President’s Letter
As I write, we are looking forward to our ASM in Cork, held jointly with the International Epidemiology Association European Congress of Epidemiology. It’s great to be joining up with the IEA and the conference programme looks exciting. This year we have three plenary lectures – our usual Cochrane and Pemberton lectures to be given by Margaret Whitehead and Kenneth Rothman respectively and the IEA lecture from Valerie Beral. An impressive line-up. The core of our conference though, is the parallel sessions, so carefully timed to allow conversation and moving between sessions, and the posters, workshops and visits. Our rapid fire sessions were extremely popular last year and we are repeating them this time.

We are working on a joint membership scheme with IEA that should represent quite considerable savings for people who want to be members of both organisations. More details will follow in due course. Bringing the two organisations closer must be in the interests of us all, and working with the IEA allows SSM to operate on a more international level.

I ended my last newsletter by commenting on the huge health inequalities that still exist and are increasing, and noting that we’ve lots more work to do. In contrast now, I’d like to express a hope that you are all taking a proper break from work at some point over the summer. We all work so hard that holidays are vital to keep us sane. Our workloads seem to increase annually; the pressures of competition in research, REF in the UK, and the need to teach larger and larger classes with the increase in marking and student support are meaning that many researchers work longer and longer hours. In SSM we are very concerned about the pressures on our members at all levels. Careers are precarious with many early- and mid-career researchers leaving research to have a better work-life balance and a more secure future.
Various organisations are concerned about the research process: more and more publications that fewer people can read, endless pressure on research funding, concerns about reproducibility and even fraud. The system seems broken. SSM will try to tackle this with others, but the system won’t change overnight.

The shadow of Brexit hangs over the UK members of SSM, though it will affect our Irish colleagues too. SSM has always been a UK and Ireland society and we will continue to work together whatever happens. We have an uncertain time ahead, but maintaining good links across boundaries is important in so many contexts, and not least in research.

Apart from the excitement of the conference, this seems a somewhat gloomy letter from me, but we in the West have a lot to be thankful for.

The pressures on us are challenging but we aren’t working in sweat shops or being trafficked. We can also take holidays, a luxury denied to many people around the world. I’ve been fortunate in having time away and I’ll leave you with a photo taken from the beautiful Gertrude Jekyll gardens looking towards Lindisfarne Castle on Holy Island – a lovely tranquil spot.

Hazel Inskip

We have a new website!

Check it out at socsocmed.org.uk

Take a look around, see what’s new, and feel free to get in touch with suggestions.

We hope you like it!
The 63rd Annual Scientific Meeting for the Society for Social Medicine and Population Health will be hosted by the School of Public Health at University College Cork, Ireland on the 4th - 6th of September 2019 and will be a joint meeting with the International Epidemiology Association European Congress.

This year a sustainability theme has emerged organically through the Local Organising Committee and Working Groups. The conference will be nearly completely plastic free, will feature a meat free day, and have various sustainable options available to delegates throughout.

In addition, this year will introduce the use of a tailored conference app called Whova. Whova will allow delegates to access their conference programme and abstracts via their smart phone or tablet, build custom programmes and even network with other delegates through custom discussion forums. While this year will still see the hard copy handbook and journal, the local organising committee hope to nudge members in the direction of electronic copy with the hope of fully paperless meetings in the future.

Feedback on these innovations are crucial so be sure to let the Local Organising Committee and SSM Committee know what you think either in person during the meeting or through the members survey which will be circulated after.

The Local Organising Committee are thrilled to be hosting this prestigious event and looking forward to providing over 260 delegates with a hearty Irish welcome in September.
Editors’ ASM picks

Gil Martine-Edith’s picks

At the ASM, I will look forward to Omiyale et al. presenting ‘Body size and composition in relation to risk of endometrial cancer in UK Biobank’ (OP33). The authors compared measures of body fat (e.g. body fat percentage, body fat mass) to the more conventional use of BMI and determined which measure was the most relevant and informative to assess the obesity-associated risk of endometrial cancer.

