

# Making An Impact: The 32<sup>nd</sup> EHPS Conference

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The 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual EHPS 2018 Conference was my first conference, both as an attendee and presenter. I must first

thank the EHPS for awarding me one of this year's conference grants; it funded a personally and professionally indispensable experience.

This year's conference was placed against a stunning background of lush greenery, musical flair, and bustling city life in and around NUI Galway. There was a great sense of energy and enthusiasm within the university during this time, with several opportunities for socialising, networking, and professional development through arranged social events, workshops, posters, and presentations.

I was fortunate enough to book a workshop on *Using The Person-Based Approach to Develop Successful Health Behaviour Change Interventions* delivered by Katherine Bradbury, Leanne Morrison, Kate Morton, and Katy Sivyer. It was hugely informative for both those without relevant experience such as I – where we were shown the necessary steps of intervention development – and those looking for additional tools to use in their current or future research. One topic the workshop covered was the “use of think aloud interviews” in conjunction with the “Table of Changes” approach. This presented a systematic and efficient method for person-centred refinement of interventions through the tabulation of comments expressed in these interviews, which were then grouped according to intervention characteristic/modification. These were then coded using a unique coding framework to indicate reasons for

change, and categorized as to whether they are a “must”, “should do”, “could do”, or “would do in future” (MoScow analysis) to prioritize potential modifications. I learned a lot about the different stages of this process through this, along with helpful tools to use for this task in the future should I encounter it.

Additionally, this was my first contact with like-minded others who I then socialised with throughout the duration of the conference, which for someone like me who had travelled on their own was very welcome. As a budding wannabe health psychologist/ clinical health psychologist, it is always useful to have a chance to make connections with others at similar stages to myself whom I might collaborate with in future. (This was also the time when I was enlightened as to the benefits of possessing a research oriented twitter account!)

The friendly nature of the international health psychology community was apparent from start to finish, complemented by the hospitality of the EHPS, NUI Galway, and The Galmont Hotel whom provided lively drinks receptions and a tasty conference dinner catering to all diets. Additionally, an excellent impromptu buffet dinner was made to compensate for a scheduling mix-up, which further highlights the incredible effort and generosity of these organisations. These events gave plenty time for discussion, entertainment, and deep appreciation of some Irish music and Irish dancing.

Upon seizing the opportunity to present my MSc project results (Dalgetty, Miller, & Dombrowski, 2018) in front of a knowledgeable international audience, I received valuable returns. My

communication and presentation skills were strengthened, and experts provided their feedback which has since been applied to the project manuscript intended for publication. There was an abundance of interesting poster presentations and oral presentations to choose from covering a surprising variety of domains. Among these were new insights into the future of theory through the development of propositions to provide structured (and more easily testable) presentations of theory (West, Michie, Lefevre, Godinho, Connell, et al., 2018); the evaluation of current efforts against alcohol consumption in the form of Dry January campaigns (de Visser, 2018); and the benefits and challenges of training Health Psychologists in Scotland (Swanson & Dale, 2018). The supportive nature of fellow health psychology colleagues and enthusiasts was evident within the question time and symposia discussions, which allowed us to share knowledge and propose refinements when developing ideas for future directions and applications of research.

The EHPS 2018 conference overall was an eye-opening experience as to the range of applications of health psychology in both research and interventions across many settings, health behaviours, and populations. This, along with the vast reach that health psychology has is evidenced by its consideration in other domains such as agriculture, IT, national economic policy, and post-disaster management. The topic of health behaviour theory – in their creation, refinement, application, and testing – also appeared quite prominent and popular this year, indicating potentially significant advancements on the horizon for health psychology as a whole. I look forward to seeing what health psychology research has uncovered during the time until the EHPS 2019 Conference in Dubrovnik, Croatia. Lastly, I extend my many thanks to the organising committee this year, to the EHPS, and to NUI Galway for making this year's conference a huge success for all its attendees.

## References

- Dalgetty, R., Miller, C., Dombrowski, S. (2018, August). *Are Theory-Based Interventions More Effective Than Non-Theory Based Interventions? A Systematic Review Of Systematic Reviews*. Oral presentation presented at the 32nd Conference of the European Health Psychology Society, Galway, Ireland.
- De Visser, R. (2018, August). *Dry January - enhancing the experience and benefits of temporary alcohol abstinence*. Oral presentation presented at the 32nd Conference of the European Health Psychology Society, Galway, Ireland. Oral presentation presented at the 32nd Conference of the European Health Psychology Society, Galway, Ireland.
- Swanson, V., Dale, H. (2018, August). *TRAINING Health Psychologists to Improve Scotland's Health: Tracking progress*.
- West, R., Michie S., Lefevre, C., Godinho C., Connell L., Carey R. (2018, August). *Development of a method for specifying behaviour change theories to facilitate comparison and integration*. Oral presentation presented at the 32nd Conference of the European Health Psychology Society, Galway, Ireland.



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