

**Networks in health care:
A comparative study of their
management impact & performance**

SDO Networks & Governance Research Workshop
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The Project

- **Overall Project Aim:** to compare different types of network in health care, identify the characteristics of networks that are likely to lead to “success” within their given context, & provide policy recommendations for more effective network management.
- **Team:** Ewan Ferlie, Mark Exworthy, Gerry McGivern (Royal Holloway), Louise Fitzgerald & Melanie Ceppi (De Montfort), Sue Dopson (Oxford)
- **Timeframe:** Jan 2006-Dec 2008

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Six Project Aims

1. To identify key network characteristics (e.g. organisational, managerial or membership), with a view to developing a typology of professional and clinical networks
2. To investigate the differences between more & less managed networks forms
3. To describe the origin & evolution of different types of network structure & process over time & to examine the context, content & processes of network policies & practices
4. To explore the extent to which new ICTs are contributing to the development of more network based forms of working in health care
5. To ascertain the factors which contribute to network performance, success factors & high impact within each network type
6. To identify promising lessons for policy & practice around networks in health care, & identify appropriate management styles & skills

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Case Studies

- 8 comparative case studies
 - 2 Genetics networks (basic science)
 - 2 Cancer networks (clinical service)
 - 2 Elderly care networks (client group)
 - 2 Public (sexual) health networks (functional activity)
- Replication logic
 - 4 types of network in healthcare
 - Geographical pairs: South-East vs. Midlands,
 - +ve vs. -ve examples
 - Established vs. emergent networks

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Qualitative Research Methods

- Delphi to select (structure, process, outcome) measures of success to inform selection of high & low performing cases
- Documentary analysis (case-specific & general)
- Observation (e.g. meetings)
- Semi-structured interviews
 - Theoretically / empirically informed

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Literature review

- Initial background literature review:
 - **Rise of the network form**, policy networks
 - **Knowledge**: social construction of knowledge, governmentality, communities & networks of practice, epistemic communities, boundaries, inter-organisational collaboration
 - **Quasi-organisational forms**: transactional economics, networks, markets & hierarchies, relational contracts,
 - **Social capital**: social network analysis, strong/weak ties, trust
 - **Innovation**: STS, actor network theory, biotechnology
- Informed development of the interview protocols
- Policy review x 4 types of network

Progress

- Literature & policy reviews
- 2 x Genetics cases: fieldwork complete & draft of cases written
- 2 x Cancer Cases: fieldwork complete & cases currently being written up
- Southern sexual health network case: fieldwork beginning Sept '07; Midlands case Jan '08
- Midlands elderly care network case: fieldwork beginning autumn '07; Southern case Jan '08.

Genetics

- Genetics Knowledge Park
- Translation from science into practice
- DoH/DTI-University-hospital network
- Emergent findings & theorisation
 - Professional boundaries within network (Ferlie et al. 2006), communities of practice (Wenger 1998), epistemic communities (Knorr Cetina, 1999)
 - Role of individual boundary-spanning leaders
 - Papers & presentations at EGOS & AOM conferences

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Cancer

- Tracer issues: Reconfiguration of cancer services to fit with Urology NSF (Centre-Unit specialisation, MDTs, protocols)
- Importance of management & DoH frameworks
- Network management team & leadership
- Learning from difficult previous configurations
- Surgeon & most affected by change
 - Dominance & isolation “surgical carve up” (South)
 - Initially change resistant then pragmatic self-interested acceptance (Midlands)

Public Health

- Sexual health network (south)
- Tracer issues within the network
 - HIV/AIDS in ethnic minority communities
 - Service redesign around 48-hour waiting target for STD testing
- Fieldwork starting soon...

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Issues

- No problems with research access, but Research Ethics Committees for many organisations within networks potentially frustrating.
- Utility of Delphi vs. policy / stakeholder interviews

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