

MJA NEWS

The newsletter of the Medical Journalists' Association

Summer 2015



Summer Awards: records broken again

Once again, at five to midnight there were only a handful of entries. Once again, the deadline was extended. Once again, at close of play we had a record number of entries: 123, 16 more than last year. Old hands recognised the pattern. *Philippa Pigache* reports.

This year the MJA awards increased to 11, with the addition of Blogger of the year. This attracted 15 entries; encouraging for a new award. As ever, the most heavily-subscribed category was Freelance journalist writing for a general audience, which attracted 19 entries. You will note that we have revised how we distinguish between what was previously called 'consumer' media (now called 'general audience', to include broadcasting) and what was previously called 'professional' (now called 'specialist' audience). This year there were more entries from staffers, general and specialist media (13 and 14 respectively), with 12 entries in the Editor category and 11 Young journalists. The Story of the year (the recent general election) also attracted 12 entries. Digital innovation and Broadcast journalist had eight and seven entries respectively. The one disappointing category was Regional journalist with only four entries although, interestingly, three were from broadcasting journalists in Scotland, Wales and the West Country.

Thirty-three judges recruited

This year's judging panel (a total of 33, three for each award) came from the senior ranks of the MJA – MJA chair Lawrence McGinty, vice-chair David Payne and Olivia Timbs – who were joined by distinguished professionals in medicine and journalism and former award winners like Sarah Boseley, Susannah Butter, Mark Nicholls, Daniel Sokol and Richard Vize.

They include several newcomers: Liam Farrell, columnist for *The BMJ* and *GP*;

award-winning writer/broadcaster and curator of #IrishMed; Kat Arney, science information manager, Cancer Research UK; Thom Hoffman, London-based filmmaker and multimedia producer; Richard Frediani from ITN; Harriet Vickers, multimedia assistant at *The BMJ*; Ann Mroz, editor and digital publishing director of the *Times Educational Supplement*; Geraldine Holden, senior web editor at the Wellcome Trust; Richard Warry, specialist journalism editor at *BBC News*; Ann Shuttleworth, practice and learning editor at *Nursing Times*; Fiona Lethbridge, senior press officer at the Science Media Centre; Michelle Dixon, director of communications at Imperial College NHS Trust; Helen Pearson, chief features editor at *Nature*; Nick Bostock, news editor of *GP* magazine, Rosamund Snow, researcher at Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, Oxford, and *The BMJ* patient editor.

Also recruited were Paula O'Shea, MD at Brighton Journalist Works, Carl Slater, news editor of the *Derby Telegraph*, Jo Revill, CEO of The British Society for Immunology and former Whitehall editor at *The Observer*; Harriet Adcock, news editor, *The Pharmaceutical Journal*, Mark Gould, freelance journalist; Helen Crump, Fellow in Health Policy at the Nuffield Trust; Richard Hoey, director of communications

at The Institute of Cancer Research; Sian Jarvis, now a strategic communications consultant, formerly director general of communications at the Department of Health; Rebecca Coombes, head of investigations and features at *The BMJ* and Jen Taylor, freelance writer, editor and professional congress tweeter for the European Society of Cardiology, *European Heart Journal*, *The Times*, the European Society for Medical Oncology and *Health Service Journal*.

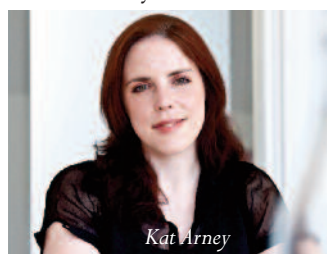
A 'body of work' has to be judged

We are eternally grateful for our judges' contribution to the awards, particularly in the summer because, with the exception of the Story of the year, these awards are for a 'body of work', which means going through three pieces of work from each entrant. And this year we also asked for supportive evidence of impact and response.

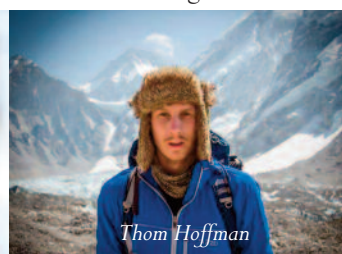
Lastly, we should record those without whom the awards would not be possible: our sponsors. Boehringer Ingelheim, principal sponsor, once again also funds the awards presentation at *The BMA House* on July 9, joined by Astellas, newcomer Bayer, also Galliard Healthcare, Lilly, Merck Serono, MSD, Novo Nordisk and Roche, not forgetting the BMA which is once again our generous host. ♦

