Detailed Call for Papers

Researching End of Life Care from a Social Science Perspective: Past, Present and Future Contributions

29-30 November 2017 at Open University (Milton Keynes, UK)

Abstract deadline 31 July 2017

Sociological and anthropological perspectives to date have provided critical theoretical insights into end of life care practices, including the changing nature and treatment of death in society, how ‘good deaths’ are constructed, and organisational issues of end of life care delivery. These perspectives have been recognised and adopted within the medical discipline of palliative and end of life care, but beyond select seminal pieces and concepts, there is little contemporary discussion of the utility of sociological or anthropological thought for addressing the challenges faced by health care professionals and policymakers in providing care to a growing and increasingly frail end of life population.

By bringing together a range of social scientists researching end of life care, this workshop aims at strengthening the position and visibility of social sciences in the medically-dominated field of palliative and end of life care research and policy. We want to promote the importance of social science approaches in this field and to seek more overt use of them to advance research, and ultimately practice, in palliative and end-of-life care. To do so, we invite participants to map out methodological and theoretical developments particularly in medical sociology and medical anthropology highlighting the actual and potential of social science contributions to end of life care research.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Social theory in end of life care: past and current approaches
- Methodological issues with researching end of life care
- Future directions for social sciences-informed end of life care research
- Engaging with end of life care policy and community developments
- Bringing theoretical insights from empirical work back into the social sciences
- Strengthening social sciences contributions to medically-oriented fields through focus on end of life care

An important element of this workshop is facilitating a discussion about the visibility of the social sciences in end of life care research. We aim at opening new dialogues about how social science end of life care research can be
developed. Such discussions have implications not only for this area of research, but a growing body of medical sociology and medical anthropology that may be viewed as operating at the margins of medical research. We hope that the workshop will lead to the establishment of a community of sociologists and anthropologists working within the field of end of life care.

The workshop will also feature presentations by Prof Jane Seymour (University of Sheffield) and Prof Allan Kellehear (University of Bradford) about their work in this field. They will also provide supportive advice for workshop participants.

The workshop is funded by the Foundation for the Sociology of Health & Illness and the Association for the Study of Death and Society (ASDS). There will be no registration fee for attendance and we have travel bursaries to support PhD students and early-career researchers to attend.

Please send your abstract (250 words) and full contact details to Erica Borgstrom (mailto:Erica.borgstrom@open.ac.uk) before 5pm GMT 31 July 2017. If you would like to apply for a travel bursary, please indicate this in your submission as well as likely amount to be required; this will not affect abstract selection. Successful participants will be asked to circulate a draft paper in the autumn and to present a summary of the paper at the workshop. Each presentation will be followed by audience discussion led by a workshop participant. More information about the format and accessibility of the workshop, expectations of participants, and information about bursaries can be found on the event website.

This workshop is being organised by Dr Erica Borgstrom (Open University), Dr Sarah Hoare (University of Cambridge), and Natashe Lemos Dekker (University of Amsterdam).

The workshop is supported by the following organisations: