year period (October 2003 to July 2006), my thanks go first of all to The Leverhulme Trust for awarding me a Visiting Research Professorship to work with Srikant Sarangi and his colleagues at Cardiff. To them, and particularly to Srikant, I owe a great deal for making the visits so rewarding for me personally. On looking back through the 4 Reports to Leverhulme of my visits I think we can claim to have touched most of the bases that we planned: in terms of research initiatives, cooperation with research staff and students in the Centre, lectures and seminars to a range of audiences, and, especially, furthering a number of cooperative publishing initiatives and conferences. It is satisfying to note how many of these themes were canvassed in the first of the annual Cardiff Lectures I gave in Cardiff in 2000.

Before I indicate some of these highlights it is worthwhile underscoring the central importance of such centres as the HCRC. They offer both a focus on a particular area of research and an opportunity for wider networking both within the university ? as with the College of Medicine (as it then was) ? and internationally with similarly placed institutions and scholars. It helps, of course, that the HCRC is located in a top-ranking UK university and one which has had close relationships with a College of Medicine (now amalgamated into one institution). At the same time, the international outreach of the Centre and its visitors and students is an important plus for any visitor like myself; one feels always that there are persons of interest passing through and sharing ideas, whether face-to-face or electronically mediated. It helps of course that Srikant Sarangi and I have known each other for a very long time and collaborate

in a range of the HCRC and more broadly in applied linguistics and professional discourse studies. It is good always to be on the same wave-length!

What then have been the highlights of this Visiting Research Professorship?

- Working closely with researchers in furthering the professionally relevant practice of communication research, and identifying research areas which could be engaged with through a process of 'joint problematization' with professionals in a range of medical and healthcare fields.
- Taking part in a number of the specialized invitational seminars and talks organised by the HCRC on a range of healthcare communication themes. Such occasions provided the opportunity of interaction and collaboration with visiting scholars and professional practitioners from Europe and the USA, as well as from other centres in the UK. They also served as *fora* for younger scholars to display their research, and afforded opportunities for mentoring which I found highly satisfying and educative. They were paralleled by invitations to other UK centres, Bristol, Nottingham, King's College London, which the visits to HCRC made possible.
- Carrying through plans to establish firmly the COMET (Communication, Medicine and Ethics) series of international conferences which has now reached its 5th meeting in 2007 and has plans to the end of the decade in varying international centres, with its regular base in Cardiff. Co-hosting the Sydney Conference in 2005 with the Centre for Values, Ethics and Law in Medicine at Sydney University was a very tangible and local outcome of the Leverhulme linkage, which coincided with Professor Srikant Sarangi's month-long attachment



at Macquarie, as was presenting joint seminars in Linköping in Sweden with Professor Sarangi on the occasion of the 3rd COMET Conference where I also gave an invited plenary. Linked with this conference series I was very happy to be associated with the founding of the COMET Society, and to act on the Editorial Board of the pioneering new journal *Communication & Medicine*, edited by Professor Sarangi, and to contribute to the ideas behind its formulation and development.

- Developing new venues for HCRC-related publications (and of course for those in other areas and sites of professional communication) with Equinox as their publisher, including the new *Journal of Applied Linguistics*. Indeed, it is only when one reflects on discussions in Cardiff at the HCRC that one sees clearly how much the activities of that Centre have contributed to the much more expansive view of the scope and brief of Applied Linguistics currently being advocated and practiced in many centres worldwide.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

3rd HCRC Summer School
15 - 17 JULY 2008

**Analysing Communication in
Public Health and Healthcare
Settings**

- Reinforcing ? and here I am speaking more of the wash-back on my own institutional practices in Australia at Macquarie University ? a commitment to professional/organisational communication as a centrally important discipline in an interdisciplinary world ? not merely *within* the academy, but most importantly *between* the academy and the professional world of work. Here the example of the HCRC is pre-eminent in its healthcare field, as its projects and network of contacts attest. As one example, my current work with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners into the evaluation of communicative expertise of doctors seeking Fellowship of the RACGP has been quite directly influenced by the work of the HCRC, both in terms of its publications and seminars, but also its annual Summer School where students and research associates of mine have been attendees.

