

Call for Papers

Workshop of the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL)
Health & Science Communication Special Interest Group (SIG)
**“Chronic Disease and Language: Understanding Social and Linguistic Representations to
Improve Treatment and Prevention”**
#healthsci17

29 November 2017

Hosted by the Department of Linguistics and English Language, Lancaster University

‘Chronic disease’, ‘long-term condition’ and ‘non-communicable disease’ are often used interchangeably to refer to conditions that can be managed, but not cured. Despite the synonymous use, these terms frame differently the conditions they describe - foregrounding the duration of the disease or its mechanism of operation. This ‘what’s in a name’ example is a good if crude illustration of how language can shape our thinking about chronic disease. As chronic diseases become more widespread among populations worldwide, they are also increasingly the target of government initiatives for treatment and prevention and therefore, increasingly the focus of text and talk. From a discourse studies perspective, texts do not simply describe the reality of a chronic condition. By drawing on some types of knowledge and not others, incorporating the voices of some actors but not others and highlighting certain aspects of a condition and not others, they help construct the reality of that condition. Research has revealed how health-related information leaflets, media articles, policy documents and more recently, social marketing campaign advertisements explicitly or implicitly prioritise certain causes, propose solutions, allocate responsibility and ultimately, construct particular understandings of chronic diseases (and what needs to be done about them). A finding that runs through much of the literature is about the prevalence of an individualised discourse, a victim-blaming style and stigmatisation of the affected individuals.

In recent years, the focus on early intervention and prevention of chronic diseases has intensified in parallel with a growing understanding that solving chronic disease problems would require multi- or trans-disciplinary research and taking a much broader view of the drivers of health beyond the individual level. We therefore welcome papers that study chronic diseases and representations in contemporary texts adopting various methodological and theoretical approaches (including, but not limited to discourse, framing, metaphor, narrative) with the aim of understanding how language shapes (and potentially limits) the ways that individuals and institutions can think, speak and behave. The aim of the workshop is to bring together researchers from the fields of the social sciences, humanities and beyond to share findings relating to the key challenges and opportunities that representations pose to treatment and prevention targets. Proposals are invited for 20-minute paper presentations as well as posters.

Confirmed Keynote Speakers

- [Dr Shona Hilton](#), Deputy Director, Medical Research Council (MRC)/Scottish Government Chief Scientist Office (CSO) Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow

- [Prof Rusi Jaspal](#), School of Applied Social Sciences, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, De Montfort University

Key Dates

- Abstract deadline: **29 September 2017**
- Acceptance notifications: **14 October 2017**
- Registration opens: **October 2017** (details about the exact date to follow)

Submission Guidelines

Please send your proposals in the form of a 300-word abstract (including references) via the following form: <https://tinyurl.com/healthsci2017>.

Fees*

- Standard (non-BAAL members) £60
- Standard (BAAL members) £45
- Student (non-BAAL members) £30
- Student (BAAL members) £25

*Fees are payable through Eventbrite and include registration, tea/coffee and sandwich lunch; what is not included is the small fee charged by Eventbrite - expect to pay £4.13 to £2.14 more than the above-stated fees (depending on the price of your ticket).