



*This newsletter is produced to coincide with the Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development at the Melbourne Convention Centre, Australia.  
'Promoting Social and Economic Equality'  
July 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> 2014*

## **Social Work and Health Inequalities Network 2004-2014**

### **From Quebec Canada in 2004 to Melbourne, Australia in 2014**

The Social Work and Health Inequalities Network (SWHIN) celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year at the Melbourne conference. If you are new to SWHIN or if this is your first World Social Work conference, this newsletter aims to put you in touch with other social work practitioners, academics and educators. We are an open and friendly group who enjoy both the formal presentations and informal time to meet in a relaxed way over a meal or at the bar.

The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary symposium will be held on Friday 11 July at 3.30pm with Liz Orr, Agnes Law and Roberta Uchoa and chaired by Paul Bywaters and Rosalie Pockett.

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### **Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development 2014, Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, Melbourne, Australia.**

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The theme of addressing health inequalities runs throughout the SWSD2014 conference. There is a stimulating programme of particular interest to network members including sessions on international HIV perspectives, social work in health settings, indigenous perspectives, women's health, marginalised communities, mental health, caregiving, disability, substance misuse and health and social issues. In addition, there are sessions on the social determinants of health, human rights and strengthening health and well-being.

Many members of SWHIN are presenting papers and/or chairing sessions including Lou Harms, Paul Bywaters, Rosalie Pockett, Tuula Heinonen, Liz Orr, Hans Knutagard, Joan Yoo, Glenda Bawden and Bruce Friedman.

## **Social workers addressing health inequalities in Australia**

In the global context, Australia is a relatively healthy and wealthy country. Notwithstanding this national status, many Australians face health inequalities on a daily basis – for some, these inequalities are intergenerational.

Health disparities continue to be experienced particularly amongst our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people living with disabilities, older Australians, and refugees and asylum seekers. Poverty continues to be the underlying causes in many of these situations. Social workers are engaging in a wide range of innovative service and policy responses to these issues in the context of a rapidly changing health policy landscape.

We have a major federal initiative to redress some of this inequality. The National Disability Insurance Scheme is a scheme being introduced in trial sites across Australia to provide people with disabilities and their families with community-based personal plans and supports. Simultaneously, the health care system itself faces significant change, with the new federal government proposing to introduce a co-payment for Medicare services, our universal health care system. While not approved through the Senate at this point in time, such a change represents a fundamental shift away from a health service model that has provided extensive health care safety nets, and presents major challenges for lower income Australians and their health prevention and intervention.

These Australian issues will be key areas of focus throughout the 2014 conference, and will resonate with many papers from international colleagues addressing health inequalities in their own practice, research and policy contexts. The 2014 conference provides an opportunity for many members of the SWHIN to come together. Over the 4 days of the conference, 102 papers under the 'Addressing health inequalities and disadvantage for individuals and communities' theme will be presented, and a keynote address given by Mr Herbert Paulschin, currently the Executive Director of the Austrian Association of Social Workers.

We are particularly delighted that a symposium celebrating the 10 year anniversary of Social Work Health Inequalities Network will be chaired by Paul Bywaters and Rosalie Pockett.

Associate Professor Lou Harms  
Local Program Committee Chair, Melbourne Australia

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## **Stories of Good Practice**

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Final year Social Work PhD student, Elizabeth Orr will be presenting her research at the SWSD2014 conference titled Stories of Good Practice which explores the synergies and tensions for Social Workers and Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officers in Victoria. A knowledge transfer process with the co-operative research centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health- the Lowitja Institute- is a key element of the research and an Aboriginal Critical Reference group has guided and informed the study. Liz's study signposts positive steps by front line practitioners, activists, Schools of Social Work, and recent publications by Indigenous social workers. However, this study highlights that developing culturally safe and decolonizing practice are ongoing challenges for the profession. The presentation invites Social Workers to become allies to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in health in Australia. Current challenges to medicare and health funding means working together to sustain government commitments to closing the health gap and keeping Indigenous health on the public agenda is critical.

Liz Orr, PhD Candidate La Trobe University, Melbourne Australia, the Lowitja Institute Scholarship.



We have asked Eileen McLeod, SWHIN Network co-founder and Executive Committee member who is stepping back from her active role in the Network, to give her reflections on her experience of SWHIN across the last 10 years.

