



Inside This Issue

Welcome from the SSM Chair	1
SSM committee notes: News	2-3
New SSM members from September 2011 to January 2012	3
ECR's Corner: Free place reports & Meet new comers	4-5
Housekeeping	4
Future events for your diary	5
From the Editors	5



Welcome from the Chair

Is SSM fit for purpose in 2012?

The role of SSM chair carries various responsibilities. Explicitly, these include effectively managing the Society. Implicitly, they include the job of steering SSM into the future.

For most of the Society's 56-year history, it has evolved incrementally but its fundamental purpose and ways of operating have remained the same. In 1998, committee members initiated a debate about the role of the Society in the 21st Century. A working group concluded that, subject to some modernisation, the Society remained on course. They also recommended such a review should be conducted every decade.

During my year as Chair, I therefore plan to initiate a similar debate. This is not in any way to challenge the fundamental purpose of SSM as a learned society, which remains as valid today as it was 56 years ago. Nor is it in any way to undermine the hard working committee, which does a great job in supporting and managing the Society. Rather it is to ensure that SSM remains fit for purpose in a rapidly changing world, and can grow and develop as appropriate. There are a number of inter-connected issues that I believe we should consider.

The membership of SSM remains predominantly academic, although a range of members working in other sectors have contributed to the Society throughout its history. Given one of our concerns is to foster links between research and policy and practice, should we be encouraging a greater membership from the NHS and other sectors? If so, how?

The annual scientific meeting is the main event in SSM's calendar. An analysis of recent conferences indicates that around 70% of papers report epidemiological research. Epidemiology is a vital organ of 'social medicine', but the remit of SSM has always aimed to be broader, encompassing public health and health services research in their widest sense. We might, therefore, legitimately ask why the ASM is dominated by epidemiology, whether we should seek a different balance, and how?

For many years, SSM has allowed the creation of 'sections' with more than 20 members. However, only in the last two years has this mechanism been used, to brilliant effect, by our Early Career Researchers. Should we encourage the development of other sections? If so, for what?

Periodically, SSM has worked with other organisations, for example hosting joint events, such as the ASM and one-day meetings. In an increasingly crowded market for learned societies and conferences, is such competition a risk for SSM? Should SSM collaborate more? If so, with whom?

Lastly, 'social medicine' and SSM mean different things to different people. SSM has created two web sites over the last 10 years, added a Facebook page, and RSS and Twitter feeds, and moved to electronic communication as a matter of course. But are we communicating effectively what SSM can do for its members and why people should join?

By answering these questions (with evidence, of course...), I hope we can help to ensure SSM's long-term sustainability. We will be asking for your views on these issues.

*--Martin White, SSM Chair
Newcastle University, January 2012*

SocSocMed News

SSM committee notes



SSM Committee News

I am delighted to introduce our two new 'Ordinary' SSM committee members, Karen Rees and Noriko Cable, elected in the online ballot at the end of 2011 and our new Chair-elect, Simon Capewell, who will each serve a three-year term on the committee from January 2012 to December 2014. In addition, we have two ECR sub-committee representatives: Peter Tennant, who is the 2012 Chair of the ECR sub-committee, and Joanne Coster, who is the Chair-elect. Karen, Noriko and Peter will be joining Charles Florey (webmaster) on the Society's communications sub-committee.

Karen Rees is a senior researcher at the University of Warwick Medical School; some of you may have met her at last year's very enjoyable ASM, which she helped to organise. She works in the Statistics and Epidemiology Unit in the Division of Health Sciences. Her expertise is in evidence synthesis, particularly Cochrane reviews, and epidemiology. She currently provides advice within the West Midlands Research Design Service and leads a programme of Cochrane reviews on the primary prevention of cardiovascular disease.

Noriko Cable is already familiar to some of you as she is one of the editors of our 'new-look' newsletter, having volunteered for that role in 2010. Noriko is a senior research fellow in the Research Department of Epidemiology & Public Health at UCL, where she studies psychological well-being, health related behaviour and social integration over the life course, and resilience factors that reduce social gradients in psychological health.

Simon Capewell is Professor of Clinical Epidemiology in the Department of Public Health at the University of Liverpool, where he works primarily on chronic disease prevention. Simon will take over from Martin White as chair of the Society in 2013.