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Kat Arney



Thom Hoffman



Ann Mroz



Richard Hoey



Paula O'Shea



Carl Slater



Jo Revill

NoticeBoard

New members

Susan Field is a freelance writer with more than 17 years' experience. After graduating in history, she completed an NCTJ journalism course and worked briefly for local newspapers before changing course to become a PR account manager at a business-to-business marketing agency. In 2004, she joined the media relations department of the Medical Defence Union (MDU), writing advice articles, claims analyses and case studies, as well as advising MDU members who had been approached by journalists. She went freelance in 2010 but still writes for the MDU, contributing interview profiles and articles on topics ranging from 19th century anatomists to burnout in modern-day doctors. She also writes for clients specialising in healthcare IT, professional development and credit risk. Outside work, her interests are politics and running.

Rob Osborne studied politics and law at Swansea University, then took a graduate diploma in broadcast journalism at Cardiff University, where he won the Welsh Livery Guild award. Days after graduating in 2008, he joined ITV Wales as a general reporter on an *ITV News* student bursary, and he took over as health and social affairs correspondent in 2013. In his spare time he reads, and walks in the company of his dog Bobby.

Alistair Quaile is editorial manager of the professional portfolio at MA Healthcare Ltd. He is also editor of the *Journal of Paramedic Practice*, a monthly peer-reviewed and evidence-based journal for the paramedical profession, and of *International Paramedic Practice*, a quarterly journal that encourages the sharing of pre-hospital innovations and practices worldwide, and raises awareness of different cultural influences. Before this he was subeditor on *Practice Nursing*, a monthly peer-reviewed journal for nurses working in general practice. He is a member of the Larrey Society, the first cross-sector think-tank established to help shape future ambulance policies. He holds an MA in philosophy and theology from the University of Edinburgh, where he was editor-in-chief of *The Student*, the UK's oldest student newspaper.

AGM alert

The MJA AGM will be held at the Medical Society of London on Thursday, September 24. Make a note in your diaries, though we will of course remind you again nearer the time. We will be arranging some entertainment, possibly a repeat of the successful Ethics Brains Trust we ran a few years back, with new brains. We will be inviting questions on a range of medical ethical issues soon.

MJA Summer Awards 2015 – finalists

Blogger of the year

Jerome Burne, healthinsightuk.org
Richard Lehman, thebmj.com
Katie Silver, sciencealert.com
Nick Trigg, bbc.co.uk

Broadcast journalist of the year

Faye Kirkland, BBC 5 Live
Victoria Macdonald, Channel 4
Liz Tucker, Verve Productions

Digital innovation

Will Stahl-Timmins, *The BMJ*
David Swan, *Pulse*
Nick Trigg, Alison Holt, John Walton, BBC

Editor of the year

Jenni Middleton, *Nursing Times*
Giles Newton, Mosaic (Wellcome Trust)
Nigel Praities, *Pulse*

Freelance journalist, general audience

Sophie Goodchild
Chloe Lambert
Patrick Strudwick

Freelance journalist, specialist audience

Jacqui Thornton
Ingrid Torjesen
Janet Wright

Regional journalist

Matthew Hill, BBC, *Points West*
Rob Osborne, ITV Wales

Staff journalist, general audience

Sarah Boseley, *the Guardian*
Steve Connor, *The Independent*
Andrew Gregory, *Daily Mirror*

Staff journalist, specialist audience

Gareth Iacobucci, *The BMJ*
Shaun Lintern, *Health Service Journal*
Helen Thomson, *New Scientist*

