

Working Papers in the Health Sciences

It is with great pleasure that I write for this first edition of *Working Papers in the Health Sciences*.

The aim of this peer reviewed e-journal is to promote scholarly writing among academics from as early as possible in their careers and as early as possible in the development of research, knowledge or innovation.

I think back to my early career as a novice academic. Early on, I found I had a desire and enjoyment of writing, but I also distinctly remember not knowing how or where to develop it. Journals seemed remote and demanding and more popular professional outlets like the *Nursing Times* felt too unreachable to a young undergraduate nursing student. Once I graduated, I signed up to write reviews on health-related books for a new feminist magazine called *Everywoman*, now long gone. This unpaid journalism was an early joy, especially receiving the books to review on a whole range of subjects and interests. I learnt the art of crafting a short piece of writing that made sense, where my sentences were short, economical and understandable to a broad readership, and to make a pithy point without being over-elaborate. I also quickly learnt that editors re-craft the words you took so much trouble over. It became a bit of a sport trying to minimise editorial changes by honing my writing as much as I could before sending it off. There are so few opportunities of this kind; *Working Papers in Health Sciences* has been developed to provide what is a clear gap in the market: an early opportunity to publish.

We are looking to provide a space for students and early career academics to publish as soon as possible and to keep publishing. This has a number of benefits. It provides a space where others can follow emerging work, also feedback through the peer review process that may prove useful in shaping it further, and most importantly, practise in writing and publishing; this should become part of your persona if you are to become a scholar. It is through writing and making your writing widely available that you grow your reputation and through which others can take up and use your work. It is a discipline that needs to become second nature and something that you know how to build in to your working week, not letting other activities supersede or squeeze it out. It is, in short, the lifeblood of an academic, or for that matter a clinical leader, as it is the tool for communicating our ideas, thoughts, endeavours and most importantly the evidence that we so badly need to underpin our respective disciplines.

This first edition has an interesting selection of papers. Professor Peter Griffiths summarises his inaugural lecture 'Doing away with Doctors? Workforce research and the future of nursing' – a brilliant exposition on why carefully-accrued evidence is essential to underpin changes in workforce and skill mix in health care. Trevor Kettle provides an account of the value of using audio podcasts as a way of providing students with feedback on their work; innovations of this kind are key to improving the experience of students. Ilkhani and colleagues report the early results of an audit of children and young people's units to determine the extent to which they take account of disability. Yvonne Middlewick outlines her plans for a study of experiences of health care by peri-menopausal women with mental health problems. Breslin and colleagues report a study of the outcomes associated with specialist and generalist teachers of primary physical education. Finally, Suminthra Naidu describes a study comparing two different methods for assessing PaCO₂ in neonatal intensive care. Together, these papers illustrate the range of issues and interests encompassed by *Working Papers in Health Sciences*. I hope that as the journal progresses, we open up an interesting forum for debate, comment and feedback as part of the scholarly method; it is through this that work is further shaped and developed. The process of receiving and giving critical comment is fundamental to participating in the academic world and something that one has to experience and develop a level of comfort with. Even now, when I submit papers for publication I regularly receive detailed critical feedback and rejection. These days I tell myself that the work or paper will be better for it, as the process of responding to reviewers inevitably strengthens and clarifies the way in which work has been presented. It sheds light on things I hadn't noticed or thought of and points to where descriptions of method or argument lack clarity or substance. What a pity we can't apply such processes to our personal lives. The thoughts of a few peer reviewers could be very useful indeed!

Professor Jessica Corner
Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences
University of Southampton