Peter Tennant is a Research Associate and PhD student at the Institute of Health & Society, Newcastle University, where he has been working since summer 2007, primarily on the epidemiology of congenital anomalies.

Joanne Coster is a Research Associate and PhD student at the School of Health and Related Research (SchARR) University of Sheffield. Her research interests are in quality of care, patient safety and Emergency and Urgent care services.

The Committee is currently drafting an SSM handbook, intended mainly for the officers and other committee members. It will detail the roles and responsibilities of officers and committee members, committee processes, and other aspects of 'institutional memory', such as how specific tasks and payments are divided between the main SSM committee/funding and the ASM organising committee/budget. This handbook will supplement the detailed handover pack already available for the ASM organising committees and will be accessible on our web site.

The SSM communications subcommittee met in January 2012 to discuss both the SSM and ASM websites and how best to communicate with Society members and with those who are not (yet) members. There will be a report on this in the next newsletter but in the meantime, if you have any ideas, please send them to me at: secretary.ssm@gmail.com.

Constitutional change – and what it means for you

The results of the ballot on the proposed changes to the SSM constitution and bye-laws were as follows: 219 in favour, 10 against (with three who voted in favour having a few reservations, still leaving 94% of those voting fully in favour). Thank you to those who also left comments. I should like to point out that Honorary Membership is conferred as an honour, as a token of respect to mark the individual's longstanding contribution to social medicine and generally to the Society. Almost all Honorary Members were lifelong members of the Society until the honorary membership was bestowed on them by your committee. It is not a category of membership for those who aren't interested enough to pay for full membership.

The Committee therefore approved the changes to the constitution and bye-laws at its meeting on 25th January 2012. Your annual subscription of £20 (the amount has been unchanged for more than a decade) will have been collected via your standing order in January 2012.

Over the next few months, you will receive a direct debit form to fill in and return to **Julia Goodwin**, the Membership Secretary, along with an explanation of what this does and does not allow the Society to do, the notice period the Society will have to give you each year before collecting the subscription (even if the amount is the same as the previous year), a reminder to cancel your existing standing order once you have sent Julia your direct debit form, and how to cancel the direct debit, (directly via your own bank in both cases, as their existence is under your control, not the Society's).

The direct debit will be used for the first time in January 2013; the fee for 2013 will be proposed by the committee but will have to be accepted by a vote of members attending the 2012 AGM.

SocSocMed News

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS for London 2012 ASM: Deadline 19th March 2012

The Society includes people with a wide range of interests, covering many disciplines and topics.

To ensure that the ASM reflects this range of expertise, we need you to submit abstracts based on the work you and your colleagues are doing, rather than any preconceived ideas of what SSM is or is not interested in.

We welcome submissions on all aspects of social medicine, including health services research, epidemiology, public health, statistics, sociology, psychology, health policy and/or mixed methods research.

Abstracts can only be submitted via the [conference website](http://www.ssmconference.org.uk) (http://www.ssmconference.org.uk) which will go live around the week beginning 13 February 2012. The instructions have been emailed to all members and are also available online (on the conference website or via the [SSM website](http://www.socsocmed.org.uk), http://www.socsocmed.org.uk). The word limit is 400 words and the abstract should follow the format **specified**.

The deadline for submission is 19th March 2012.

Each abstract will be reviewed by four reviewers (randomly allocated and not from your institution) against criteria that are also available at that ASM website. To give yourself the best chance of success, ensure you give enough detail (in particular for the results) that the scientific merit of the abstract and the importance of the question can be judged.

Free places available at the ASM for students

Students accepted for oral or poster presentation are more likely to be offered a free place at the ASM. So, submit your abstract before the deadline!

Pre-ASM meeting

We are planning to have series of pre-conference meetings on the 11th and the morning of the 12th September, before our ASM (12-14 September). More information will follow very soon. I hear they are *very* good.

Would you like to follow us? You can catch us up at:

<http://twitter.com/#!/SocSocMed>

Re-tweet our news at yours & spread them around!

Thumbs up. SSM is on the [Facebook](#), too!