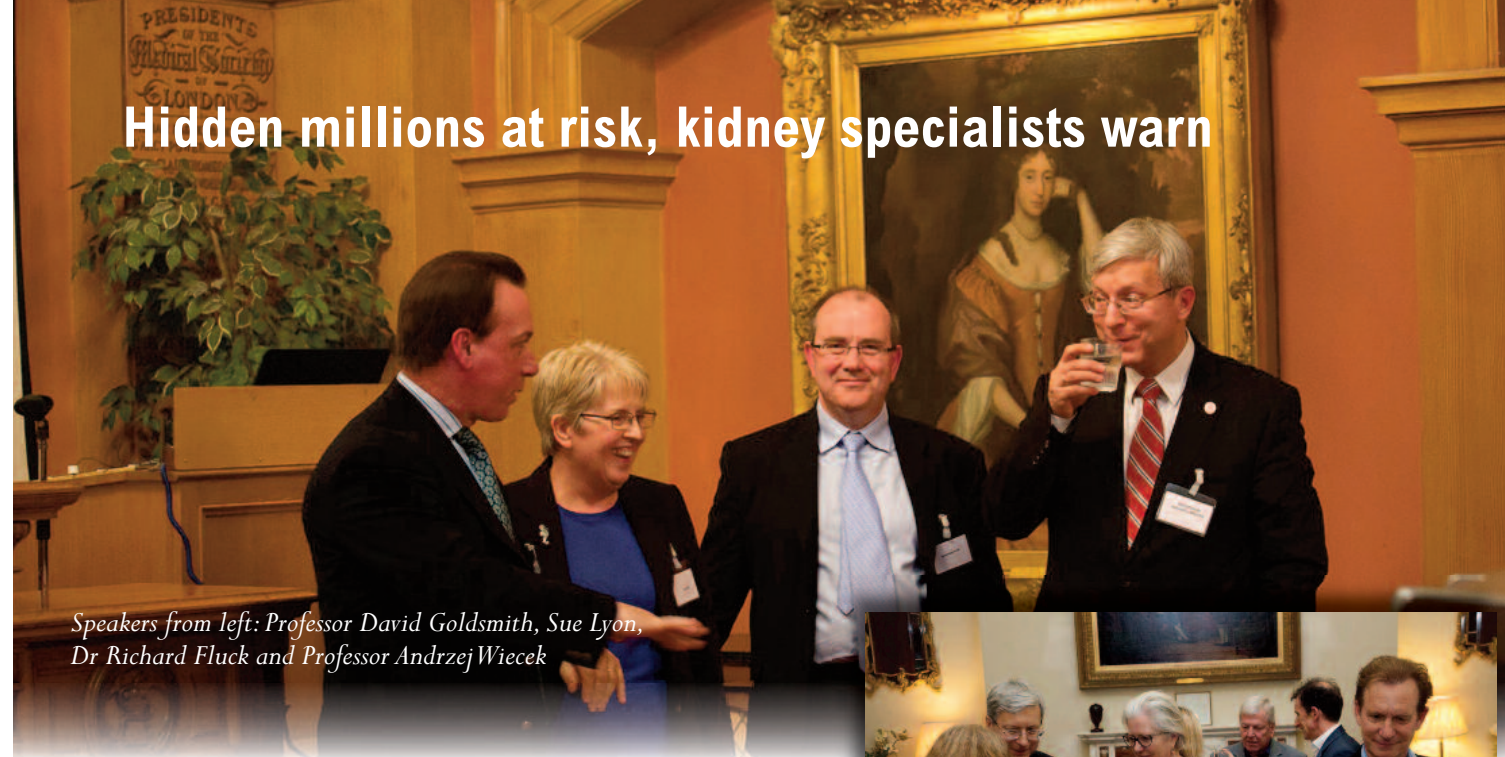
Story of the year – the 2015 election

Jaimie Kaffash, *Pulse*
Alex Matthews-King, *Pulse*
Patrick Strudwick, www.buzzfeed.com

Young journalist of the year

Sophie Barnes, *Health Service Journal*
Will Hazell, *Health Service Journal*
Alex Matthews-King, *Pulse*

Hidden millions at risk, kidney specialists warn



Speakers from left: Professor David Goldsmith, Sue Lyon, Dr Richard Fluck and Professor Andrzej Wiecek

Undiagnosed chronic kidney disease is like an iceberg, warned the panel of experts addressing a press briefing held by the MJA at the Medical Society of London in May, in association with the 52nd Congress of the European Renal Association (ERA) and the European Dialysis and Transplant Association (EDTA).

Some 70 million people (more than one in 10 Europeans), have lost some of their kidney function, putting them at risk of life-threatening and debilitating illness, while also imposing a massive financial burden on Europe's healthcare services.

What's more, the exponential rise in kidney disease over the last decade is only partly explained by demographics. 'An ageing population alone can't explain the steep upward trend in chronic kidney disease,' said ERA-EDTA president, Professor Andrzej Wiecek. 'Diabetes, hypertension, obesity and smoking all raise the risk of damage to the kidneys. The truth is that the number of undiagnosed patients is like an iceberg, with only a fraction of the burden visible. In fact, up to 50 per cent of older patients in Europe have some degree of kidney disease.'