So, much achieved and much learned! I can only express my gratitude to all associated with the HCRC, in particular Srikant Sarangi, but with a special word of thanks to Wendy Lewis, whose administrative talents and warm and supportive personality made this series of research visits as smooth as they ever could be!

Chris Candlin
Senior Research Professor
Macquarie University, Sydney

Attractive Images and Engaging Talk: Communicative Practices Surrounding Obstetric Ultrasound

This is the focus of PhD research by Samina syed Afzal, who has a clinical background in diagnostic ultrasound, being jointly supervised by Dr Tina Gambling (School of Healthcare Studies) and Professor Srikant Sarangi. A full report will appear in the next issue of HCRC Newsletter.

It rained in Cardiff during the first week of July, but this did not dampen the enthusiasm of those who were fortunate to attend the HCRC 2nd Summer School: *Ethics and Healthcare Communication* (2-6 July). Over four days, expert presenters interacted with each other and with a small group of participants to explore many facets of the Summer School theme. Formal presentations shifted into lively discussions that spilled over into further talk around the lunch table. The highly interactive character of the proceedings led Srikant Sarangi to rename this year's Summer School, 'Summer Conversations'.

The course team of Michael Brannigan, Ruth Chadwick, Lauris Kaldjian, Celia Roberts, Barry Saferstein, Srikant Sarangi and Paul Wainwright was expert, highly experienced and uniquely multi disciplinary. Topics included shared end-of-life decision-making, ethical judgement of medical futility, ethical issues in healthcare research, the challenges of integrating ethics and communication in clinical practice, and the potential for ambiguity and error in the GP consultation. The perspectives of, amongst others, a philosopher/ethicist, a medical practitioner/academic specialising in clinical ethics and clinical decision-making, a professor of nursing, and expert discourse analysts illuminated discussions. This same mix of expertise was brought to bear on the joint analysis of case studies.

A bonus for participants was the opportunity to attend the Cardiff Lecture 2007, given by Professor Peter Harper on 'Genetics and Medicine: Successes and Disasters'.

Summer conversations of a different nature took place on the second evening of the Summer School when participants and presenters enjoyed the warm and welcoming hospitality of Usha and Srikant Sarangi. Over a delicious, home cooked Indian meal and a glass or two of red wine, there was much hilarity and conviviality.

Thank you to the HCRC team for a memorable Summer School.

Catherine O'Grady
Macquarie University, Sydney

COMET 2007 took place between 28-30 June at the Università della Svizzera Italiana in Lugano, Switzerland. This annual showcase event, locally organized by the Institute of Communication and Health, attracted nearly 200 international researchers. Among the topics discussed in the parallel sessions, particular emphasis was placed on the communication trajectories involving patients and healthcare professionals in a number of clinical settings, including critical care as well as management of information in preventative settings. Other areas of interest were the interface of ethics and communication and the impact of health communication messages via internet and other media directed to the broad public, from intervention programmes for children to pharmaceutical products advertisement. COMET has no doubt come off age as an interdisciplinary research arena: researchers from different fields interact amicably despite different epistemological and methodological orientations, while remaining focused on improving professional as well as research practice. COMET 2007 included three distinguished plenary lecturers: Wolf Langewitz (Basel University) proposed a neophenomenological interpretation of non-verbal medical communication; Peter Twohig (St. Mary's University, Canada) spoke about risk management in the case of diabetes patients, and Jenny Kitzinger (Cardiff University) gave an overview of the crucial role of mass media in health communication.



The 8th Cardiff Lecture was delivered on 29 June by Professor Peter Harper from the Institute of Medical Genetics, Cardiff University, on the theme: 'Genetics and Medicine: Successes and Disasters'. With his wealth of research and clinical experience, Professor Harper was uniquely positioned to assess both 'the state-of-the-science' of genetics and 'the-state-of-the-art' of counselling to enrich our understanding of this topical field.

