Welcome to the Winter edition of HEG News. One change you will notice is that I’m not Jenny, but Ed. Jenny has been elevated to the lofty heights of Director of Post Graduate Research for the Norwich Medical School and I’m very pleased to be taking over as the new HEGHoG (head of group), taking up the reins from an erudite line-up of past Heads of Group. Thanks to Jenny for all her hard work over the past few years and I’m hoping I can fill the shoes to the same level.

Since returning to UEA just over a year ago, one thing that strikes me is how diverse our work is as a group. We have skills and expertise in economic evaluation alongside clinical trials, decision analytic modelling, health services research, economicometric analysis of large datasets, health state valuation, expert elicitation, value of information analysis and much more, all pushing methodological boundaries, increasing knowledge whilst contributing to our overarching theme of decision making in health care. This edition showcases some of our latest work.

Ed Wilson, Head of Health Economics Group (HEG)

Hellos and Farewells

We’re very pleased to welcome Dr Rory Cameron to our group. Rory has joined the Health Economics Group after recently completing an MSc in Public Health and Health Economics from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical medicine. Rory has a PhD in biochemistry and worked for several years as a post-doctoral researcher in microbial biochemistry, before moving into consultancy, where he specialised in pharmaceutical market access and competitive strategy. Rory will be working with Professor Jenny Whitty on several projects in cystic fibrosis and will be based part of the time at the Royal Brompton Hospital.

We are delighted to welcome Sarah Pyne who has recently joined the group as a Senior Research Associate in Health Economics. She will be working with Tracey Sach on the RETAKE study (looking at vocational rehabilitation in stroke survivors) and with Garry Barton on the Dex-CSDH trial and the RESCUE-ASDH trial (both looking at different treatment options for head-injured patients with subdural haematoma).

Sarah has degrees in Biochemistry and Health Economics and has worked as a Medical Writer and, most recently, for a consultancy specialising in economic analysis.

We are also pleased to retain Charlotte Davies who has recently finished her successful VERSUS ARTHRITIS Foundation Fellowship. Charlotte will be working with Tracey Sach on economic evaluations being undertaken alongside several dermatology based clinical trials.

Congratulations to HEG’s Adam Wagner who has been appointed Senior Research Fellow working with the ARC East of England Health Economics and Prioritisation Theme.

Very sadly we will be saying goodbye to Lisa Irvine (Senior Research Fellow) at the end of January 2020. Lisa is moving to the University of Hertfordshire to work on the DACHA project. She will be sorely missed.

The HEG Team

HEG RESEARCH

IS SCREENING WORTHWHILE?

IS IT WORTHWHILE SCREENING FOR RENAL CANCER?
IS A CLINICAL TRIAL WORTHWHILE?
IF SO, WHAT SHOULD WE MEASURE?

Recently published work from HEG’s Ed Wilson along with colleagues from the University of Cambridge suggests that a one-off ultrasound scan of 60 year old males may be cost-effective, but the benefits are uncertain and are contingent on the prevalence of renal cell carcinoma, and the stage distribution at diagnosis in screen-detected cancers. Future research in these areas would be of greatest value to tax payers.

Renal cell carcinoma is the 7th commonest cancer and the most deadly of all urological malignancies. Over a quarter of patients diagnosed in the UK have metastases at presentation and have a pretty dismal prognosis: only around 6% will still be alive five years later, compared with 84% diagnosed with stage I disease. However, a simple ultrasound scan of the kidneys may be able to detect earlier stage cancers, allowing earlier treatment to improve survival. But at present it is not known whether population screening is cost-effective, and what, if any, new information and data are needed to inform the decision.

We developed a decision model simulating the costs and benefits of a one-off ultrasound scan in men and women of different ages, along the lines of the existing screening programme for abdominal aortic aneurysm which invites men for a scan during the year they turn 65. We found that a one-off scan of 60 year old men is most likely to be cost-effective, but uncertainties in the evidence mean there is a chance that screening men and women from the age of 40 may also be cost-effective. Value of information analysis suggests the most valuable data collect in future studies to reduce decision uncertainty are the prevalence of renal cell carcinoma in different age/gender groups and the stage distribution of cancer in screen-detected patients.


HEG RESEARCH

NICE APPOINTMENT

HEG’s Ed Wilson has just been appointed to NICE’s technical appraisal committee B, advising NICE on whether the NHS should adopt new treatments based on their costs and effects.

Contact: ed.wilson@uea.ac.uk

HEG RESEARCH

EAST OF ENGLAND ARC LAUNCH

THE HEALTH ECONOMICS AND PRIORITISATION IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE THEME

The NIHR Applied Research Collaboration (ARC) East of England (EoE) was officially launched at the beginning of October. It is a five-year collaboration between Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust, and the Universities of Cambridge, East Anglia, Hertfordshire and Essex along with other NHS Trusts, Local Authorities, Regional Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STPs), patient-led organisations, charities, and industry partners across the EoE. It aims to improve care by undertaking applied research which supports frontline NHS and Social Care staff to change practice and investigate whether care and treatments are effective and provide good value. It builds on the work of the CLAHRc EoE.

HEG’s Jenny Whitty leads the Health Economics & Prioritisation theme of the ARC EoE. Work within this theme is intended to:

- Use and develop ‘best practice’ methods for analysing costs and the wide range of patient-centred outcomes
- Increase and strengthen connections between the different parties interested in health economics and prioritisation (HEP), thus helping share findings and increasing the impact of HEP research in the East of England and beyond.