And that's not good news for Europe's healthcare services, according to NHS England's kidney Tsar, Dr Richard Fluck. Kidney disease already costs the NHS £1.5bn a year, he said. There had been 'an explosion in the number of people needing dialysis during the mid-2000s, costing £30,000 per patient per year'. And the burden is not just financial. MJA member Sue Lyon, who has lived with kidney failure since she was diagnosed at the age of 26 in 1977, gave a warts and all picture of living with an illness where dialysis, followed by a kidney transplant, has kept her alive, but hardly in comfort.

'How does it feel? It's horrible,' she said. Of course, she's 'enormously lucky', she added. But dialysis is exhausting, and transplants require drugs that leave you with 'fat legs and tiredness, and an increased risk of cancer, heart disease and osteoporosis'. Her husband Barry Noon, also a kidney-failure patient, died suddenly in March aged 68.

With apparently few, if any, promising treatments on the horizon, prevention, or at least improved early detection, is the best hope. Yet both the public and non-renal clinicians remain poorly informed about the symptoms and impact of loss of



From left: Jane Symons, Andrzej Wiecek, Mary-Ellen Field, Sue Lyon and Robert Short, with Lawrence McGinty and Danny Buckland behind



Jenny Hope (left) and Nicola Hill, who chaired the event

kidney function. GPs should make a kidney test part of the Health Check programme, but most don't.

MJA members looking for an upbeat story would have been glad of any clever ideas about what could be done to protect the nation's threatened kidneys. Instead we heard about the benefits of bringing together specialists from all over Europe for this four-day nephrology extravaganza. Not everyone in the audience was convinced. 'It makes you wonder what happens to kidney patients in need of specialist care when their doctors are all in London,' pondered one seasoned medical correspondent after the meeting.

Following the meeting, comfort was at hand in the form of Verena Restell's delicious buffet, the Medical Society's soothing wine cellar, and stimulating conversation with experts and colleagues. Thanks go to organisers Sue Lyon and Jane Symons, and to the ERA for a generous donation towards the press briefing.

Jane Feinmann

Every picture tells a story: MJA meeting on data graphics

The new award for Data journalism in this year's Winter Awards produced some impressive entries. Figures sprang to life in dynamic representations of dry statistics. These graphics really told the story. New forms of digital innovation make this an exciting way to illuminate complex science. Will Stahl-Timmins, a finalist in the Data journalism award, works at *The BMJ*, and members of the committee have persuaded him to talk to us on the topic on October 15, at the Medical Society of London. We will remind you again nearer the time.

Meanwhile, David Payne, editor of thebmj.com, writes: 'A few years ago David McCandless came to speak to *The BMJ* about how to develop beautiful interactive graphics that tell stories in a way that conventional articles just can't. We decided we wanted someone like David in the team. Will joined us almost a year ago and has forced us to rethink our approach to articles and data.'

'As writers and editors we are learning to pitch ideas to him. He can bring dull datasets to life for print and online. It's great when he sees the visual potential of a story and develops an interactive graphic to accompany it.'

Above right is a Stahl-Timmins interactive graphic on which institutions recommend what kind of face-mask for protection from which disease. (View it and other graphics online at www.bmj.com/infographics.)

Later this month, Will is contributing to a course at the medical faculty of the University of Bordeaux. He explains: 'As infographics and dataviz designer at *The BMJ*, my schedule is normally packed with demands for new and engaging visuals –

interactives for our website and colourful spreads for our print journal. With the busy production schedules, it's sometimes hard to find time to step back and reflect on what has worked, what could be done better, and why communicating health research is so important. That's why I'm very much looking forward to teaching this summer at the International School of Population Health Sciences at the University of Bordeaux.'

'This is a five-day course, running from June 29 to July 3.

Faculty for the course have a wide range of experience: in population studies, social aspects of health determinants, health communication, and pharmaco-epidemiology/vigilance. This year, there are four different themes: Introduction to principles and methods of population health studies/epidemiology; Social determinants of health; Health communication, and the Post-marketing evaluation of medicines.

'I will be teaching on the health communication course, which I think will be of particular interest to MJA members. This course aims to help participants to identify and use a variety of health communication tools, including new online media such as infographics. It will provide an introduction to the theoretical foundations of communication about health, and identify new strategies for generating successful and beneficial health-related communication. I will be sharing some of my work from *The BMJ*, some of my online research about perception and memory of infographics, and how I think they can be designed and commissioned most successfully.'

More information, including registration details, can be found on the course website: <http://bisphs.u-bordeaux.fr/> ◆



The University of Bordeaux is vast; four independent universities have only recently been reunited as a single institution and are housed in many buildings in the city.

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