The lecture focused on Huntington's disease as a prototype for late onset genetic disorders, while serving as a model not only for genetic counselling but also for gene mapping and isolation. Professor Harper traced the history of medical genetics and the major problems and successes that have arisen in the field. Through the episodes that he described, he highlighted the role that communication issues have played in both categories and underscored the value of communication research to genetic counselling.

Vote of thanks was given by Professor Angus Clarke, Consultant Geneticist at the Institute of Medical Genetics. A drinks reception and buffet dinner followed. A version of this year's Lecture will be made available shortly.



Constructing Blame and Responsibility: Childhood Obesity Reports in the British Press

Noor Aireen Ibrahim has submitted her doctoral thesis for examination on this topical issue, which offers a comparative analysis of representation of childhood obesity in broadsheet and tabloid papers along a 24 month period.

The Health Communication Group in the Department for Language and Communication Studies (ISK) at NTNU in Trondheim is in the process of establishing itself as part of a national/international network. An important step in consolidating discourse and communication research in the field of healthcare in Norway is to gradually create a mutually binding collaboration on local, national, Nordic and international levels with researchers and professionals that share common research interests. We have so far succeeded in establishing international collaboration with Professor Srikant Sarangi at HCRC, Cardiff University and Professor Per Linell at Linköping University. Following their advice, the Health Communication Group arranged the first doctoral course, in the snow covered NTNU campus, which attracted discourse analysts and professional healthcare researchers from Norway, Sweden and Denmark. In addition, Professor Srikant Sarangi was invited as a guest lecturer, who held what might be called 'research clinics' whereby participants attending the course signed up to discuss their 'presenting research problems' with the hope of some diagnosis/prognosis, if not resolution. The participants underlined the considerable value of these individual sessions in their evaluation of the course.

The overall aim of the doctoral course was to present theoretical and methodological tools and perspectives in analysing communicative activities across a range of healthcare settings. The various lectures centred around authentic as well as simulated consultations, inter-professional team meetings, psychotherapy and genetic counselling. The course also aimed to emphasise the significance of applied and situated communication ethics at the interface between discourse practitioners and discourse researchers. The array of focal themes and analytic approaches aligned very well with the heterogeneous group of participants who described the course as an invaluable learning opportunity.

The 14 participants were discourse analysts and healthcare researchers with a wide range of experience, varying from fresh PhDs to those at the end of their doctoral research to postdoctoral researchers.

The course team consisted of: Ellen Andenaes (ISK, NTNU), Hilde Eide (Faculty of Nursing, Oslo University College), Arnstein Finset (Department of Behavioural Sciences in Medicine, University of Oslo), Heidi Gilstad (National Centre for Fetal Medicine, St. Olav University Hospital, NTNU), Hilde Grimstad (Department of Public Health and General Practice, NTNU), Per Linell (Department of Culture and Communication, Linköping University), Sissel Rolness Lysklett (NTNU), Per Maaseide (University College of Bodø), Srikant Sarangi (HCRC, Cardiff University), John-Arne Skolbekken (Department of Psychology, NTNU), Jan Svennevig (Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies, University of Oslo), Goril Thomassen (ISK, NTNU), Gunhild Aam Vatn (ISK, NTNU) and Rolf Wynn (University of Tromsø).

Some of the participants were also invited to share their work via short presentations. Overall, the course attempted a balance between lectures and group sessions. We look forward to organising a follow-up course focusing on data analysis from various perspectives.

Goril Thomassen
Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Trondheim, Norway



Appetite for conversation

When writing this short piece, I am in the last few days of my attachment (Sep-Dec 2007) at HCRC as a Visiting Scholar. The idea goes back to my attendance at the 1st HCRC Summer School in 2006, which opened for me a new way of analysing healthcare interactions. I am a Senior Lecturer in Nurse Education at University of Skövde, Sweden, and one of my upcoming roles includes Programme Director of a new Masters in The Health of Elderly and Caring, beginning 2008. I was only too pleased to return to Cardiff, sponsored by The Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research (FAS), thanks to the invitation and unflinching encouragement of Professor Srikant Sarangi.

