

EHPS Reports

Report on the 7th Annual CREATE Workshop in Galway, Ireland

CREATE website

(<http://www.ehps.net/create/>)

The early career network of the EHPS, CREATE, aims to provide young researchers in health psychology with further training and international collaboration. CREATE brings together early career experts in health psychology from all over Europe and the world to share expertise and support. The annual interactive workshop is one of the main features of CREATE and offers the chance to work closely with leading health psychologists who facilitate the workshop and the possibility of becoming part of an international network.

For this year's workshop, *Designing and Evaluating Theory-Based Interventions*, we had the pleasure of having Susan Michie, current president of the EHPS, Charles Abraham and Susan Ayers as facilitators, all outstanding experts in the field. The workshop took place immediately before the 19th conference of the EHPS in Galway, Ireland. Thanks to the local organizer, Karen Grogan, we were able to hold the workshop conveniently at the EHPS conference venue, the National University of Ireland, Galway. The participants in this year's workshop were 45 early career researchers from Bulgaria, Germany, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, New Zealand, and the UK.

The workshop's focus was on the complex interplay of theory and intervention in health psychology. We discussed how interventions can be designed and tested in such a manner that furthers theory development and theory selection. The facilitators used a wide range of innovative didactical measures to encourage active and lively participation. One important aspect was a statement of research interest and workshop motivation which all participants had to prepare beforehand. With the help of these statements, the facilitators formed homogenous working groups.

Thanks to their sense of humour, the facilitators were able to generate a friendly and productive workshop atmosphere right from the start. The excellent introductory talks by Susan Michie, Charles Abraham and Susan Ayers were very stimulating and encouraged participants to discuss their different backgrounds and research interests in the smaller groups. All participants had to read four papers (among them the Michie & Abraham, 2004 citation classic from *Psychology & Health*) before the workshop, which provided a sound basis from which to discuss matters of theory evaluation and designing interventions. Especially the aspect of basing theory-guided interventions on ample evidence was promoted.

On the first day of the workshop, the participants were briefed in theory evaluation. Matters of study design were discussed as well as criteria for assessing internal and external validity. In various workgroups, the participants were encouraged to examine their respective experiences with intervention studies and collect practical problems. The important issue of building evidence bases was discussed by introducing the Framework for design and evaluation of complex interventions by the Medical Research Council (MRC) of the UK.

The second day of the workshop was devoted to evaluation criteria such as various effect sizes. As a protocol for developing, conducting and evaluating theory-based interventions, intervention mapping was introduced and discussed. From the discussion of the Intervention Mapping and the MRC frameworks, the idea of generating an intervention checklist was born. A task force has been formed and aims at presenting a checklist by the end of the year.

The last day focussed both on troubleshooting participants' problems with their own studies and on discussions of the intervention checklist and integrated the issues from the previous two days. Lively discussions on topics such as theory selection, population identification, critical literature review, specifying behavioural targets against which to evaluate theories, and methodological issues



This year's workshop was organised by Inez van Korlaar, Emma Massey (both Netherlands), Marie Carmen Neipp (Spain), Pia Pajari (Finland), Magda Mazurkiewicz (Poland), Karen Grogan (Ireland), Urte Scholz, Jochen P Ziegelmann and Benjamin Schüz (all Germany). Sadly, this year's workshop was the last for Inez, Marie Carmen, Urte and Pia, as they have finished their PhDs- congratulations!

such as intention-to-treat analyses broadened the focus of the workshop and brought new insights.

This CREATE workshop was special as it addressed extremely important issues in health psychology, i.e. theory-based interventions and their evaluation. Thanks to the facilitators' flexibility and willingness to respond to the great interest in the MRC and Intervention Mapping framework, a task force on the intervention checklist was formed, which also offers the opportunity for researchers from different countries to continue working together beyond the workshop. Participants who were new to the field benefited from the various presentations, working groups and discussions and those already familiar with intervention design, implementation and evaluation were able to gain new insights.

Last but not least, the workshop and the social programme enables strong links throughout Europe, both in research and friendship. We learned a lot about King's heads, the sad story of the hanged Walter, and that there is strong evidence that health psychologists should base their nutrition on chicken wings and crisps and wash that down with some Smithwicks'. See the website for photos.

Working with Susan Michie, Charles Abraham and Susan Ayers was not only a great pleasure; it was also inspiring, both in terms of effectiveness and working climate. We are sure that all participants profited from their excellent teaching and tutoring, which will probably result in many high-quality papers during the next year.

On the last day, participants were asked to evaluate the workshop. The results were very positive, and we will try to follow the suggestions for further workshop topics such as Illness Perceptions, Intervention Techniques or Advanced Statistics in the coming years.

Next years' workshop will precede the 20th EHPS conference in Warsaw, Poland. Ralf Schwarzer and Aleks Luszczynska have agreed to facilitate the 8th CREATE workshop on *Stress, Coping and Social Support*. We are very happy and grateful to have these experts as facilitators, and we are looking forward to an exciting workshop next year. Please encourage early-career researchers to apply for the workshop. Further details on the content of next year's workshop will be announced in due time on the CREATE website (www.ehps.net/create).

CREATE workshop 2005 in Galway, Ireland
Picture by Paul Norman

