

HISTORY OF THE **SECTION OF** **EPIDEMIOLOGY & PUBLIC HEALTH**

Connection with John Snow and William Farr

The Section has an illustrious history, being the direct descendent of the London Epidemiological Society founded by William Farr, William Budd, Thomas Addison, John Snow and others in 1850 (Evans A. Benjamin Guy Babinton: Founding President of the London Epidemiological Society. International Journal of Epidemiology 2001;30:226-230). John Snow is famous for tracing an outbreak of cholera in London to the Broad Street pump and can be considered one of the founding figures of modern epidemiology, while William Farr can be considered a founding figure in medical statistics. One of the first considerations of the Epidemiological Society was cholera, but they also made recommendations on smallpox and fevers. The Compulsory Vaccination Act of 1853 (relating to smallpox) was largely based on the Society's advice.

Epidemiological Society

In 1907, the Epidemiological Society joined with others to form the Royal Society of Medicine. Dr G.S.Buchanan and Dr W.Hamer at the Public Health Department of the London County Council called the first meeting of the Section of Epidemiology in June 1907. This was then followed by the appointment of Dr A.Newsholme as the first President of the Section in October 1907.

Reaction to the Poor Law Commission

In 1913, following the investigation of the Poor Law Commission, the Section changed its name to the Section of Epidemiology & State Medicine to reflect its wider objective of 'the investigation of epidemic or endemic diseases in respect of the circumstances and conditions which favour, prevent or are otherwise associated with the occurrence, their persistence or their variations in type or character'.

Tuberculosis Order

1921 saw the Section as one of the driving forces pushing the government to re-enact the Tuberculosis Order to ensure a pure milk supply and in 1943 led a 1,100 strong petition of Medical Health Officers reinforcing the argument for smallpox.

The WHO

Following the Second World War the Section were some of the first to hear of the newly founded World Health Organisation. Between 1951 and 1963 the Section refined its role 'to study the occurrence and character of disease, populations and the means of their prevention' and re-emerged as the Section of Epidemiology & Preventative Health. The Section then went into a lull until 1975 when it was reborn as the Section of Epidemiology & Community Medicine.

Royal Commission on Medical Education

It was during this lull that the Section was instrumental in the Royal Commission on Medical Education recommending the establishment of the Faculty of Community Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians in 1972.

Epidemiology AND Public Health

Following much discussion of the role and understanding of Community Medicine, in 1990 the Section's name was altered once again to its current place as the Section of Epidemiology & Public Health. In this incarnation the Section has once more been reborn. As government agendas refocused attention on public health and the role of epidemiology in healthcare, the Section is moving to reflect once more the cutting edge of public health and provide a space for the ideologies, conflicts, debates and discussions which will take us forward into the new millennium.

HISTORY OF MEETINGS

The 1918 'Flu Pandemic

While at the RSM, Dr Newsholme brought together a meeting to discuss the management of the 1918 flu pandemic, it was one of the most high profile and vigorous debates on health at the time and was widely reported.

Infectious Disease and Mendalism

The Section continued to be challenging and thought provoking over the years. In its early phase there was a particular focus on infectious diseases such as diphtheria, rubella, tuberculosis, measles, etc. However this did not exclude a paper by William Bateson on the 'Mendalism in relation to disease', a paper that led to a lively meeting on the current theories of heredity and disease in 1910 and provoked some of the thinking that undoubtedly underpins our current approaches to medical genetics.

As the impact of infectious diseases declined the Section moved with the times and highlighted work on the wider determinants of health. A groundbreaking paper by Dr James Niven (President of Section 1909-10 and Medical Officer for Health for Manchester) illustrated how the trade cycles and systems of casual labour related to poverty and disease.

Still Births

In 1913 it was the joint work between the Section and the Section of Obstetrics & Gynaecology investigating stillbirth that led to a definition of still birth and pressing for the official registration of stillbirths. The registration system still continues today and provides invaluable information about foetal mortality.

Immunisation

The Section remained for much of the twentieth century an environment in which new and developing ideas and work could be presented and discussed. The Section were amongst the first to see work on the Polio Epidemics in Devon & Cornwall in 1911, work on the Polio Epidemic in 1947 and hosted Professor Jonas Salk's lecture on the Poliomyelitis vaccine posing the difficult question for any vaccine 'how much is enough?'. Immunisation remained high on the Section's agenda with presentations on Diphtheria immunisation in 1937 and the inauguration of the national prevention campaign in 1943. The results of the immunisation against influenza were first presented in 1937 by Dr Christopher Andrews.

