

Centre for the Social History of Health and Healthcare

Seminar Series

Previous Seminars

Seminar Series 2024/25

3 December 2024

[Centre for Executive Education \(CEE\) Building, room G4, ground floor](#)

[Dr Rosalind Parr](#)

Glasgow Caledonian University

Clinic, nation, region, globe.

Multi-scalar histories of birth control in and from early post-colonial South Asia.

The recent historiography of birth control in South Asia has shifted attention to the early postcolonial period and highlighted the link between family planning and state-led 'nation-building' projects. Led primarily by women, postcolonial birth control initiatives generated funding, promoted scientific knowledge and administered family planning projects on the ground, usually as part of a wider focus on women's health. Yet, as with all forms of 'development' in the Global South, postcolonial family planning was and remains open to the charge of 'Westernisation' and neo-colonialism due to its reliance on foreign donors and the prevalence of ideas seemingly originating elsewhere. Engaging with these critiques, this paper explores the crucial role of South Asian women's expertise in postcolonial family planning and examines its implications for the history of birth control as a global phenomenon. Focussing on the 1950s and 1960s, it draws on the records of activist organisations such as the All-India Women's Conference, the All-Pakistan Women's Association and the All-Ceylon Women's Conference as well as national family planning associations. The paper argues for a multi-scalar analysis that incorporates a range of spatial and imaginative contexts – including the clinic, the nation and the region – while remaining alert to global power dynamics. This, it will be suggested, offers a model for thinking through the constraints of decolonisation in development contexts shaped by colonial legacies and the evolving international order.

5 November 2024

[Room TL565](#)

[Dr Dieter Declercq](#)

University of Glasgow

Medical humanities as helping work: a case study of play workshops for wellbeing and creative thinking

This talk has a theoretical and an applied part. First, we will investigate the idea of medical humanities as "helping work". This investigation is prompted by the humanities' encounter with

medicine – evidently a profession that has helping at its core. In professional and academic literature, education is typically also listed as a key example of a helping profession. However, at least in my own experience, “helping” rarely serves as an explicit guiding principle for academic work – especially research activity. So, the first part of this talk will explore: What would it mean to conceptualise humanities scholarship as helping work? Is it useful to do so? And what are the scope and boundaries of such work? The second part of the talk then proceeds to explore an example of medical humanities research as helping work. Specifically, I will talk about a community project that develops the uses of play workshops for wellbeing and creative thinking. We will discuss some interesting challenges, including the practicalities of co-design and navigating the ethics of research and innovation activity.

Bio: Dr Dieter Declercq has recently joined the University of Glasgow as Lecturer in Medical Humanities (Narrative Medicine). Previously, he was a Senior Lecturer in Film and Media at the University of Kent. Dieter is co-host of the webinar-podcast series Conversations about Arts, Humanities and Health and author of the book *Satire, Comedy and Mental Health. Coping with the Limits of Critique* (Emerald, 2021). His research focuses on popular media and health. Much of research activity is collaborative and interdisciplinary.

24 September 2024 - POSTPONED - new date to be advised

Room TL662

[John Nott](#)

University of Edinburgh

“A complete picture of what actually is medically wrong with the African’: The East African Medical Survey, mathematics, and modernism at the end of empire’

The East African Medical Survey (EAMS) began in the mid 1940s to survey the health of the villages providing labour for the ill-fated Tanganyika Groundnut Scheme. This attempt to mechanise groundnut cultivation over several million acres—then one of the more costly failures of late-colonial modernism—soon fell apart. But the EAMS remained, instead shifting toward the mapping and selective elimination of disease across the wider region. Six locations in Kenya and Tanganyika were selected, and thousands of people fell under detailed and often invasive medical surveillance. Over the course of six years, researchers collected anthropometric and dietary data; stool, urine, blood, and skin samples; and demographic data from interviews with the many women surveyed. The correlation of social and biological data, and the construction of proxy indices from disparate data sources, was all part of the project’s stated purpose: to detail ‘a complete picture of what actually is medically wrong with the African.’ This paper sets this little-known moment of imperial science within the broader history of colonial scientific surveillance and considers the application of mathematical statistics as a novel aspect of late-colonial modernism.

Seminar Series 2023/24

12 March 2024

[Wendy Kline](#)

Wendy Kline, Ph.D., Dema G. Seelye Chair in the History of Medicine at Purdue University, is internationally recognized for her scholarship in the history of medicine, history of women's health and the history of childbirth. She is the author of four major books: *Exposed: The Hidden History of the Pelvic Exam* (Polity, Spring 2024); *Coming Home: How Midwives Changed Birth* (Oxford University Press, 2019); *Bodies of Knowledge: Sexuality, Reproduction, and Women's Health in the Second Wave* (U. of Chicago Press 2010); and *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (U. of California Press, 2001).