I will also be hoping to attend Corcoran et al.’s presentation: ‘Release of 13 Reasons Why and hospital-presenting self-harm in Ireland’ (RF07). Having watched the controversial series myself, it will be of particular interest to hear the results of that study evaluating the associations between the graphic depiction of suicide in the show and the increase in female hospital-presenting self-harm in Ireland.

I will then listen to the presentation by Craig et al. on ‘The association between gestational weight gain and birthweight is partly self-fulfilling and should be interpreted with caution’ (RF32). It will be enriching to gain an insight into the controversies around monitoring gestational weight gain and the difficulties in strictly dissociating pregnancy-related maternal weight gain from foetal macrosomia.

During the poster session, I will be looking for the poster by Higgins et al. on the ‘Pathways to ethnic differences in obesity: the role of migration, culture and socio-economic position in the UK’ (P21). It will be particularly interesting to hear more about their results since it is the first study in the UK to examine these three key pathways to obesity, using waist circumference as the main outcome and combining data from eight different ethnic groups.

And finally, the poster presentation by Smith et al.: ‘Is social isolation as bad for health as smoking 15 cigarettes per day? Findings from two large prospective UK cohorts’ (P84) will be of particular interest. Their results will be key as the mortality risk between social isolation and smoking have been investigated in the past, but the evidence remains inconsistent.

The Oral, Rapid Fire and Poster Programmes can be found here.
Kate Mason’s picks

This year’s ASM programme looks as good as ever, making it hard to single out just five abstracts as my ‘top picks’. Session C on Thursday is packed with great talks, and I think I’ll concentrate on the Health Inequalities stream. I’m especially looking forward to hearing McCartney and colleagues present the findings of their systematic review of reviews on “The impact of political economy on population health” (OP64), and Disney and colleagues (all the way from Australia) presenting their work on “Hierarchical models for international comparisons: a case study of smoking, disability and social inequality in 21 European countries” (OP61), in which they will illustrate a new way of displaying estimates of inequalities.

On at the same time over in the Methodological Issues stream, I like the look of “A multi-omics approach to investigate the inflammatory response of life course socioeconomic position: findings from EPIC-Italy” (OP81) in which Castagné and colleagues will present new findings relating to the biological mechanisms underlying socioeconomic inequalities in health. Also in Thursday’s Session C, in the Mental Health stream it will be interesting to hear the results of Hope et al’s policy simulation using the Millennium Cohort Study: “Could increasing income in lone-parent households reduce population prevalence and inequalities in children’s mental health problems?” (OP84). I might struggle to get to all of these in one session, so I will be hoping to find someone I can swap notes with afterwards!

Friday morning’s offering of Oral Presentations looks like a great way to recover from the conference dinner, before hitting the Rapid Fire Session. There will also be lots of interesting posters to get around – one in particular that I’ll be checking out is “The softer they fall: a natural experiment examining the health effects of job loss before and after Fornero’s unemployment benefit reforms in Italy” by Koltai and colleagues (P69).

I could easily have picked another five abstracts that I am looking forward to just as much, so I’m confident this is going to be a stimulating few days. Hope to see you there!

The Oral, Rapid Fire and Poster Programmes can be found here.
Celebrating women in science: Interviews with SSM Honorary Life Members.

In this series of interviews, SSM honorary life members and leading women in science share their memories and thoughts on choosing a career in social medicine and how SSM influenced their career path.

Interview with Honorary Life Member

Professor Alison Macfarlane is a perinatal epidemiologist and statistician at City University of London, where she was lead researcher in the Department of Midwifery (2001-2010). Now retired from full-time research, she continues her research part time. Alison worked as a statistician in various research areas, before joining the National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit in Oxford in 1978, where she worked until 2001. She has particular interests in the evaluation of settings for birth, inequalities in health and children from multiple births. As a statistician, Alison is interested in the interpretation and use of official statistics and their relationship with policy.