Preventative Medicine

In the 1950s Dr W H Bradley tried to enthuse members with the emerging concepts of social medicine, although it was the more widely accepted Preventative Medicine that took hold. Meetings on road accidents, the health impacts of atmospheric pollution and the prevention of influenza brought new focus to the post war industrialised populations health. It was some of this work on occupational exposure which led to the formation of the Section of Occupational Health in 1964.

Community Medicine

The 1970s saw the Section reflecting on the current state of things with meetings on 'Community medicine – what does it mean?' and 'Problems and problem solving in community health'. By 1982 in his presidential address, Professor WH Holland identified the crux of the uncertainty, 'Community medicine – myth or change agent?' set out the confusion and false expectations that was lying in the term Community Medicine, he said 'It was a mistake to drop the term public health since our concern is with the health of the public and with the provision of public health services'.

Health Inequalities

In the 1980s and 1990s the political shifts and re-organisation of the NHS overshadowed much of the work of the Section. However in 2005 the Section is building a focus on health inequalities and investigating the new challenges of genetic epidemiology following the mapping of the human genome. We hope to take the Section once more into uncharted territory and exciting new opportunities.

MEDALS AND AWARDS

Jenner Medal

Founded in 1896 by the Epidemiological Society to commemorate the centenary of Edward Jenner's discovery of the smallpox vaccine. The award is made to individuals who have undertaken distinguished work in epidemiological research.

The medal was designed in Bronze by Allan Wyon. It features Jenner's face on one aspect and the symbol of the Epidemiological Society, the Earth, on the reverse. The medal was re-cast following the evolution of the Society into the Section of Epidemiology at the RSM.

It was first awarded to Sir William Henry Power who was the then Medical Officer for London and had formulated the theory of aerial conveyance of smallpox and chaired the Royal Commission on Tuberculosis.

Some of the individuals to whom the Jenner Medal has been awarded include:

Mr AT Glenny	(1953): for contributions to diphtheria immunisation
Sir Richard Doll	(1981): for outstanding studies on the epidemiology of cancer
Sir Donald Acheson	(1993): for the advancement of public health
Sir Donald Henderson	(1996): for work towards worldwide eradication of smallpox
Dame Rosemary Rue	(2001): first woman president of the faculty of community health and pioneer of women in medicine

The Alexander Hutchison Medal

This is a memorial lecture and medal awarded in memory of Dr Alexander Hutchison OBE PhD FRCP. Dr Hutchison was best known in England for his leadership as Medical Officer of Health for Hull where he drove forward oral poliomyelitis vaccine and persuaded the local authority to undertake the first mass campaigns for screening for phenylketonuria and cervical cancer and to provide free family planning.

The Medal is awarded biennially to an individual nominated by Section council on a topic of public health and epidemiological importance. The Medal winner is asked to give a presentation which reflects the ethos of Dr Hutchison's work.

This has been awarded in recent years to:

Sir Richard Doll	1992-93)
Sir Kenneth Calman	(1994-95)
Dame Deirdre Hine DBE FRCP	(1996-97)
Sir David Carter FRCS FRCPE	(1998-99)
Professor Sir Michael Rawlins	(2002-2003)

The Brooke Award

In 1987, the Epidemiologist Eileen Minnie Brooke bequeathed part of her estate to the Royal Society of Medicine, for a Brooke award in Epidemiology annually at the discretion of the President. The epidemiological theme of the award made it appropriate for the Section of Epidemiology & Public Health to nominate suitable recipients to the President of the RSM. To date, the award has been used to fund Visiting Brooke Professors, usually in association with the Berzelius symposia.

There have been four Brooke Visiting Professorships:

Professor Rylander	1992
Professor Jari Tiihonen	1996
Captain Greg Gray	1998
Dr David Olds	1999

The Brooke Grant has been used this year to provide bursaries for public health trainees from across the UK to attend meetings at the RSM, a travel grant to enable students to explore public health in different countries and the Brooke Lecture.