### **Start of the Network**

It began with a conversation. Paul Bywaters and I had been working for several years on social work's contribution to tackling health inequalities. However, it had been difficult to engage UK academics in the central importance of this issue to social work. So I suggested we canvassed overseas colleagues to see if they shared our interest and commitment. Accordingly Paul set off to the Social work in Health and Mental Health Conference in Quebec in 2004.....

### **Development**

Since its foundation, the following theoretical, dissemination and organisational issues within the Network have been particularly significant for me.

*Theory:* Through other Network colleagues' work, I have become better informed about issues of which I was previously very ignorant, for example indigenous people's experience of health inequalities, and health disadvantages associated with internal economic migration. I have also benefitted from work that has looked at connections between different countries' policies. For example, through analysis spearheaded by SWHIN's current co-convenors, I have become more aware of the insidious ways heterosexist discrimination pursues LGBT asylum seekers, with devastating effects for well-being and even, life. Co-editing the Network's first volume on global health inequalities also brought home a hard theoretical lesson. Many social work texts - from whatever locality - are still written as though they assume that what they have to say is universally applicable. Alternatively, texts can produce a schematic account of international issues. I came to see that in reality we face a much harder theoretical task: reflecting how international conditions permeate local situations, while giving an account of specific local features.

*Dissemination:* A variety of forms of dissemination have been at the heart of the Network's development. One response to the logistics of sharing analysis and evidence globally, has been a series of video-linked seminars, for example linking the UK with Australia, Sweden and China. Subjects covered have included inequalities in Emergency Care, and a Pacific Rim perspective on global health issues in social work education. These have been an economical means of communication, informative, and enjoyable. At the start, with more rudimentary technology, they were also nail-biting. 'Would the connection work?' What a relief when Agnes Law and her colleagues and students from Sun Yat-Sen University appeared on the screen. Now called teleconferencing, and not requiring advanced technology from all parties, seminars like this could be initiated around the Network.

'For information'. Who among us has not benefitted from Paul Bywaters' weekly jiscmail updates of references to potentially relevant publications? These form part of the spine of

the Network. They not only distribute invaluable information, but are a frequent and consistent reminder of the Network's existence and utility. (It's a service that is open as well to other volunteers to complement or cover specialist areas.)

Reflecting growing confidence in the Network, the current co-convenorship has also seen an initiative to spread the message to other disciplines: that social work constitutes an essential element in addressing health inequalities. Approaches have been made to Marmot's team of epidemiologists at University College London, whose pioneering work on health inequalities had received international recognition. Initial efforts have resulted in mutual benefits. Explicit reference to social work and evidence on it has entered Marmot's team's reports, and he accepted an invitation to be a plenary speaker at the World Conference on Social Work and Social Development in Stockholm 2012.

### *Organisation*

Three organisational Network traditions have evolved that seem to me particular sources of strength. Current convenors are drivers of policy. However, the practice has grown up that they have the supportive back-up of previous convenors. This means that while current convenors forge ahead – they can draw on the accumulated 'know-how' of Network organising, to give them a flying start. A tradition of warmth and good company has also been fostered through Network 'get-togethers', typically at conferences. For me, while writing this - and I'm sure for other members around the globe - this means that irrespective of distance, Network members feature vividly in your mind's eye. This is intrinsically important and attractive. It also boosts morale and effort. Thirdly, the Network has built a tradition of productivity. This is exemplified by two edited collections, special issues, chapters, articles, reports, submissions, policy documents, teaching materials, and podcasts. These are all feats of organisation that endorse the rationale for the Network. To illustrate in relation to the forthcoming edited collection: 'There are 31 contributors, 17 chapters and 8 different countries represented'.

Inescapably for a live initiative there are a series of organisational challenges. How democratic the Network is, is an on-going and large issue. A more specific issue is how to decentralise policy and practice from what has tended to be a UK secretariat, so that the Network can more fully represent and benefit from its wealth of international talent. Apart from specific conference grants and institutional background resources, the Network has remained essentially unfunded. Its primary currency has been the efforts of interested and committed members. This has lent its operations a certain freedom. However, at present there is less 'give' in the academic system re time and funding. This raises again, the question of the material basis of the Network.

**The Future?** SWHIN has begun to map globally how health inequalities should be a core concern for social workers, how social work is implicated in producing such inequalities, but how social work can contribute to tackling them. Currently the Network has approximately 400 members. Four hundred imaginations. Four hundred intellects, with a shared focus. That's a promising resource!

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## **Other research currently being undertaken by SWHIN members**

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### **International refugee migration and well-being.**

The province of Manitoba and the city of Winnipeg in Canada in particular, is receiving an increasing number of African refugees. We are exploring the factors that create stress for this population after resettlement in Winnipeg and the coping strategies they adopt to cope in their new land. The emerging themes from our findings are indicating issues of social relationship rupture due to the separation from family and lack of understanding of the new culture, poverty, and the laws and other regulations are often imposed without consideration of their understanding and integration by refugees. African refugees' coping strategies include attending seminars on different aspects of life in the resettlement country and maintaining practices and rituals from their country of origins. The African newcomers also built relationships with their ethnocultural community members who offer needed informal support.

Dr. Regine King and Professor Tuula Heinonen,

University of Manitoba, Canada.

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## **5<sup>th</sup> European Conference for Social Work Research, Slovenia 22-24 April 2015**

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The 4th conference took place in Bolzano, Italy from 15-17 April 2014 and was attended by SWHIN network members.

The 5<sup>th</sup> European Social Work Research Conference will take place in Ljubljana, Slovenia from 22-24 April 2015. Its title is: Reclaiming Community, Agency and Social Movements: The Social Work Perspective. (Further information is available from <http://www.eswra.org/conference/> . The organisers will issue a call for abstracts soon).



**Why participate in SWHIN?**

**Connect with members  
of 25+ nations**

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## Watch this space – Singapore 2016

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The next Social Work in Health and Mental Health conference is taking place in Singapore in 2016. More information about the conference can be found at:

<http://www.sasw.org.sg/site/event/8th-international-conference-on-social-work-in-health-and-mental-health>

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## 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary Timeline: Social Work and Health Inequalities Network

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Proposed by Paul Bywaters and Eileen McLeod in 2004 at 4<sup>th</sup> international Social Work in Health and Mental Health Conference in Quebec, Canada. Paul Bywaters leads the writing of a conference Declaration

[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross\\_fac/healthatwarwick/research/devgroups/socialwork/swhin/keydocs/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/healthatwarwick/research/devgroups/socialwork/swhin/keydocs/)

Network founded at meeting called by Paul Bywaters at the IFSW World Conference in Adelaide, Australia, 2004. Web site and email list created. Paul Bywaters elected Convenor.

2005: Paul Bywaters, with co-applicants from the Network, awarded ESRC Research Seminar series grant on Social Work and Health Inequalities Research. Seminars held in Birmingham, Coventry, Glasgow and London 2006-7. Publications on line [http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross\\_fac/healthatwarwick/research/devgroups/socialwork/swhin/esrc\\_seminar\\_series/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/healthatwarwick/research/devgroups/socialwork/swhin/esrc_seminar_series/)

2006 International Association of Schools of Social Work Congress in Chile. Members attended and gave papers.

2006: Network invited to lead a symposium at the joint IFSW/IASSW World Conference in Munich. (Paul Bywaters (UK), Lindsey Napier (Australia), Vimla Nadkarni (India), Stephen Rose (USA), and Vishanthie Sewpaul (South Africa) presented papers.

2006: Network invited by IFSW to lead the revision of the international policy on Health. Work led by Paul Bywaters (UK) and Lindsey Napier (Australia). Policy presented to the IFSW General Meeting and ratified unanimously in Salvador, Brazil 2008. Presentations on the Policy given to the IFSW World Congress, Salvador, Brazil.

2006: Paul Bywaters invited to be an international theme leader and key note speaker at the 5<sup>th</sup> Social Work in Health and Mental Health conference in Hong Kong.

2006: Lindsey Napier elected Convenor.

2007: Paul Bywaters invited to co-author a chapter on health in the Sage Handbook on Social Work Research.

2008: International Association of Schools of Social Work Congress in Durban, South Africa. Members attended and gave papers.

2009: Publication of Social Work and Global Health Inequalities, edited by Paul Bywaters, Eileen McLeod and Lindsey Napier published by Policy Press, a collection written by Network members.

2009: Special issue of International Social Work on Health edited by Network members Rosalie Pockett and Karen Postle.

2009: SWAP Guide Integrating Health Inequalities in Social Work Learning published, written by Paul Bywaters, Gurnam Singh, Stephen Cowden, Eileen McLeod (all UK), Stephen Rose (USA).