“Do I need to take a security guard to the gynecologist?” Sexual Misconduct and the Crisis in Reproductive Health Care in the U.S.

Beginning in 1960, a trip to the gynecologist was nearly synonymous with getting the birth control pill – or at least the main reason many visited the gynecologist in the U.S. but by the 1990s, it was becoming clearer that more and more sexually active women were putting off a trip to the gynecologist due to the shame and fear of getting a pelvic exam. But why has the pelvic exam become a source of shame and fear? The exposure of sexual misconduct in the examining room has eroded the sense of trust between patients and gynecologists, resulting in a massive decline in preventive reproductive health care. In this talk, I argue that the real problem has to do with the unaddressed, indeed silenced, stigma surrounding the practice of the routine gynecological exam. It has to do with the very uncomfortable question of what it means to touch and peer into the vagina of a patient. and it's a problem that's been with us since the origins of gynecology.

5 March 2024

[Prof Hilary Marland, University of Warwick](#)

‘There is nothing peculiar in the insanity of child-bed’: Diagnosing, Locating and Treating Insanities of Reproduction c.1870-1930

After the 1870s the separate existence of puerperal insanity, a diagnostic category that had done good service since the 1820s in framing the relationship between childbirth and mental illness, began to be questioned in the medical literature. By around 1900 the diagnosis appeared to have been eliminated from the psychiatric canon, the coincidence of childbearing and insanity no longer regarded as sufficient to warrant a discrete diagnosis. Rather than producing taxonomic clarity, however, the result was diagnostic confusion, the label puerperal insanity was still widely used in medical texts and the courtroom, and as late as 1935 one psychiatrist was prompted to declare that puerperal insanity was still enjoying a ‘protracted funeral’.

This paper explores how this changing diagnostic backdrop translated into practice when childbirth was framed as an associated or exciting cause of mental disorder rather than a distinct category. In many asylums the label puerperal insanity continued to be used in the first decades of the twentieth century, and formed, along with the insanities of pregnancy and lactation, an important category of admission. While diagnosis was increasingly related to heredity causes and associated with physical disease, asylum superintendents were alert to the impact of frequent childbirth, pregnancy loss and the deaths of infants in producing mental breakdown and to the particular conditions of life, be they

poverty, exhaustion, vice, or ethnicity and migration, which made women vulnerable to mental illness. Around the same time, some doctors expressed increasing concern about the social stigma attached to asylum admissions for mothers experiencing mental breakdown around the time of childbirth; they began to consider other locations for treatment as well as exploring the potential role of improved maternity care in protecting women from mental breakdown.

20 February 2024

Medical Humanities in China and the UK - Fellows Workshop

Dr Kaija-Liisa Koovit

Kaija will discuss arthroplasty (surgical procedures which intend to restore the function of a joint) and the politics of patient choice. When choosing the best artificial medical device for a patient, surgeons depend on personal experience and clinical research, but most often, they rely on the arthroplasty registries and its measure of success – the revision rate. That rate does not always reflect what is best for the patient.

Dr Luis Bernardi Junqueira

Luis' talk will focus on the arrival of psychical research in early 20th-century China and its impact on Chinese approaches to health and religious experience. More specifically, I will discuss how Chinese reformers adopted and adapted psychical research – a Euro-American discipline concerned with the scientific investigation of paranormal phenomena – to address specific societal challenges in their pursuit of modernity.

Dr Mia Chen Ma

Mia's presentation will address how science fiction is increasingly recognized as a vital genre for contemplating medical theories, practices, and public health issues amid technological advancements and ethical debates. It will touch on issues such as waste pollution and its health implications, green industry, urban living and the risk society, and international surrogacy, among others.

13 February 2024

[Prof Sasha Handley](#)

Professor of Early Modern History, University of Manchester

Soporific Recipes and the Material Renaissance, 1500-1700

This paper locates the material arrangement of human sleep within the wider culture of experimentation, observation and creativity known as the 'material renaissance'. Recipes were at the centre of this vibrant culture of making with Pamela H. Smith (and others) characterising recipe making as vital epistemic practices in this period. This paper asks how this new "hands-on" epistemology responded to concerns about sleep quality in early modern Europe (England and Germany). Examining people's attempts to sleep well through the medium of recipes, I set out new modes of observation and experimentation with organic soporifics and signal the importance of these medicinal trials for the therapeutics of sleep care.

5 December 2023

[Dr Andrew Seaton \(University College London\)](#)

Andrew Seaton will reflect on writing the history of the National Health Service (NHS) by drawing on his new book, *Our NHS: A History of Britain's Best-Loved Institution* (Yale University Press). Andrew will discuss the principal arguments of his book and their contributions to the fields of medical history, British history, and political history, as well as his methodological choices and approach to writing. In doing so, he hopes to stimulate a wider discussion about how scholars might write future histories of the service and other comparable medical and welfare institutions.