The Berzelius Symposium is an annual event which alternates between being hosted by the Section of Epidemiology & Public Health at the RSM and the Swedish Society of Medicine in Stockholm. It commemorates the experience of Swedish chemist JJ Berzelius in his visit to the Medical and Chirurgical Society in 1812. The first Symposium was hosted at the RSM in 1992 on 'Water and Public Health' and attracted over 100 delegates from across Europe, it was followed in Stockholm where the 'Health Aspects of Indoor Air' were hotly debated following of the launch of the Swedish National Asthma Campaign. The most recent Symposium in 2004 discussed the effects of Alcohol.

HONORARY FELLOWSHIPS OF **THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF MEDICINE**

Each year the Section is eligible to nominate individuals for Honorary Fellowship to the RSM. This nomination is based on individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the advancement of epidemiology and Public Health.

Honorary Fellows include:

Sir MacFarlane Burnet:	Nobel Prize Winner for Medicine & Physiology
Sir Richard Doll:	Globally recognised authority on smoking and cancer
Sir Donald Acheson:	CMO and spearhead of UN medical relief envoy in Sarajevo
Prof Jerry Morris:	Expert on exercise and cardio-vascular disease
Sir George Godber:	CMO and leading light in health planning & education
Sir Kenneth Calman:	CMO and fundamental restructuring of medical education

PAST PRESIDENTS

The Section has always been based on a bedrock of practicing public health professionals. Many of the Past Presidents have held posts in Local Government Board and its successor the Ministry and then Government Department of Health and several world-renown academic departments.

The first President of the Epidemiological Society was Benjamin Guy Babington.

The First President of the Section

Sir Arthur Newsholme

In his first paper to the Section, Sir Arthur highlighted the problems of poverty and disease, he was particularly interested in the inter-relation of poverty with tuberculosis and typhus fever, a relationship that for tuberculosis remains today. He was convinced that ‘Poverty and disease are allied by the closest bonds, and nothing can be simpler and more certain than the statement that the removal of poverty would effect an enormous reduction of disease’.

Sir Newsholme was intimately involved in the response to the 1918 flu pandemic and first President of the Section of Epidemiology, Medical Officer for Brighton and Medical Officer to the Local Government Board in Whitehall.

CURRENT MEMBERS OF COUNCIL INCLUDE :

Dr Ike Anya - Young Fellow Representative

Currently an SpR in Bristol on the SouthWest scheme and I trained as a doctor in Nigeria. I have interests in HIV, ethics of public health, communicable disease and international public health and have also taught on the DTM&H at the LSHTM and in introductory epidemiology at UWE in Bristol.

Dr Paul Edmondson-Jones

I am a consultant in Public Health Medicine and have just joined Council for the first time although have been a member of both the RSM and Epidemiology & Public Health Section for many years. I joined the NHS full time in 2000 after 21 years in the Army during which time I deployed to many parts of the world, saw active service in the Falklands and Yugoslavia and was awarded the MBE for my role in the MOD during the Gulf War.

I am currently the Director of Improving Health & Quality for Portsmouth City Teaching PCT (a role that incorporates Director of Public Health but also includes other areas such as Quality, Education and Training, Communications, Public Involvement, GP Education and Research). I chair the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Public Health Network and the National Public Health in Primary Care Group as well as being on the newly formed Executive of the NHS Alliance Health Network.

My main areas of interest include education and training, military medicine, clinical networks, health inequalities, winter warmth and excess winter deaths, emergency admissions and priority setting. I am particularly keen to see how we can make the Section and its activities even more relevant and interesting, especially to try to attract the attention and attendance of more provincial members and for trainee members.

Dr Anna Hansell – President

Dr Hansell is a Senior Lecturer at the Dept of Epidemiology & Public Health, Imperial College London. She is currently working on the UK Biobank study, which plans to establish a cohort of 500,000 individuals over 2006-2010 with the aim of investigating the genetics and gene-environment interactions of common diseases. Prior to public health training, she trained in internal medicine. Her research interests are environmental and respiratory epidemiology, with a particular interest in health effects of air pollution.

