

News from the conferences

Every year, the journal's editors attend regional, national, and international conferences where we interact with authors of interesting work. We look for opportunities to bring the best of that work to the attention of our readers by encouraging those authors to consider publishing with us. Emerald Group Publishing itself also provides supportive guidance and award recognition for graduate student research (www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/research/index.htm) and writers at all levels of experience (www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/authors/index.htm). Several of the journal's issues this year, including this one, contain thought-provoking ideas from graduate theses, award-winning projects, and conference presenters.

Since there are far more conferences each year than our editorial team can attend, we need to be strategic in planning. We rely upon advice of our Editorial Advisory Board as well as readers. If you know of other conferences pertinent to healthcare policy and governance that we should consider, please let us know. In this editorial we describe highlights of several conferences we attended in 2016.

AcademyHealth's Annual Research Meeting is a major forum for health services research, where attendees gather to discuss the health policy and health system implications of research findings, sharpen research methods, and network with colleagues from around the world. Last year's June meeting in Boston was the largest one yet, drawing more than 2,800 attendees and included 150 sessions with more than 700 speakers and nearly 1,500 posters. Further information about the meeting can be found at: www.academyhealth.org/events/site/arm-2016. The 2017 meeting will be held in New Orleans, Louisiana from 25 to 27 June; their call for abstracts opened in early December 2016.

The Kings Fund (www.kingsfund.org.uk/) is one of England's most important independent charity organizations. With a vision that the best possible care is available to all, The Kings Fund supports work to help to shape policy and practice through research and analysis; develop individuals, teams, and organizations; promote understanding of the health and social care system; bring people together to learn, share knowledge, and debate. Emerald Group Publishing was a journal partner for The Kings Fund annual Digital Health and Care Conference in London last July. That event drew over 250 attendees from a wide variety of disciplines. Its focus was on enabling patient-centred care through information and technology. Amongst the key challenges were to improve information sharing, not only with other professionals and sectors other than health such as housing and social care, but crucially with patients, to raise awareness of digital solutions amongst frontline clinicians. There were some powerful narratives that demonstrated ways in which timely and accurate information sharing could save lives and reduce harm from inappropriate treatment. Integrated care records – where they are used, are beginning to demonstrate benefits. There was a pressing need to build “digital trust” – both amongst patients and professionals so that innovations could be introduced successfully into routine care. In the words of keynote speaker Bob Wachter, from the University of California, we need to “re-imagine” the work in a digital age. Presentations at the two-day event are available on the event's website (www.kingsfund.org.uk/events/digital-health-and-care-congress-2016).

The International Association of Medical Regulatory Authorities (www.iamra.com/) meets every second year. Their 12th International Conference on Medical Regulation was held in Melbourne, Australia, co-hosted by the Medical Board of Australia and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. In total, 500 delegates from 42 countries,



the highest number to date, were presented with a new emphasis on risk-based approaches to regulation; indications that health professional regulators are beginning to think about what they do in a different way; and recognition that to continue to deliver the same kind of regulation on its own is no longer “fit for purpose”. New ways of working are needed, in education, in complaints handling, continuing professional development, and engagement with other agencies. In addition, there were discussions and presentations on ways in which the use of complementary and alternative medicines was on the rise in more parts of the world, with acknowledgement that regulation is needed to address this. Risk of harm from the unregulated sector is not something that medical regulation can ignore. There are jurisdictions in Asia and Africa where regulation of traditional medicine already is integrated, and attendees were gently reminded in many sessions of how regulatory activity is often seen through the lens of westernized health systems. A much greater number of research papers than ever before was evident, reporting both quantitative and qualitative findings from across the spectrum of disciplines and regulatory functions, and a sense that the momentum around setting regulatory research aims at strategic and organizational-wide levels was growing. Building internal capacity for research was an important part of this. IMRA’s next conference will be held in Dubai in September 2018.

Each year the Washington Patient Safety Coalition (Marcus-Smith, 2011) convenes the Northwest Patient Safety Conference (www.wapatientssafety.org/news-events/patient-safety-conference). In 2016, attendees at this regional event heard local and nationally recognized speakers address critical issues related to creating a patient safety-oriented culture, meaningful engagement of patients and families in their care decisions, examples of shared decision making and improving communications, and presentations by winners in the annual Qualis Health Washington State 2016 Awards of Excellence in Healthcare Quality. Their 2017 conference is scheduled for 11 May in Seattle, Washington.

