

Research brief

SUMMER 2019

Narrating Blood – the impact of hidden blood-related health conditions



Director Professor Janet Boddy and IDS Senior Fellow Hayley MacGregor, this programme brings together national and international research expertise to establish a set of analytical and methodological instruments to address the social, economic and health burden of hidden blood-related conditions such as anaemia in low- and middle-income countries. Our research will initially focus on the UK, Bangladesh, India, and Ghana.

ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT

Blood-related disorders such as anaemia are of key current policy concerns because they are complex health issues. Anaemia is often 'hidden' from the view of both those who suffer from it as well as those who treat it. One of the key approaches identified has been a transdisciplinary and problem-solving approach for such complex health issues. The Narrating Blood programme enables us to bring together social scientists with medical scientists, haematologists, immunologists, policy makers and members of civil society organisations to systematically pool together the expertise at Sussex, along with the expertise of international institutions to help address these issues.

CONTEXT

Exploring the impact of hidden blood-related conditions on social, economic and health welfare in the UK, Bangladesh, India and Ghana.

Narrating Blood is an international research network at the University of Sussex based in the Centre for Cultures of Reproduction, Technologies and Health (CORTH). It is a joint collaboration with the Sussex Centre for Innovation and Research in Childhood and Youth (CIRCY) and the Institute for Development Studies (IDS). Led by CORTH Director Professor Maya Unnithan, CIRCY

By integrating community beliefs around our topic areas, we aim to help stakeholders in development including policy-makers curate locally-contextualised and programmatic approaches to address the realities of blood-related reproductive and adolescent health issues.



KEY THEMES

Narrating Blood examines the ways in which blood is narrated within policy discourse, as well as perceived in terms of weakness or stigma in everyday family, school and livelihood contexts for poor, rural, urban and migrating populations. Our network will explore the following topic areas:

- Blood related stigma
- Blood borne infections (HIV and Aids, Malaria, Zika, Ebola)
- Anaemia (nutritional, including neonatal and infant; thalassaemia; sickle cell anaemia; malarial anaemia)
- Menstrual disorders
- Blood diagnostics and related technologies
- Blood transfusions
- Blood donations
- Blood, kinship, inheritance
- Blood and identity politics

NETWORK OBJECTIVES

One of the key global challenges for health and education, anaemia and blood-related health and psychosocial conditions, require a transdisciplinary approach, bringing together interdisciplinary perspectives in new ways which connect our research with actionable interventions on the ground. Accordingly, the objectives of the network are as follows:

- Pool expertise around the less-visible, non-communicable blood-related disorders, especially anaemia and menstrual health focusing on young women and men as well as adolescent girls and boys
- Develop effective health communication methodologies for close-to-community providers (i.e. midwives and informal health workers) that draw on anthropology, psychology, philosophy, education, social policy and social care perspectives and to critically engage with behavioural change interventions
- Share knowledge and advise on culturally sensitive policy related interventions in low- and middle-income countries

CONTACTS

To get involved in our research contact:

Narrating Blood Directors:

Professor Maya Unnithan
m.unnithan@sussex.ac.uk

Professor Janet Boddy
j.m.boddy@sussex.ac.uk

Dr Hayley Macgregor
h.macgregor@sussex.ac.uk

FUNDING

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FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

For further information about Narrating Blood visit:
www.sussex.ac.uk/corth/research/narrating_blood
or scan the QR-Code



RECENT ACTIVITIES

Following on from the meeting of the international network partners at the University of Sussex in June 2018:

- Maya Unnithan and Janet Boddy from the University of Sussex visited Dhaka, Bangladesh in January 2019 where they were hosted by network partner Professor Sabina Rashid (JPG School of Public Health). During their 5-day visit, the Sussex team met with a range of professional, development, and community stakeholders exploring the local meanings and practices relating to blood and health.
- Between January and March 2019, meetings and skype discussions took place between partners in Ghana, India, Bangladesh and the UK with regard to a draft proposal in response to the GCRF call on Health and Context. This involved discussion with new network partners, including at Sussex (Dr Heike Rabe, neonatologist, BSMS).
- In April 2019, Maya Unnithan and Shobhita Rajagopal (IDS, Jaipur, India) were hosted by fellow partner Uma Vennam (SPVM University) in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh. Their visit included meetings with key faculty members and community health providers.
- Maya Unnithan and Janet Boddy travel to Ghana in August 2019 to meet with local network members and researchers, and community health providers.
- A collaborative grant proposal development workshop will be held at the University of Sussex in October 2019, which will include international doctoral researchers as well as national network members.
- Blood and identity politics

GLOBAL PARTNERS AND UK PARTNERS

Mr Daniel Amoako-Sakyi

Department of Microbiology and Immunology, University of Cape Coast (Ghana)

Dr Sangeeta Chattoo

Department of Health Sciences, University of York (UK) Professor

Professor Kate Hampshire

Department of Anthropology, Durham University (UK)

Dr Simon Mariwah

Department of Geography and Regional Planning, University of Cape Coast (Ghana)

Ms Chhaya Pachauli

coordinator of Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA) (Indian chapter of global People's Health Movement (PHM)), Prayas, Rajasthan (India)

Dr Sara Parker

Liverpool John Moores University

Professor Shobhita Rajagopal

Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur (India) Professor

Professor Sabina Faiz Rashid

James P. Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University (Bangladesh)

Professor Corrine Squire

School of Law and Social Sciences, University of East London

Professor Sally Theobald

Department of International Public Health, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (UK)

Professor Uma Vennam

Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalam (Women's University), Tirupati (India)

ASSOCIATED SUSSEX FACULTY

Professor Kwame Akyeampong

School of Education, University of Sussex

Dr Tam Cane

Department of Social Work and Social Care, University of Sussex

Dr Tim Chevassut

Haematology Research Group, Brighton & Sussex Medical School

Dr Rhys Morgan

Haematology Research Group, Brighton & Sussex Medical School

Dr Maria Moscati

School of Law, University of Sussex

Dr Heike Rabe

Department of Paediatrics, Brighton & Sussex Medical School

Dr Shahaduz Zaman

Department of Global Health and Infection, University of Sussex

RESEARCH VISITORS 2019

Ms Alice Charwudzi – Department of Haematology, University of Cape Coast (Ghana)

Ms Ishrat Jahan – James P. Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University (Bangladesh)



Meeting with researchers at JPG School of Public Health, Dhaka, Bangladesh
Source: Ishrat Jahan