When and where did you start your first job in ‘social medicine’ research?

In 1972 at the MRC’s Air Pollution Unit at St Bartholomew’s Hospital Medical School. Before that, I had worked as a statistician in agricultural research and transport planning and as a computer programmer in the early days of computerised maps.

Who would you say has positively influenced you the most during your career?

Abe Adelstein, Chief Medical Statistician at the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) was a huge influence on researchers of my generation who did secondary analysis of OPCS and other routine data. He encouraged us to read the past reports to understand the historical development of public health analysis and understand contemporary issues and data in that context.

When did you first join the SSM?

When I started at the Air Pollution Unit, I worked for Robert Waller, a keen member of SSM. He told me the purpose of ASMs was for younger researchers to make the presentations and encouraged me to submit an abstract. To my amazement, it was accepted and I found myself talking in a plenary after two high profile professors, the second of whom was Geoffrey Rose... I was terrified but the presentation went down well as it was one of the first uses of computer graphics and I was presenting daily mortality data.

When did you attend your first SSM ASM? Do you have any particular memories from your first few ASMs?

It was 1972 or 1973. My main memory was of meeting a lot of people. There was a strong link with the BSA Medical Sociology Group, which followed on from SSM in the same place. The ‘founding mothers’ of medical sociology – Margo Jefferies, Meg Stacey and Ann Cartwright – tended to sit together in the front row and ask difficult questions. Later on, when the Radical Statistics Health Group got going, we found that SSM was a good place to sell our pamphlets and recruit new members.

Tell us something about yourself that has nothing to do with Social Medicine, the SSM, or academia.

In real life, I play traditional folk music in a ceilidh band, and organise concerts and a New Roots event for young musicians.
SSM ECR Workshop
The ECR Workshop with the title “Developing your career in research: challenges and opportunities in a changing market” will be held on Tuesday 3rd of September in Mardyke Pavilion, University College Cork. The workshop is fully booked but you can add your name in the waiting list and we’ll let you know if a free place comes up.

You can have a look at the provisional programme below!

ECR Dinner after the Workshop
You are welcome to join us for dinner after the workshop. We will be meeting at 19:00pm at the Cork City Centre (meeting point TBC).
If you would like to come to dinner but you still haven’t registered please email Kate O’Neill (kate.oneill@ucc.ie) or Niamh McGrath (niamh.mcgrath@ucc.ie).

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>10:00-10:30</td>
<td>Registration and Tea/Coffee</td>
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<td></td>
<td>It’s always good to start at the beginning!</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:30-10:50</td>
<td>Welcome and introductory remarks</td>
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<td>Dr Kate O’Neill/Ms Niamh McGrath, SSM ECR subcommittee local officers</td>
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<td>Addressing challenges in research</td>
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<td>10:50-11:10</td>
<td>Supporting your development with mentoring</td>
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<td>Dr Peter Tennant, SSM Honorary Secretary, University of Leeds</td>
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<td>11:10-11:30</td>
<td>Athena SWAN: gender equality and support for early career researchers</td>
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<td>Ms Sarah Fink, Athena Swan Project Officer, Royal College of Surgeons Ireland</td>
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<td>11:30-11:50</td>
<td>Understand the research office: its role and expertise</td>
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<td>Ms Imma Zoppi, Research Support Office, University College Cork</td>
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<td>11:50-12:10</td>
<td>How UCC launched a transformative programme to prepare PhDs and</td>
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<td>research staff for rewarding careers beyond academia</td>
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<td>Ms Mary-Kate O’Regan, HR Manager, University College Cork</td>
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<td>12:10-12:30</td>
<td>Tea/Coffee</td>
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Maximising opportunities within academia

