

# Health in Cultural Context

21<sup>st</sup> June 2012

University of Dundee and University of St Andrews

Place: Seminar room 2, Medical and Biological Sciences Building,

University of St Andrews

## Speakers:

Isobel Cameron – University of Aberdeen

Steve MacGillivray – University of Dundee

Fabio Sani – University of Dundee

Sammyh Khan – University of Dundee

Gozde Ozakinci – University of St Andrews

## Discussants:

Nick Hopkins – University of Dundee

Thilo Kroll – Social Dimensions of Health Institute

Elsbeth Graham - University of St Andrews

**A workshop sponsored by the ESRC in collaboration with the  
University of St Andrews and the University of Dundee**

## Programme:

9:30-10:00: **Registration**

10:00-10:15: **Welcome and Introduction**

Speaker: **Nick Hopkins** (University of Dundee)

10:15-11:00: **Culture and Depression: Investigating the Communication of Emotions in Northern Cultures Using an Interdisciplinary Approach**

Speaker: **Isobel Cameron** (University of Aberdeen)

11:00-11:45: **Understanding and Explaining the Role of Cultural Differences in Systematic Reviews of Randomised Controlled Trials**

Speaker: **Steve MacGillivray** (University of Dundee)

11:45-12:30: **Group Identification and Mental Health**

Speaker: **Fabio Sani** (University of Dundee)

12:30-2:00: **Lunch**

2:00-3:30: **Social identity, collective participation, and health: The Prayag Magh Mela**

Speaker: **Nick Hopkins** (University of Dundee)

**Collective Experience and Health: A Longitudinal Study of Collective Participation in a Hindu Festival in India**

Speaker: **Sammyh Khan** (University of Dundee)

**Health Behaviours during Magh Mela: Explanations for Health Behaviours given by Hindu Pilgrims**

Speaker: **Gozde Ozakinci** (University of St Andrews)

3:30-3:45: **Coffee**

3:45-4:30: **Panel Discussion**

**Nick Hopkins** (University of Dundee), **Thilo Kroll** (Director of Social Dimensions of Health Institute), **Elsbeth Graham** (University of St Andrews)



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## Abstracts:

### **Isobel Cameron:**

How people express their emotions is viewed to be integral to the cultural knowledge systems in which they are immersed. Yet emotions such as depression are commonly understood from a Euro-American perspective. This is reflected in the international classification systems which are applied in the diagnosis of affective disorders and in tools used to assess depressive symptoms in clinical settings. As such, caution should be applied when making sense of affect through specific cultural lenses. If northern inhabitants differ in their emotional expression from a standardised international norm, this has important implications for the recognition and treatment of affective disorders. This presentation will set out the rationale for, and describe the methods to be applied in an interdisciplinary programme of research being undertaken at the University of Aberdeen beginning in October 2012. This programme will investigate the nature of emotional expression in northern cultures by applying a wide range of methods and expertise drawn from health services research, psychiatry, anthropology, the arts, psychology, education, computing and medical sciences.

### **Stephen MacGillivray:**

The paper will introduce the purposes, methods and products of meta-analysis; outline the problem of heterogeneity; consider the role of cultural differences in contributing to heterogeneity; and consider methodological approaches to understanding and explaining it. I will be focussing on depression as an exemplar and thus will also be considering the international epidemiology and specific cultural factors that are known to exist across cultures regarding the diagnosis/recognition and treatment/management.

### **Fabio Sani:**

We all belong to social groups (e.g., family, work group, sport team). However, we may *identify* with a group (i.e., have a sense of belonging to the group and of commonality with other group members) to different extents. I will discuss research demonstrating that higher identification with one's family, work-place, support group, or school predicts higher mental health across different European countries. This research also suggests that the positive health implications of group identification are stronger than, and relatively independent from the effects exerted by the amount of social contact one may have with other in-group members.

### **Sammyh Khan:**

This presentation will describe a longitudinal study that investigated the impact of participation in a large-scale collective event upon health in an Indian context - the Magh Mela at Allahabad. The Magh Mela is the largest religious festival in the world and has a history spanning centuries with millions of pilgrims participating each year. Specifically, the study aimed to examine if, and if so, why, participation in a collective event would lead to improvements in health. First, using a matched sample of participants and non-participants, we show that pilgrims' health improved significantly after having participated in the Magh Mela. Second, we show that the increase in health can be explained by cognitive and behavioural crowd processes derived from Social Identity Theory (SIT). We end the presentation by discussing the applicability of SIT has to health psychology in different cultural contexts.

### **Gozde Ozakinci:**

This presentation will describe the qualitative analyses of the open-ended entries that the Hindu pilgrims provided on their health behaviours during Mela and any changes they observed in their behaviours. We proceeded by asking them the reasons for these changes and the responses were thematically analysed. The findings showed that the reasons for these changes included the role of context (ie. Conditions in Magh Mela) as well as social and spiritual aspects for their behaviours.