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### SSPC Annual Conference 2018

We are delighted to announce our next Annual Conference to be held on 17 May 2018 at the Royal Society of Edinburgh. The focus of the conference will be **'Primary Care Research in the Era of Realistic Medicine'**.

The conference will be based on a traditional format whereby there will be keynote speakers providing overviews on the Scottish and international perspectives, plus oral and poster presentations.

Applications for presentations are now invited to be submitted by 16 February 2018. The application process and presentation forms can be found on [www.sspc.ac.uk/events/conferences/](http://www.sspc.ac.uk/events/conferences/)

The conference will be held in association with the Society of Academic Primary Care (SAPC). There will be a free place to the July 2018 SAPC conference in London awarded to the best research presentation or poster.

To reserve a place as a delegate at the SSPC 2018 Annual Conference, please visit <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/scottish-school-of-primary-care-annual-conference-2018-tickets-41490062895>

The delegate fees are £145.00 with a discounted 'Early Bird' registration fee of £115.00.

We look forward to seeing you there !



## Editorial

Since our last newsletter, we have been busy with the national evaluation of primary care transformation pilots and a variety of different activities including planning the SSPC conference which will be held on the 17 May next year in Edinburgh. This will explore the theme of 'Primary Care Research in the Era of Realistic Medicine' and we very much hope you will attend. We are sure the day will be stimulating and informative, and as in previous years, will foster debate and discussion.

We have also been active in refining our concept of 'middle-ground research', which we recently published in the British Journal of General Practice (<http://bjgp.org/content/67/664/498>). We were delighted to have this co-authored by the Chief Medical Officer and Deputy Chief Medical Officer for Scotland, who are very supportive of the concept.

GP clusters are starting their work across Scotland; we know that there is variation in progress, as one would expect from a new policy development. Our briefing paper, *Collaborative Quality Improvement in GP Clusters* summarises the literature and current national support for Quality Improvement activity ([http://www.sspc.ac.uk/media/media\\_543940\\_en.pdf](http://www.sspc.ac.uk/media/media_543940_en.pdf)). However, we are aware that this is a rapidly changing area!

This is also a very significant time for general practice in Scotland, as the 2018 Scottish General Medical Services contract offer was released in November, followed by a series of roadshows held by the Scottish GPs Committee of the British Medical Association. A poll on phase one of the proposed contract is underway, the results of which will be known in January. Following a decision on the way forward for general practice and primary care in Scotland, we believe that it will be important to have a carefully planned programme of research and evaluation to inform the new arrangements over the next few years.

In this context and more widely, the importance of academic primary care in policy-relevant research and evaluation has never been stronger, and SSPC look forward to working with all the key stakeholders over the coming years in order to inform evidence-based realistic medicine. Our conference in May 2018 will be an opportunity to consider this in practical terms. We are also keen to ensure academic primary care offers an attractive career path. In this regard, please note that the NHS Education for Scotland Academic Fellowships will be advertised early next year.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



Professor Stewart Mercer  
SSPC Director



Professor John Gillies  
SSPC Deputy Director



## Update on SSPC National Evaluation of New Models of Primary Care

We are pleased to report good progress on this. We have now completed two rounds of scoping all new models of primary care that are being tested in NHS territorial Health Board areas. More detailed work is well underway on case studies in Ayrshire & Arran, Lanarkshire, Tayside and Highland & Islands as well as the national evaluations of Advanced Nurse Practitioners and Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy. This work is enhanced by our overarching case study that focuses on the potential uses of 'Big Data'.

Early findings from the research teams in the lead universities undertaking this work indicate that most tests of change have been implemented and are at various stages of progress.

The final report of the Inverclyde Case Study, which was carried out ahead of the other case studies that were agreed with the Scottish Government, will be posted on our website early next year. Tests of change reported in this included Phlebotomy, Advanced Nurse Practitioners, Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy, and Telephone Triage for GP Home Visits.

A big thank you to everyone helping us with our evaluation.



## 'Middle Ground' Research

Our concept of 'middle-ground' research is gaining widespread attention following publication in the British Journal of General Practice (BJGP) (<http://bjgp.org/content/67/664/498>).

The BJGP is one of the leading academic primary care journals in the world. Professor Roger Jones, Editor of the journal, commented in his foreword that *'Stewart Mercer and colleagues, including the Chief Medical Officer and Deputy Chief Medical Officer for Scotland, describe a new model of 'middle-ground' research that has the potential to genuinely support primary care transformation. With a much shorter 'cycle time' for doing health services research and getting it into practice, this approach may turn out to be a model for healthcare innovation and development more widely'*.

SSPC facilitated two workshops at the Chief Medical Officer's Conference on Realistic Medicine in October this year on the theme of evaluation and middle-ground research, which attracted over 90 attendees.

## **SPIRE** **Scottish Primary care Information** **Resource**

Many of you will be aware of the forthcoming roll out of SPIRE.

This project, approved by the Scottish General Practitioners Committee and the Royal College of General Practitioners Scotland, will simplify and standardise the process for extracting data from GP practice systems for a number of purposes. One of these is to support any new contractual arrangement with GPs through the provision of data. SPIRE also assists GPs by providing tools for practices, for example a flu vaccination dashboard and statistics on multi-morbidities. It can be used for GP cluster work and has potential as a tool for assessing local health needs and for research purposes.