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<tr>
<td>12:30-12:50</td>
<td>Progressing from early to mid-career; finding a direction, creating your career narrative and beating imposter syndrome</td>
<td>Dr Linda O’Keeffe, School of Public Health, University College Cork</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:50-13:10</td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>Dr Sheena McHugh, School of Public Health, University College Cork</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:10-13:30</td>
<td>Top tips for getting your research published and disseminated</td>
<td>Prof Simon Capewell, Department of Public Health &amp; Policy, University of Liverpool</td>
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<td>13:30-14:30</td>
<td>Lunch - Tea/Coffee</td>
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A changing market

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<tr>
<td>14:30-14:50</td>
<td>A road less travelled: Turning theory into practice in the third sector</td>
<td>Dr Martin Davoren, Executive Director, The Sexual Health Centre, Cork</td>
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<td>14:50-15:10</td>
<td>Daring to Lead? Thinking outside the box to bridge the gap between academia and research</td>
<td>Dr Fiona Geaney, Founder/CEO, Food Choice, Cork</td>
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<td>15:10-15:30</td>
<td>Switching it up - academia to industry</td>
<td>Dr Sarah Jo Sinnott, Harvard University, Massachusetts</td>
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<td>15:30-15:45</td>
<td>Tea/Coffee</td>
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Building our careers

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<td>15:45-16:30</td>
<td>Facilitated breakout tables with speakers</td>
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<td>16:30-16:50</td>
<td>Group feedback from the breakout tables</td>
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Closing remarks

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<tr>
<td>19:00</td>
<td>Dinner and networking event</td>
<td>Cork city centre</td>
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Specific ECR benefits from the SSM membership include:
- Support for ECRs through networking, mentoring, and academic opportunities
- Opportunities for research dissemination and networking through the ECR Gig Trail scheme and SSM Network Platform
- Specific ECR news and announcements via monthly ECR emails and triannual SSM newsletters.
- ECR specific events including the annual ECR pre-conference workshop and other one-day events throughout the year
- ECR networking opportunities and social events at the Annual Scientific Meeting

Keep up to date with ECR subcommittee news and activities via the SSM website [www.socsocmed.org.uk/ECR](http://www.socsocmed.org.uk/ECR) as well as our Twitter account @ECR_SSM

To contact the ECR subcommittee, or to register for ECR updates, please email us at ecr.ssm@gmail.com.
News from the MCR Section

The MCR Section started with a few individuals tasked by the main SSM Committee to set up and run a new section dedicated to the needs of middle career researchers. The aim was to focus on the challenges that face researchers who are no longer at an early stage, but not yet fully established autonomous researchers. The definition of an MCR was broad, in an academic career structure, it was anyone between 5 years post-Doc and reader/professor level. Since then, we have become an established Section of SSM and have organised several events.

Our first event was a meet & greet at one of the lunchtimes during the ASM in Dublin 2015. We moved on to have a successful first meeting at the ASM in York 2016 to determine the issues MCRs faced and what support SSM could provide. In Manchester 2017, we had a pre-conference half-day workshop on work-life balance. In Glasgow 2018, we had two events: a half-day pre-conference on developing line management and team leadership skills and a Thursday afternoon masterclass in grant writing.

In 2019/2020 we will trial some new activities: a member survey and a workshop outwith the ASM. The MCR member survey will give us more information about the MCR members (who, where, sector etc); information on the issues faced by MCRs and how SSM can support MCRs. The idea of having a workshop outwith the ASM is to give people who are not able to attend the ASM, the opportunity to attend a shorter 1-2 day event and network with other MCRs.

Future Events and Plans
If you can’t wait for the MCR member survey, then please get in touch and let us know what events would be useful for you. The MCR Section are always looking for ideas for events that we can help arrange for the MCR members. We have some ideas, such as a joint 1.5-2 day writing retreat with the SCR section which we could couple with a CV clinic. Watch this space for more information!

New Members Welcome
Would you like to shape the MCR Section? Then, please consider joining the Committee. It’s a great opportunity to network with senior academics, peers and colleagues, and to get involved in discussions about the future of the research in this field. Watch out for nominations and elections.