7 November 2023

[Dr Grace Redhead \(Exeter\)](#) and [Dr Rebecca Lynch \(Exeter\)](#)

Grace will be discussing the origins of the 'postcode lottery' of inequalities in healthcare

The 'postcode lottery' has become a dominant political framing for place-based health inequalities in Britain, used by patient groups, politicians and in media coverage of regional health and healthcare inequalities. Using newspapers, parliamentary material and health policy, this paper explores the history of the 'postcode lottery' as a term of patient protest and political art, and asks what values and ideas about the NHS, the role of the state, and the position of the patient, have been embedded within it. The first part of this paper examines its origins in the 1989-91 introduction of the 'internal market', the 1994 reintroduction of the National Lottery, and in the context of widespread anxieties about the uneven distribution of state services and private wealth in Britain. It explores its changing uses through the era of New Labour and the introduction of the Conservative austerity programme, and its use as a 'weapon' in the 'armoury' of third sector health organisations. It concludes that the 'postcode lottery' has gained such political currency because it enables the decontextualization of places from their long social and economic histories. This paper then turns to an examination of the long histories of regional health inequality in Britain obscured by the notion of the 'postcode lottery', and how epidemiologists and policymakers have grappled with the problem of resource allocation. Finally, this paper argues that the emergence and use of the 'postcode lottery' reflects and reinforces the entanglement of the NHS with the logic of marketisation and appeals to discourses of fairness which ignore questions of structural inequality.

10 October 2023

Dr Hannah Elizabeth (LSHTM)

Joint seminar with Women's History Scotland

'Everyone expected me to get an abortion': Managing HIV-affected pregnancy in Edinburgh in the late 20th Century

Abstract: This paper tracks how the advice to terminate pregnancies became integral to the medical and social management of HIV among women in the UK and how this shaped experiences of HIV-affected pregnancy. Specifically, it traces how the advice that 'at risk' and HIV positive women should avoid pregnancy, and should terminate pregnancies, evolved in Edinburgh in the last decades of the twentieth century. It asks how this advice shaped the experiences of pregnant people affected by HIV, and then finally traces how the advice to terminate pregnancies ebbed away. In doing so, the chapter explores how healthcare practitioners and the women under their care viewed HIV-affected pregnancy, and the possibilities of HIV-affected motherhood and the families it conjured, excavating the myriad tensions which shaped the decision to terminate or continue a pregnancy affected by HIV.

Hannah Elizabeth is a cultural historian of health, sexuality, emotions and childhood in Britain. They are currently working on a Wellcome funded project investigating how HIV-affected people built and maintained families in Edinburgh, influencing national and international policy and practice through daily acts of love, care, and activism. Their most recent publication from the project is a chapter titled: 'Recovering Mothers' Experiences of HIV/AIDS Health Activism in Edinburgh, 1983-2000'. Beyond histories of HIV they have published widely on the history of British public health education, activism, teenage sexual health and sexuality, most recently with an article on queer women's health activism in Birmingham with 'The Wild Women of the West (Midlands)'.

23 March 2023

The First Resort and The Naked Room: How to be Sane in an Insane World

Prof Matt Smith (Strathclyde) and Willa Schneberg

7 February 2023

Time, Loss, and Grief: Pieces from a History of the UK University's Present

Prof Felicity Callard (University of Glasgow)

24 January 2023

New and forthcoming books from History at Strathclyde: roundtable discussion

Dr Catriona Ellis, Dr Matt Eisler, Dr Laura Kelly, Dr Fearghus Roulston and Prof Matt Smith in conversation with Prof Jim Mills about their new books

29 November 2022

Youth, gender and teenage sexual counselling in Britain post-1945 (exact title tbc)

Caroline Rusterholz (Cambridge)

8 November 2022

“One Roof Style Medical Care”: The Development of Health Centres in New Zealand in the 1970s and 1980s

Hayley Brown (LSHTM)

11 October 2022

Book launch: The Edinburgh Companion to the Politics of American Health

Sophie Jones (Strathclyde) and Martin Halliwell (Leicester)

4 October 2022

Fortitude and Nationality in Crimean War Surgery

This paper examines the substantial debate on surgery, emotions and ideas of race and nationality in the Crimean War. It will argue that the war was a significant moment in the development not only of well-known Humanitarian impulses towards the “common soldier” but also of an often explicitly racialised cult of pain and endurance in the face of the surgeon’s knife. In particular it will consider the debates on survival rates among the "races" represented in the war - British, French, Russian and Turkish.

James Kennaway (University of Groningen)

28 March 2022

Mental Health Foundation, Reclaiming Our Heritage Online Event

Introducing a collection of stories about the arts and mental health landscape in Scotland, between the 1950s to early 2000s.