Mark Hohenberg - Other Member

I am currently a 2nd year clinical medical student at the Royal Free and University College Medical School, also having completed a BSc in Infection last year. I currently hold the post of Principal Student for the Student Members Group of the RSM (our equivalent of a Section

President) and I am heavily involved with all meetings relating to the students' group, the Young Fellows and to a certain extent, the Catastrophes and Conflict Forum, where I am also a council member. I try my utmost hardest to represent student views of all levels for the development of meetings by the Sections of the RSM.

I have been very interested in epidemiology and public health even before I started medicine (with a fascination with the CDC's EIS service) and I try and keep up to date with current affairs in epidemiology and public health, especially through the PROMed e-mail service. It is certainly an area I have/ am considering as a career.

Dr Ronnie Pollock MA MB BChir FFPH – Immediate Past President of Section Council

Formerly Regional Director of Public Health and Director of Planning in the Oxford Region, Ronnie Pollock was particularly responsible for developing a Strategic Planning methodology for the better delivery of health services, examining differences in need and the match of provision to need, deriving measures of quality and exploring the criteria for improved outcomes of care.

He produced the first ever comprehensive Regional Strategy within the NHS, and developed a Strategic Plan for Health Services in Lebanon at the end of the Civil War. He continues to develop these ideas in his consultancy practice and is extensively involved in hospital planning, having planned over 60 hospitals in the UK and in 20 overseas countries.

Dr Rosalind Stanwell-Smith FRCOG FFPH MSc – Vice President

I have worked independently in public health epidemiology since 2000. Previously I worked in clinical medicine, communicable disease epidemiology and research. I have had three secondments to the Department of Health, including one in which I set up the Confidential Enquiry into Stillbirths and Infant Deaths. Now my work is project based and wide ranging – especially since qualifying as a Blue Badge London tour guide last year, so now I run tours with a medical/scientific theme. Meetings run by the Section or jointly with other Sections are an excellent way to keep in touch with developments relevant to public health and the increasingly multidisciplinary way of working – and creativity: the Section has run art and photography competitions. I do not think the RSM can be bettered for the opportunities it offers for CPD across a range of topics, whether you are in academia, the NHS, retired – or working independently.

Dr Justin Varney – President Elect

Currently a 3rd year specialist registrar on the London, Kent, Surrey and Sussex Training Scheme, Dr Varney has a special interest in the public health of lesbian and gay populations and the health needs of the homeless. He is the current chair of the BMA Public Health SpR Committee and part of the Executive Committee of the Gay & Lesbian Association of Doctors and Dentists.

MEMBERS OF SECTION COUNCIL
IN THE LAST 10 YEARS

Professor E Alberman FRCOP
Dr Fiona Adshead MRCP
Professor H.R.Anderson MD
Dr Ikechuku Anya
Dr John Ashley MFPHM
Prof Christopher LR Bartlett FFPHM
Dame Beulah Bewley
Dr Penny Bevan FFPHM
Dr G J Bicker
Lt Col J Philip G Bolton MRGP
Professor Ann Bowling Hon FPHM
Dr Alleyna Claxton
Dr Ann Corkery FPHM
Dr June Crown CBE FRCP
Dr D G Cunningham
Miss Roxana Curtis
Dr Elizabeth Davies DFPHM
Dr Charlie Easman
Dr Philippa Easterbrook MRCP
Dr Paul Edmondson-Jones
Professor Paul Elliot MRCP
Professor Malcolm Forsythe FFPHM
Dr Anthony Golding
Lt Col John Graham MFPHM
Professor Roderic Keith Griffiths

Dr Gervase Hamilton FFPHM
Dr Anna Hansell
Dr Peter Hayward FFPHM
Mr Mark Hohenberg
Professor Walter W Holland CBE FFPHM
Dr Michael Joffe MD FRCP
Dr E J C Kendall MRCP
Dr Gillian Leng MFPHM
Dr A MacMillan MPH
Professor Martin McKee FRCOP
Dr Yi Mein Koh MFPHM
Professor David L Miller FFPHM
Dr Ruth Milton MFPHM
Dr Tish-Laing Morton MRCGP
Professor ND Noah
Dr Ronnie Pollock
Dr Adrian Renton MD
Dr Mark Reacher MD
Dr Quentin Sandifer MFPHM
Dr N Spence Galbraith CBE FRCP
Dr Ros Stanwell-Smith
Dr Justin Varney
Dr Charles Wolfe MRCP
Dr Clive Wilkins DVPH