New members September to December 2011

Ms	Inka	Barnett
Ms	Catherine	Bromley
Mrs	Sook	Choo
Dr	Katie	Cole
Dr	Adnan	El Kharoubi
Mrs	Clare	Foster
Ms	Rachel	Hendrick
Mr	Fergus	Neville
Ms	Anja	Scheiwe
Ms	Rebecca	Steinbach
Dr	Saverio	Stranges
Dr	Daniel	Turner
Dr	Paula	Whittaker
Dr	Ingrid	Wolfe

Welcome to our society!

European Public Health Conference, 8-10 Nov 2012, Malta

EUPHA and ASPHER are pleased to invite you to the 5th ANNUAL EUROPEAN PUBLIC HEALTH CONFERENCE 2012, co-organised with the Maltese Association of Public Health Medicine. The main theme of the conference is All Inclusive Public Health. Please reserve 8 – 10 November 2012 in your agenda.

Abstract submission:

The abstract submission system will be available from **2 February 2012 until 1 May 2012 (midnight CET)**. The abstract submission is slightly changed and includes the possibility of adding keywords to your abstracts.

Pre conferences:

At the moment, they have around 14 pre conferences and one satellite conference planned. The details of these activities will be available soon on the website.

Malta 2012 website: http://eupha.org/site/upcoming_conference.php



European Journal of Public Health

All SSM members are automatically members of EUPHA. For enquiries about the EUPHA Newsletter and access to EJPH, please email membership@eupha.org.

SocSocMed News

ECR's corner: Free place reports

As we reported in the last newsletter, our three ECR events at the SSM AGM in Warwick were well-attended and got good feedback. The 26 recipients of free student places were also very positive about their experiences of the conference, with key themes including the friendly atmosphere, the quality and diversity of presentations, and the useful role of the social activities:

"Thank you very much for funding my debut attendance at a SSM conference. I really enjoyed myself over the three days and am leaving with lots of new ideas and new friends. I was impressed by the high quality of presentations across the board [...and] I really benefited from seeing work from outside my own immediate subject area. The highlight of the conference, for me was being part of the early career research (ERC) group. It was inspiring seeing early career and established researchers presenting alongside each other in the sessions and seeing how researchers at all stages of their career gave thoughtful responses to the work and raised new avenues."

"I was impressed with the number of early career researchers present this year. The SSM committee and the early career researchers committee certainly had made a lot of effort to nurture and encourage the young researchers. [...] The amount of papers presented and the positive attitude of the meeting was the most impressive. I have been to a few conferences and felt draining at the end of the day. However with SSM, it was most relaxing and very motivational."

"I heard a number of very interesting and relevant presentations over the three days, with a large contingent of ECR presentations which is always very encouraging. Poster presentations were of an equally high calibre, with authors eager to discuss their research, often loitering in a nearby corner waiting for the opportunity to reveal themselves as the author. Social activities and ECR events were numerous and enjoyable, and I appreciated the equal emphasis placed on these. All in all I had an enjoyable three days and thoroughly look forward to London 2012."

HOUSEKEEPING

PLEASE keep your contact details up-to-date. Following-up bounced back emails takes a lot of time, so please let us know as soon as you change any part of your contact information, work address, home address, but most importantly ***email address***.

The easiest way of doing this is to go to SSM website and click on Membership and then [Online update](#).

Meet the new comers!

After a highly-contested election, we're delighted to welcome Inka Barnett (Centre of Diet and Activity Research, Cambridge) and Julie George (University College London) to the ECR SSM committee, replacing Mark Kelly and Ian Forde. The chair of the ECR subcommittee has also passed from Anna Goodman to Peter Tennant (Chair) and Jo Coster (Deputy Chair)

Meet Inka Barnett

*What are your background and interests?

I completed a MSc in Nutritional Sciences at the University of Bonn, and a MSc in Public Health Nutrition at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. I am currently working towards a PhD in Epidemiology at the University of Cambridge. I am very interested in the interlinks between social factors and health in global settings using both quantitative and qualitative research methods and cross-country comparison.

* Why did you decide to get involved in social medicine?

I studied nutritional sciences in both Germany and the UK and from the beginning of my studies I was very interested in the social and cultural determinants of nutritional behaviours and dietary patterns. After my studies I worked for several research projects in low-income countries where I experienced how important social and cultural factors can be for the acceptability and success of nutritional interventions. The strong interlinks between social factors and health outcomes became even clearer for me during my work for a research study on child health issues in Ethiopia, Peru, Vietnam and India. To improve my knowledge and to be able to understand the relations between social factors and health better I am currently doing a PhD in Epidemiology.