15 March 2022

The making of a transnational community of practice: Transnational connections of AIDS activists in West Germany, the UK and Greece

Nikolaos Papadogiannis, St Andrews/CSHHH

1 February 2022

The “Love Thugs”: Ecstasy, homosociability and the decline of hooliganism in 1990s Britain

Peder Clark, CSHHH

23 November 2021

‘When Africa was a Laboratory for German Scientists’

Dr Edna Bonhomme (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin)

26 October 2021

‘Decolonising madness?’ (full title tbc)

Dr Ana Antic (University of Copenhagen)

12 October 2021

'Rhetoric punishment, madness, healing: the uses of self-injury in early modern England'
Dr Alanna Skuse (University of Reading)

28 September 2021

'It all began with my snoring man: Pharmaceutical and Alcohol Abuse of Women and its Treatment in Socialist East Germany'
Dr Markus Wahl (The Institute for the History of Medicine of the Robert Bosch Stiftung (IGM), Stuttgart)

16 March 2021

African American Mental Health and Social Policy in 20th Century Urban America
Prof Martin Summers, Boston College

2 March 2021

In the archive of the Peckham Experiment
Dr Giulia Smith, University of Oxford

16 February 2021

Working alternatives towards a history of anti-psychiatry 'from below'
Dr Steffan Balyney's abstract
Download Steffan Blayney's abstract

26 January 2021

Marijuana Boom in Colombia, a Book Talk
Dr Lina Britto, Northwestern University

1 December 2020

The history of trauma and refugee mental health in the Global Health
Yolana Pringle (University of Roehampton) and Baher Ibrahim (University of Glasgow)

17 November 2020

"I am English": Loneliness and Melancholia in Elizabeth Taylor's Novels
Akshi Singh, Queen Mary University of London

28 October 2020

School of Humanities Seminar Series

'Smallpox Eradication 40 years On: An Alternative Commemoration'

Professor Sanjoy Bhattachayra

Leading member of the UK's history of medicine community who has published widely on infectious diseases, international health organisations and medicine in modern empires.

Download Sanjoy's [Slides](#)

27 October 2020**MHCUK Roundtable Discussion**

A roundtable discussion introducing the work of this year's Medical Humanities China-UK (MHCUK) Fellows, Dr Wankun Li, Dr Louise Creechan and Dr Fabiola Creed, welcoming them to the CSHHH.

18 February 2020

Rubber Gloves and Liquid Gold: Drugs and the Regulation of Queer Spaces in the 1980s

Dr Ben Mechen, Lecturer in Twentieth Century British History, King's College London

Download Ben's [Abstract](#)

14 January 2020

The making of an alternative international health: North Korea and the socialist world

Dr Dora Vargha, University of Exeter

Download Dora's [Abstract](#)

10 December 2019

"You go to Hong Kong for me": The colonial city in British imaginations

Dr Chi Chi Huang, University of Strathclyde

18 October 2019

"How medicine got modern with media technology: Towards a media history of 20th-century medicine"

Michael Sappol, PhD, History of Science & Ideas, Uppsala University, Sweden

17 October 2019

Medical Movies 1918-1965

Michael Sappol, PhD, History of Science & Ideas, Uppsala University, Sweden

24 September 2019

'Legato con amore in un volume: 18th and 19th century Italian manuscripts in the Wellcome Collection'

Prof Phil Cooke, University of Strathclyde

26 March 2019

Mass Immunization in Chinese and Global Health

Mary Augusta Brazelton, University of Cambridge

19 March 2019

"Clubbable": The Shaping of Britain's Medical Elite

Sally Sheard, University of Liverpool

19 February 2019

Caress and the making of the Guide Dog Partnership in 1930s America

Neil Pemberton, University of Manchester

6 December 2018

Crossroads of American Sovereignty

Mary X Mitchell, Purdue University

12 March 2019

3 December 2018

The Abortion Act (1967): a Biography

Gayle Davis, University of Edinburgh

25 September 2018

"Relaxed Mother - Relaxed Child": Responsible women and contagious tension in the twentieth century

Ayesha Nathoo, University of Exeter

26 April 2018

Drug Addiction in Post-war Finland: Some Preliminary Remarks

Anu Salmela, University of Turku

Download the [Abstract](#)

7 March 2018

'The Growth and Development of the "Therapeutic Orphan" in American Pediatric Drug Policy and Clinical Practice, 1933-1979'

Cynthia Connolly, University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing

Download the [Abstract](#)

7 February 2018

"Don't Do Brain Surgery with a Pickaxe": Psychosurgery and Shock Therapy as Political Metaphor in Post-WWII American Fiction

Joanna Wilson, University of Edinburgh

Download the [Abstract](#)

24 January 2018

Ronald Sandison, LSD and the 'Beyond Within' Powick Hospital

Mark Gallagher, University of Glasgow

Download the [Abstract](#)