The mission of the Guidelines International Network (G-I-N) (www.g-i-n.net/) is to lead, strengthen, and support collaboration in guideline development, adaptation, and implementation. Founded in 2002, G-I-N is a network of over 100 organizations in over 32 countries. G-I-N’s 2016 annual conference was held last September in Philadelphia on the campus of University of Pennsylvania, in collaboration with Penn Medicine, the American College of Physicians, and the ECRI Institute. The theme of the conference was “Individualised guidelines and clinical performance measurement in an era of personalised medicine”. Attendees included healthcare providers, policy makers, insurers, guideline developers and implementers, performance measures developers and implementers, researchers and others with an interest in developing, promoting, adapting, or implementing guidelines and performance measures. The 2017 G-I-N conference, to be held in conjunction with the Cochrane Collaboration, Campbell Collaboration, International Society for Evidence-Based Health Care, and the Joanna Briggs Institute, is scheduled for 12-16 September in Cape Town, South Africa.

IDWeek (www.idweek.org/past-and-future-events/) combines the annual meetings of the Infectious Diseases Society of America, the HIV Medicine Association, the Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society, and the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America. As such, it is a feast for those interested in the clinical or research aspects of infectious diseases, the organization and management of clinical and public health programmes relevant to infectious diseases, and the health and governance of infectious disease training programmes and societies. Their 2016 meeting, held in New Orleans last October, attracted over 7,000 attendees and featured 269 oral presentation sessions and 1,891 posters. The 2017 meeting is scheduled for 4-8 October in San Diego, California.

Except for those in Canada’s longest-established universities, Canadian schools of population or public health are relatively young. The University of Alberta’s School of Public Health, the first in Canada to become accredited, hosted an International Forum on

Public Health Education in celebration of its 10th anniversary in Edmonton last November. Featuring speakers from Australia, South Africa, the USA, and Vietnam as well as a former president and the president-elect of the World Federation of Public Health Associations, the meeting shared ideas with 160 attendees from across Canada (www.ualberta.ca/public-health/about/academic-events/international-forum-on-public-health-education). Plenary and interactive sessions explored global perspectives, thoughts on what the future may hold, ways to enhance the learning experience, and engagement of government policy makers. Schools and programmes that engage in delivering public health education – regardless of where they are offered – share similar challenges and opportunities. This conference set out to create an opportunity to learn from one another, sharing information, ideas and best practices, so that, together, all can be effective in preparing tomorrow's public health leaders. This conference was sponsored by the National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools (www.nccmt.ca). Its organizers will consider evaluation results to determine whether a similar event should occur periodically and, if so, at what Canadian location(s). The World Federation of Public Health Associations' 15th World Congress is scheduled for 3-7 April, 2017 in Melbourne Australia (www.wcph2017.com/).

Starting in 2010, Health Systems Global (<http://healthsystemsglobal.org/>) has organized a biennial conference (<http://healthsystemsresearch.org/hsr2016/background-history/>). Last November in Vancouver British Columbia, their 4th Global Symposium on Health Systems Research drew over 2,000 researchers and policy makers from universities, healthcare systems, and government agencies as well as the world's leading non-governmental aid organizations in 101 countries, all devoted to improving health and healthcare. With a theme of “resilient and responsive health systems for a changing world”, attendees shared information in over 200 concurrent and HSG working group sessions on every aspect imaginable ranging through pedagogy (to advance the effectiveness of those who teach); methodology (to advance research capabilities across the field); intersectionality and the nature of compelling evidence (to better understand what drives political decisions and generation of good public policy); communication (both to advance effectiveness in giving voice to leading advocates for evidence-based policy as well as to every member of a public, especially those in marginalized populations, who will be affected by a policy); leadership (to share new findings (Reich *et al.*, 2016; World Health Organization Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, 2016)); complexity theories (to avoid, as one speaker quoted, HL Mencken's warning that “[...] for every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple and wrong [...]”); funding issues (addressing shifting patterns and related influence of global donor funds relative to local government funding); ways to approach understanding then to promote resilience and responsiveness in health systems; and lessons learned through projects around the world intended to strengthen healthcare systems while addressing many different disorders. Their 5th Global symposium is scheduled for 8-12 October 2018 in Liverpool, England.

David Birnbaum and Michael Decker

References

- Marcus-Smith, M. (2011), “A voluntary safe table to help competitive organizations collaborate on improving quality”, *Clinical Governance: An International Journal*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 252-259.
- Reich, M.R., Javadi, D. and Ghaffar, A. (Eds) (2016), “Special issue: effective leadership for health systems, sponsored by the alliance for health policy and systems research”, *Health Systems and Reform*, Vol. 2 No. 3, pp. 171-271.
- World Health Organization Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research (2016), *Open Mindsets: Participatory Leadership for Health*, WHO, Geneva.