EDITORIAL FOREWORD

Our team based at the University of Liverpool has been editing the newly named journal *Medical Sociology online* for four years, carrying on the 41 year tradition in the UK, of a publication associated with the British Sociological Association’s (BSA) Medical Sociology group, or MedSoc as it is more commonly known by its members. When putting together this edition, we have been impressed by the variety of submissions that have been sent to us for review: from epidemiological studies to auto-ethnographic accounts, all employing a variety of methodological approaches and drawing on different literatures.

We have included two papers in this edition: the first is *ME: The rise and fall of a media sensation*, where Patricia de Wolfe explores the natural history of the controversial and influential media coverage of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME), also known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). In her analysis, de Wolf draws attention to the different constructions of this illness which delineated and divided medical practitioners and sufferers alike. While many people with ME/CFS favoured an organic explanation of ME/CFS as a ‘disease’, and actively sought social recognition as people experiencing a chronic illness, others, usually from bio-medical sciences, including doctors, tended to favour the explanation of ME/CFS as a mental health disorder, manifesting itself as a collection of apparently physical symptoms. By locating the roots of the disease in documented cases of ‘female hysteria’, these gendered biomedical explanations were picked up and turned over by the media, leading to new constructions of the illness over time. Similarly the class/ occupation influenced designation of ‘Yuppie ‘Flu’ reflected contemporary preoccupations with new working practices and upward social mobility.

In contrast to this exploration of the media, Lorraine Ritchie’s article; *Wearing two hats: interviewing older people as a nurse researcher*, is a personal reflexive account of her experience of interviewing older people as a nurse and also as a researcher. Through an exploration of these two roles, Ritchie draws our attention to the dilemmas a number of people with occupational identities experience once they start to conduct research, which in other research disciplines are not always fully explored. Hannah Bradby’s opinion piece, is a similarly personal account, reflecting and analysing how it ‘felt’ to experience a major life-event (surgery), without at the time meeting the person who conducted the surgery. While Sarah Collins in her response argues that this not usual, both writers highlight the need for personal communication between doctors and the people who for a time, become patients in their care.

If you have any comments about this edition or would like to contribute to the publication, please email the editorial team on MSO@liverpool.ac.uk. If you would like to submit an article for peer-review to Medical Sociology online, please use the link: http://www.medicalsociologyonline.org/submissions.html

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