

Virtues and Vices in Evidence-Based Clinical Practice

Green Templeton College, Oxford, 27th January 2016 10 am – 4 pm

Background

This workshop will explore how we might develop the interdisciplinary study of virtues and vices so as to support evidence-based clinical practice.

Much has been written about the research-practice gap. We have mountains of evidence-based guidelines, but clinicians rarely follow them. Research on this gap in the medical field has been dominated by trials of behaviourist interventions predicated on a crude stimulus-response model (e.g. how feedback on performance may increase guideline adherence). Social scientists have argued that such models have limited value in situations characterised by a complex interplay of human, organisational and policy influences, and have proposed more complex, emergent, and interactive models of the research-practice link.

Both linear and complex models of 'getting research into practice' miss important subtleties about how humans think. They also overlook the fundamentally social and moral nature of clinical practice. The doctor/nurse is not a dispassionate information processor but a caring professional, guided by the ethical question "what is the right thing to do for this patient?".

The innovative feature of this workshop will be its focus on philosophical and psychological aspects of the research-practice gap. How humans behave is underpinned by how they think. Thinking styles are in turn influenced by underlying cognitive mechanisms, biases, **intellectual virtues** (e.g. conscientiousness, open-mindedness) and **intellectual vices** (dogmatism, closed-mindedness, prejudice). Clinical practice is also strongly influenced by **professional virtues** (e.g. altruism, integrity, respect for confidentiality), and, regrettably, also sometimes by what might be termed **professional vices** (e.g. tendency to close ranks).

We believe that much could be gained by exploring the explanatory role of cognitive mechanisms and intellectual character traits in relation to the research-practice gap. Our tentative hypothesis is that to deliver evidence-based clinical practice in the information age, professional virtues must be supplemented by intellectual ones – and, conversely, the professional development of clinicians must discourage intellectual vices.

Aims and objectives

The AIM of the workshop is to bring together scholars and practitioners from clinical medicine, management, health/social policy, philosophy and psychology to consider new ways of theorising and researching the research-practice gap in clinical practice.

The OBJECTIVES are

- To review the strengths and limitations of both linear (behaviourist) and 'complex' models of getting research evidence into clinical practice
- To extend these models with a new focus on the human traits and virtues [and vices] that support [or interfere with] the practice of evidence-based medicine
- To develop a new, interdisciplinary theorisation of how professional virtues might be combined with intellectual virtues to produce a contemporary model of the 'good' clinician in the information age

Timetable

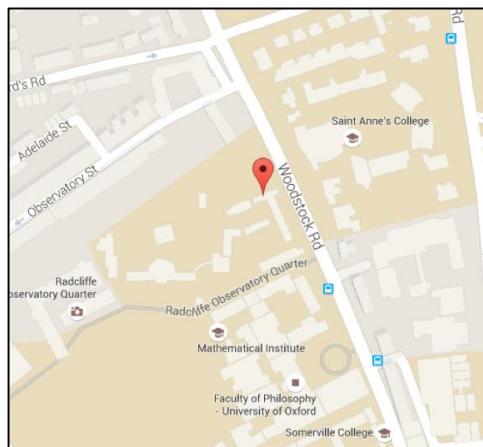
1000	Arrival, registration, tea/coffee
1020-1030	Welcome (Trish Greenhalgh)
1030-1100	Professional virtues (Iona Heath)
1100-1145	Intellectual virtues and vices (Quassim Cassam)
1145-1230	Facilitated discussion
1230-1330	Lunch
1330-1400	Psychological traits relevant to the uptake and use of evidence by clinicians (Nick Fahy)
1400-1430	Professional vices? A critical incident (Trish Greenhalgh)
1430-1530	Facilitated discussion
1530-1600	Tea and wrap-up

Pre-workshop reading

The following sources may be useful in preparing for the workshop:

- *Stealthy Vices* by Quassim Cassam <http://social-epistemology.com/2015/10/16/stealthy-vices-quassim-cassam/> (blog)
- *Good doctoring: Have we replaced reason with rationality?* <http://bioethics.northwestern.edu/atrium/articles/issue11/greenhalgh.html> (article by Trish Greenhalgh)

Logistics



Green Templeton College, Oxford OX2 6HG, is about 1 mile walk from the main train station.

There is no parking.

On arrival, come through the main entrance, past the Porters Lodge and follow signs to Abraham Lecture Theatre where there will be registration and coffee.

Student rooms may be available from <http://www.universityrooms.com/en/city/oxford/home>.

Expenses claims

If you have a source of funding for your travel/accommodation, please use that. If not, we have a small budget to reimburse second-class travel and one night's accommodation, with priority to PhD students and early career researchers. Please keep your receipts and email linnemore.jantjes@phc.ox.ac.uk for an expenses form.