2010: Paul Bywaters invited to co-author a chapter on Health in the forthcoming Sage Handbook on International Social Work.

2010: Network invited to give keynote presentation at the 6<sup>th</sup> Social Work in Health and Mental Health conference in Dublin, Ireland. (Paul Bywaters (UK), Roberta Uchoa (Brazil), Lindsey Napier (Australia), Estelle Rubenstein (Israel)).

2010: Julie Fish and Kate Karban elected joint Convenors.

2010: Videocast on the IFSW policy on Health by Paul Bywaters.

2010: Joint IFSW, IASSW, ICSW world conference in Hong Kong, China. Lindsey Napier and other members attended, contributed to the development of the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development and made presentations. The Network has continued to argue for the Agenda to give a greater prominence to health issues by engaging with the consultation process and by direct contact with the Agenda leadership.

2011: Network seminar at the 1<sup>st</sup> European Social Work Research Conference, Oxford. Paul Bywaters, Varda Soskolne (Israel), Julie Fish (UK) and Sarah Donnelly (Ireland) presented papers.

2011: Network awarded \$4000 by IASSW for an online symposium and videocast, 'Translating global perspectives on health inequalities research into social work education - a Pacific Rim perspective', Rosalie Pockett (Australia), Paul Bywaters and Eileen McLeod (UK), Liz Beddoe (New Zealand) and Joan Yoo (Korea). This was the sixth online international symposium. Others have involved the University of Warwick, UK with university colleagues, students and practitioners in Melbourne and Sydney Universities, Australia, the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden and Sun Yat Sen University, Guanzhou, China.

2011: Proposals for 2 symposia on social work and health inequalities accepted by the world conference of IFSW, IASSW and ICSW, in Stockholm, Sweden, 2012. Participants from the UK, USA, Israel, Brazil, New Zealand and Australia.

2011: Kate Karban, representing the Network, invited to be a member of the International Committee for the 7<sup>th</sup> Social Work in Health and Mental Health conference, 2013, Los Angeles, USA.

2011: Julie Fish Chaired the conference and presented to the Inside Government Forum on Health Inequalities, London.

2012: Develop Social Work and Health Inequalities webpages for SCIE website.  
<http://www.scie.org.uk/workforce/socialcareandhealthinequalities/index.asp>

2012: Sir Michael Marmot presents to the Joint world social work conference in Stockholm

- The network holds a symposium on teaching and learning in health inequalities in social work education.

2013: Fish, J. and Karban, K. (2013) Health inequalities at the heart of the social work curriculum. *Social Work Education*.  
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02615479.2012.742502?journalCode=cswe20>

2013: Social work and health inequalities: Interview with Patricia Fronek, Griffith University, Australia. As we approach World Social Day 2013, equality is on the global agenda. In today's podcast, Julie Fish talks to us about social work's role in addressing health inequalities and the social determinants of health, and the importance of raising the profession's profile in this area of practice.  
<http://www.podsocs.com/podcast/social-work-and-health-inequalities/>

2013: Kate Karban presented to the World Social Work day at Westminster UK, leading the SWHIN contribution at an event addressed by Richard Wilkinson (*The Spirit level*).

2013: Professor Nancy Krieger presents to the Social work in health and mental health conference in Los Angeles, California.

The network convenes four symposia on

- Mental Health and Disability
- LGBT Health Inequalities
- Health and Well-Being of Indigenous People
- Developing the Social Work Curriculum

2014 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the Joint World social work conference, Melbourne Australia.

2015: Fish, J. and Karban, K. (March, 2015) *Social work and lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans health inequalities: International perspectives*. Bristol: The Policy Press.

Among other activities, the network has also

- advocated for the inclusion of health and social inequalities in the Global Agenda for Social work;



- promoted the inclusion of health inequalities in the social work curriculum;
- developed webpages for the UK Social Care Institute for Excellence website;
- produced international teaching resources for World Social Work Day;
- influenced the policy agenda by contributing case studies to the Global Observatory.

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## **Future of the Network**

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Julie Fish and Kate Karban are standing down as Joint Convenors of the network if you want to find out more or have ideas about how the network can be developed:

[jfish@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:jfish@dmu.ac.uk) / [k.karban@bradford.ac.uk](mailto:k.karban@bradford.ac.uk)

### **Why participate in SWHIN?**



**Access current developments in health equity  
Strengthen local & global knowledge and action**