With HEG’s Adam Wagner (primarily funded by ARC EoE), Jenny was pleased to host a ‘theme launch’ with interested stakeholders in late September. Here, they discussed potential research areas for the theme and plans for the coming year. As a ‘cross-cutting theme’ Jenny, Adam and colleagues will be working to support projects across the ARC EoE, while also developing their own ARC related research. A key goal for the coming year will be to increase capacity of the theme by securing external funding and growing the number of researchers affiliated with the theme.

www.arc-eoe.nihr.ac.uk

HEG RESEARCH

RESEARCH DESIGN SERVICE (RDS)

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Research Design Service (RDS) supports researchers to develop and design high quality research proposals for submission to NIHR funding programmes and other open, national, peer reviewed funding competitions, for health or social care research. The RDS EoE is led by the School of Health and Social Care at the University of Essex, with partner sites at the Universities of Bedfordshire, Cambridge, East Anglia, Essex and Hertfordshire and a number of NHS trusts. It is one of ten RDS and has replaced the work of the RDS East of England and beyond.

The team includes the following: Garry Barton, Alistair Clark, Jean Craig, Jamie Murdoch, Helen Ribeiro, Lisa Rowe, Tracey Sach, Lee Shepstone, Susan Stirling, Ann Marie Swart, David Turner, Charlotte Davies and Sarah Pyne.
UPDATE ON MSc IN HEALTH ECONOMICS

We were very pleased to welcome our new cohort of seven students onto the MSc in Health Economics in September last year and are enjoying teaching them their first module in Health Economics.

We are also delighted that we are now able to offer a route through our MSc in health economics which is accredited by the ESRC through the South East Network for Social Sciences (SeNSS) Doctoral Training Partnership (economics pathway). Our MSc can be the ‘1 in a ‘1+3’ Masters+PhD studentship, or on successful completion of the MSc, students can apply to SeNSS for a 3 year studentship to do a PhD within the economics pathway. The competition for studentships starting in October 2020 is now open. See https://seNSS-dtp.ac.uk/applying-for-a-senss-student-led-studentship

Study Health Economics at UEA and you’ll learn to make decisions that really count. You’ll be based in the Norwich Medical School, where you’ll not only develop an understanding of economic concepts related to health, public health, and health services policy, you’ll be part of a school at the forefront of research. You’ll train with a wide range of healthcare students, taught by leading academics, and you’ll be connected to a well-respected health economics – what in the world do they have to offer each other?

HEG SEMINAR SERIES

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>TUE 14 JAN 2020</td>
<td>GEORGIOS XYDOPOLOS Thomas Payne Study Centre, Room 0.1 Title TBC</td>
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<td>TUE 10 MAR 2020</td>
<td>BISHAL MOHINDRU Norwich Medical School, Room 1.02 Health economic analysis using the Cystic Fibrosis registry</td>
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<td>TUE 5 MAY 2020</td>
<td>GARRY BARTON Queens Building 0.08 A UK multi-centre double-blind randomised-controlled trial of dexamethasone versus placebo for Chronic Subdural Haematoma (CSDH): cost-effectiveness analysis</td>
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<td>TUE 30 JUN 2020</td>
<td>RIC FORDHAM Queens Building 2.22 Environmental economics meets health economics – what in the world do they have to offer each other?</td>
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HEG PRESENTING EXTERNALLY

HEG’s Dr Ed Wilson attended the Society of Medical Decision Making annual North American conference in Portland, OR in October, where work in collaboration with colleagues in the ConVol (Collaborative Network for Value of Information Analysis, www.convol-group.org) network was presented on consideration of potential for the efficient calculation of expected value of sample information.

HESG Newcastle – HEG’s Dr Wilson attended the Winter HESG meeting. All truly enjoyed the meeting on both the social and academic fronts!

PhD NEWS

Congratulations to Dr Christina Crossman-Barnes, who was awarded her PhD on the Economics of Asthma in October 2019. Christina was supervised by Professor Garry Barton, Professor Andrew Wilson, Professor Tracey Sach and Professor Graham Devereux. We thank Prof Jenny Whitty and Prof James Mason for examining her thesis.

A ‘hello and welcome’ to our new PhD students, Rana Altabee and Jinesh Patel. Rana is a faculty member at the King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences in Jeddah. Rana has a BSc degree in Respiratory Care from the University of Dammam and an MSc degree in Respiratory Care from Rush University. Rana is working with Prof. Jennifer Whitty on research investigating quality of life and treatment burden for patients with Cystic Fibrosis. Jinesh has a background in Pharmacy and health economics, working in Germany, Scotland and India. He will be working on ‘Improving the measurement and valuation of health-related quality of life in Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis’ with Prof Jennifer Whitty.

FOCUS ON CHIZOBA NWABICHIE

Chizoba joined us in 2018 and is working on the role of home food production in the Prevention of nutritional blindness in children’. Vitamin A deficiency leads to nutritional blindness in children and Chizoba’s thesis seeks to understand if growing foods rich in vitamin A at home can tackle this problem. She has been carrying out a qualitative study to understand the barriers and facilitators in the uptake of home food production by Nigerian women. The final stage of Chizoba’s work will be to carry out a cost-effectiveness analysis of home food production in preventing nutritional blindness in children. Chizoba is supervised by Professor Jenny Whitty.


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