Get in touch:

mcr.ssm@gmail.com   @mcr_ssm
In July 2019, the NIHR announced a £135 million investment in 15 new NIHR Applied Research Collaborations (ARCs), to support applied health and care research that responds to, and meets, the needs of local populations and local health and care systems.

The funding will also support, facilitate and increase the rate at which research findings are implemented into practice.

The scheme aims to improve outcomes for patients and the public; improve the quality, delivery and efficiency of health and care services; and increase the sustainability of the health and care system both locally and nationally.

The new ARCs will tackle a number of areas of need highlighted by the NIHR Futures of Health report, including: the challenges of an ageing society; multimorbidity; and the increasing demands placed on our health and care system.

The new scheme also aims to deliver a step change in national-level impact through significant collaboration between the new ARCs, and through NIHR ARCs providing national leadership within their fields of expertise.

Find out more on the NIHR website.
Communication updates

Hello!

In the current climate of Brexit-fuelled instability, researchers need to unite through their aims, passion and dedication to public health. I would like to believe that SSM provides an anchor to our objectives and visions, linking our overall engagement in the scientific community. Not so long ago, we created the SSM Network Platform (featured on our new website) aiming to facilitate a starting point for informal networking to share ideas and foster connections between SSM members with similar research interests across different levels of seniority. These networks are influential not only in bringing connections into an online domain but also in introducing people with similar interests to each other via interest groups and mediated introductions that take place now at every Annual Scientific Meeting. Last year in Glasgow, we held 3 Network Interest groups: 1) Methodology for Observational Research; 2) Healthy Ageing and 3) Health inequalities/health policy.

We are pleased to organise some of these sessions again in Cork this year:

1) Methodology for Observational Research (led by Peter Tennant, Mark Gilthorpe)
2) Healthy Ageing (led by Janice Atkins)
3) Mental ageing (led by Dorina Cadar).

Please join us on Friday 6th of September 2019, between 10.55 and 11.25 in WGB Main Foyer.

By joining and contributing to these network interest groups, we could enhance a new SSM community experience, based on collaborations and mutual support, with many members joining research interests groups and supporting each other throughout their academic careers, building on the mentoring scheme and SSM collaborations. This is a vision, to which I aspire.

Dr Dorina Cadar
SSM Communication and Network Officer
Senior Research Fellow
University College London
## September

- **Joint European Congress of Epidemiology and Society for Social Medicine and Population Health Annual Scientific Meeting**: 4-6 September, University College Cork
- **Public Health England conference**: 10-11 September, University of Warwick
- **Process Evaluation of Complex Interventions (DECIPHer short course)**: 11 September - Glamorgan Building, Cathays Park, Cardiff
- **The UK Congress on Obesity**: 12-13 September, Leeds University
- **The big population health conversation (virtual conference)**: 18 September, The King’s Fund
- **5th International Conference on Law Enforcement and Public Health**: 21-23 September, Edinburgh International conference centre
- **Transforming Global Health**: 26-27 September, City and Guild’s Building, London

## October

- **International Healthy Streets Summit 2019**: 10 October, Strathclyde Technology & Innovation Centre
- **Interdisciplinary Association for Population Health Science Conference**: 1-4 October, Seattle, US
- **Emerging technologies: what does the future of health care look like?**: 16 October, The King’s Fund, London

## November

- **Advanced Stata: Programming and other techniques to make your life easier** (short course): 4-8 November, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
- **12th Annual Young Researchers’ Forum**: 20 November, Marseille, France
- **12th European Public Health conference**: 20-23 November, Marseille, France
- **The King’s Fund annual conference 2019: delivering population health**: 27-28 November, The King’s Fund, London
- **European Scientific Conference on Applied Infectious Disease Epidemiology**: 27–29 November, Stockholm, Sweden
- **Public Health Science**: 29 November, Mary Ward House, London

## 2020

- Abstract submissions (closes 30 January 2020) – **World Congress of Epidemiology**: 13-16 September 2020, Melbourne, Australia