It has been developed in conjunction with input from pathfinder general practices, Health Boards and other key stakeholders. This year has seen a Public Information campaign, user testing and report development, and the shaping of tailored training plans for each Health Board. We expect that SPIRE will be available to all practices in Scotland in Spring 2018. More detail for patients and GPs, as well as FAQs are on the website <http://spire.scot>

## 2018 NES Academic Fellowships

**NHS Education for Scotland GP Academic Fellowships for 2018** will again be co-ordinated by the SSPC for its member universities. These are intended to provide training to a new generation of General Practice academic researchers.

These are 1 year appointments.

We are currently awaiting confirmation of the number of fulltime equivalent fellowships to be funded in 2018, but expect to receive this by February next year. Once available, details will be posted on our training opportunities page on [www.sspc.ac.uk/](http://www.sspc.ac.uk/)

In the meantime, if you want more information please telephone Karen Penman, SSPC Research Administrator, on 0141 330 5758 or email [info@sspc.ac.uk](mailto:info@sspc.ac.uk)

## Other Educational Opportunities

**MSc and CPD Short Courses in Primary Care (University of Glasgow).** Interested in studying for an online MSc in Primary Care at the University of Glasgow? All courses run as online distance learning and can be accessed from anywhere in the world! Three of the MSC optional modules are also run as stand alone courses for continued professional development. For more information, see <https://www.gla.ac.uk/postgraduate/taught/primarycare/?card=shortcoursesforcpd>

**MSc in Family Medicine (University of Edinburgh).** This on-line learning programme is targeted at doctors with limited opportunity for post-graduate study in family medicine. The principles of family medicine and evidence-based medicine are taught focusing on application to local context as well as relevance to global health. On-line learning is complemented by 2 weeks face-to-face teaching, allowing students to meet and form peer-support learning networks which continue beyond completion of the course. For more information, contact [robin.ramsay@ed.ac.uk](mailto:robin.ramsay@ed.ac.uk)

## Forthcoming Events

### ADEGS

18 -19 January 2018

#### St Andrews

For more information, see <http://onlineshop.st-andrews.ac.uk/conferences-events/conferences/medical-school/adeqs-2018>

### SSPC

17 May 2018

#### Edinburgh

For more information, see [www.sspc.ac.uk/events/conferences/](http://www.sspc.ac.uk/events/conferences/)

### SAPC

10-12 July 2018

#### London

For more information, see <https://sapc.ac.uk/conference/2018>

## Knowledge Hub

To keep up to date with the current news and key documentation for the Primary Care Transformation, visit Knowledge Hub at <https://khub.net/>

## Nova Scotia

The SSPC Director and Deputy Director were invited by Dalhousie University to travel to Nova Scotia with Dr Gregory Smith, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, to explore the common issues facing primary care in Nova Scotia and Scotland. This was a busy and exciting two days of meetings and discussions with policy makers, academics, and clinicians. Although differences exist in our two healthcare systems, there were very similar challenges in terms of the ageing population, inequalities, workforce issues, and the integration agenda. It was a fruitful exchange for all, and we look forward to taking discussions about evaluation and research forward in 2018.

## Ontario No More ??

by Frank Sullivan

In 2014, I accepted the opportunity to become the inaugural Director of the University of Toronto's Practice Based Research Network: UTOPIAN. The Department of Family & Community medicine there had noticed the success of the Scottish School of Primary Care (SSPC) and our Scottish Primary Care Research Network (SPCRN) and decided they wanted to emulate Scotland. Employing a senior member of the SSPC seemed like a good way for them to acquire access to the knowledge and networks we had built up since 1999. The Canadians were sure that after a few years in Ontario I would want to remain there, but my wife, who is also a GP, and I were equally insistent that we would return. Emigration is mainly a personal decision, which has affected many families in Scotland over the centuries and most of our reasons for returning were family related.

The professional attraction of returning to contribute to academic general practice & primary care in Scotland was also strong. After a few difficult years I sense that contractual, educational and research issues are starting to move in our favour again. Whether or not GPs have accepted the new contract by the time you read this there is no doubt that the dismal prospect of a more expensive, less effective (for patients & populations) NHS with few or no GPs has now sunk home with policymakers. Steps are being taken to incorporate 'job satisfaction' as a necessary element of any clinical strategy aimed at the first three. In undergraduate education The Scottish Graduate Entry Medical School, featuring collaboration across three universities and four health boards, will also help revitalise recruitment and retention to practice – particularly in rural areas. I say will rather than should because the Northern Ontario School of Medicine has achieved 70% retention of its graduates in rural areas since it began in 2006. Research is well established with SPCRN facilitating many excellent studies every year, SSPC successfully engaging in 'Middle Ground' research and the desire of many other academics and funders to access our data and work with us to understand how this magnificent entity, Scottish General Practice, works and how it could be even better. I enjoyed my time in Ontario and plan to retain strong links there: but I am a Scottish GP.

If there anything you would like to discuss with us, please email [info@sspc.ac.uk](mailto:info@sspc.ac.uk) or contact us on our Twitter account.



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