* What is the publication/piece of research that you are most proud of and why?

The piece of research I am most proud of would have to be a qualitative study that I did for a Non-Governmental Organisation in South Africa on food insecurity and HIV/AIDS in rural communities. My research report triggered a greater interest and involvement in nutritional projects within the organisation which hopefully translated into improved nutrition of HIV infected and affected families.

* Why did you want to join the ECR within the Society for Social Medicine? Is there anything in particular you'd like to do during your time on the subcommittee

I very much enjoyed the activities the ECR subcommittee organised for the last annual SSM conference. I think the ECR subcommittee provides brilliant platforms for ECRs from different universities and subject areas to meet and get to know each other. (continued on page 5)

SocSocMed News

(continued from page 4)

I am very interested in using mixed methods to understand health and health behaviours in different populations and would like to organise an ECR workshop on this topic. While there is plenty of theoretical literature on mixed method research, good practical examples seem to be relatively rare and many journals are still reluctant to publish mixed method research. A workshop in which ERCs and senior research present examples of their work, the challenges they encountered and how they dealt with them is something might be of interest for many ERCs.

* What's your favourite public health joke?

As I work on physical activity for my PhD, the two jokes are about barriers to regular exercise:

I don't work out because all the exercise programs start out by saying, "Wear loose-fitting clothes." I don't have any loose-fitting clothes!

I don't think jogging is helping me to get in shape. Last night I was huffing and puffing so hard when I got to the Burger King, I could hardly eat my Choc Swirl.

Meet Julie George

* Why did you decide to get involved in social medicine?

When I was working for Camden and Islington Health Authority, I assisted Ian Basnett on the local implementation of the Calman-Hine review of breast cancer services. I saw first hand both the practice of persuasive public health and the importance of sound research to back it up.

After that I started to pursue my career in public health.

* What is the publication/piece of research that you are most proud of and why?

The thesis I wrote for my BA comparing the effect of abortion court cases on abortion politics in the US and Germany became my first article to be published in an academic journal, so it will always have a special place in my heart.

* Why did you want to join the ECR within the Society for Social Medicine? Is there anything in particular you'd like to do during your time on the subcommittee

Although I am new to epidemiology, I have been working as a public health trainee for some time and thought I could bring useful skills to the committee. I am particularly interested in developing targeted peer support, whether that be learning sets or grant writing workshops.

* What's your favourite public health joke?

I don't actually know any public health jokes, but I would recommend watching a great YouTube video of Alfredo Morabia, Professor of Epidemiology at Columbia University, telling a joke about the difference between a neurosurgeon, a pathologist and an epidemiologist. The link is <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCK2mflwESM>

Do you know? ECR has a page on the [SSM](#).
Visit them today and get involved!

Future events for your diary

Fifty years since smoking and health progress, lessons and priorities for a smoke-free UK, 6 March 2012, 9:00-16:30, Royal College of Physicians, London

This conferences will commemorate the publication of the RCP report on Smoking and Health in 1962 and are relevant to interested parties such as practitioners, clinicians, and policy makers. The fee is £150 (£75 for full time students).

For further info & a booking form, visit [Royal College of Physicians' site](#).

6th UK & Ireland Occupational & Environmental Epidemiology Meeting. Tuesday 27th March 2012

This will be held at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London. Places are limited to 150 attendees and are available on a first-come first-served basis. The target audience is those with an interest in environmental and occupational epidemiology and early career researchers are particularly welcome. The cost is £25 total per delegate, which includes lunch and refreshments. To book, contact sarah.thorne@lshtm.ac.uk for a booking form.

From the newsletter editors

We could not have put the newsletters together without you and would like to have news, achievements, short works, adverts, or images for our newsletters. If you have something to share with the members or let us know how we are doing, please write to:

Dr Elizabeth Breeze, e.breeze@ucl.ac.uk
Dr Noriko Cable, n.cable@ucl.ac.uk, or
Dr Catherine Heffernan, hefferc@yahoo.com

The deadline for submissions to the April edition is 15th March 2012. Please keep articles to 500 words (max).

Think about ***impacts*** that you can make.