During my stay, I have particularly focused on refining my analytic expertise with regard to *accounts of pain experience in a Swedish elderly care context*. Based on transcribed and translated data, I have a two-fold focus: how elderly people initiate accounts of pain in their encounters with professionals (here nurses and social case officers); and how professionals respond to such accounts. In foregrounding the institutionality of these pain talk encounters as an activity type, I analyse how both parties orient primarily to the task of information exchange, and how they accomplish credibility by attending to aspects of role-relations and facework, and by shifting between institutional, professional and lifeworld frames in subtle, but different, ways.

It seems experience of pain in old age can be characterised as not only pathological but also as social and relational. In the care setting as well as in their accounts of pain elsewhere, the elderly are likely to conflate different aspects of pain in light of their lived circumstances and experience. While at the HCRC, I presented this ongoing work in a Health & Discourse seminar (HEADS), which I plan to write up as a future publication by taking into account the constructive feedback I received from colleagues. Overall,

it has been a very special and invaluable learning experience, which will no doubt influence my future research career. I very much look forward to visiting the HCRC during the COMET Conference in 2009, hopefully to report an update on my research activities. A special 'thank you' is owed to Professor Srikant Sarangi, who gave me excellent supervision and insightful comments. His very detailed level of data analysis in context sensitive ways has been one of the highlights and most instructive for someone who considers herself an outsider communication analyst. At his suggestion I attended a doctoral course in Trondheim, which provided an ideal platform for further networking. I have also during my stay had access to other leading researchers in CLCR e.g., Dr Justine Coupland, Dr Peter Garrett and Dr Virpi Yläne. I also appreciated the 'cool' assistance with my IT needs from the technicians. Thank you all for supporting me in different ways!

There has been a linguistic bonus to my current stay. During less formal lunch breaks on the Tuesdays, I practiced my childhood Finnish with Dr. Yläne and had many interesting chats in Swedish with Dr Garrett, which made me less home sick. Thank you Ms Aileen Doyle for popping in for a chat (in English), and for the extended narratives about both of us making the same mistake of putting our mobiles in the washing machines!

It is my hope that this Visiting Scholar attachment will lead to future research collaboration and possible formal links between Cardiff University and my home university in Skövde, and our partner institution, University of Jönköping.

Ulla Hellström Muhli
University of Skövde, Sweden



- Welcome to Diane Hemmings as the Research Associate on the Wellcome project on Explanations in Genetics.
- Welcome to Ben Saunders as a doctoral student looking at young people's experience of chronic illnesses.
- Welcome to Samina sayed Afzal as a joint doctoral student.
- Goodbye to Marie-Jet Bekkers, although she continues to co-teach the health communication module.
- The annual HCRC Workshop took place on 19 July on the theme of Family & Healthcare Communication.
- A series of HEADS seminars were scheduled during the calendar year on a wide range of topic areas. Presenters included visitors and research students.
- For the second year running, HCRC has been awarded a grant by Cardiff University for reviewing curricular provision at postgraduate level across a range of medical and healthcare departments.
- There are two on-going book projects in health discourse: Interpreter-Mediated Healthcare Consultations and Team Talk in Social and Healthcare Settings.
- Srikant Sarangi's itinerary in 2007 included Argentina, Brazil, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Malaysia, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and USA. A trip to Tehran is planned in January 2008 to help set up a PhD course in Health Communication at Shaheed Beheshti Medical University.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

COMET 2008 in Cape Town
2-4 July

COMET 2009 in Cardiff
25-27 June

The Cardiff Lecture 2008
7pm, Thursday, 17th July
KENNETH CALMAN
Why not tell the truth?
Communicating uncertainty in
health and medicine

www.cardiff.ac.uk/encap/hcrc

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