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| Host department: Oxford |
| Project Title: Lets’ talk about weight: pregnancy |
| Proposed supervisory team: |
| Primary supervisor: Associate Professor Charlotte Albury (Oxford)  Second supervisor: Associate Professor Nerys Astbury (Oxford)  Second Supervisor: Dr Merlin Wilcox (Southampton)  The supervisory team have all the relevant skills to support a student to succeed, and a good track record in doing so. The team bring expertise in women’s health, maternal health, weight management, qualitative methods, conversation analysis, and clinical expertise. We will work collaboratively with the department for health and social care Heath and wellbeing team with whom we have established relationships and who have a firm interest in this work and supporting movement into policy. |
| Potential for cross consortium networking and educational opportunities: |
| Women’s health has been prioritised by the new government, NHS and NIHR, which poses excellent opportunity for cross-consortium networking and education. |
| Project description: |
| Starting pregnancy carrying excess weight and gaining too much weight during pregnancy are acknowledged as some of the most important current women’s health issues by scientists and clinicians.  Antenatal care, a primary care delivered by healthcare professionals to people during pregnancy aims to protect the health of the mother and child. But these settings can also be a context where patients can experience weight stigma – bias or discrimination based on one’s weight. This can lead to profoundly negative impact on mental and physical wellbeing; and avoidance of care in future.  The current clinical guidelines for addressing excess weight in pregnancy in antenatal care recommend that HCPs explain to pregnant people with obesity how being overweight poses a risk, both to their health and the health of the unborn child, offer a referral for assessment and personalised advice on healthy eating and how to be physically active in pregnancy and encourage them to lose weight after pregnancy. But there is no guidance on how they should communicate these recommendations.  This project will use conversation analysis techniques to identify examples of good practice around addressing weight during pregnancy and utilise various qualitative research methods (in-depth interviews and focus groups) to explore the dynamics between the priorities of healthcare professionals and pregnant people in relation to speaking about weight during pregnancy.  The aim of the project is to bring together the findings to develop a training module on how healthcare professionals should speak about weight to people during pregnancy in a manner to minimise stigma and discrimination and maximise motivation to change behaviour which will help attenuate gestational weight gain or achieve weight loss postpartum. |
| Indicative project costs: |
| Three years of current full-time salary (pro rata if part time); Training expenses (circa £10k pa); Up to £25K in research costs across the duration of doctorate, including: Laptop computer (£650); specialist Headphones for conversation analysis (~£300); software for conversation analysis (~£3000); travel to sites (~£3000); PPIE (~£5000); specialist transcriptions necessary for conversation analysis (~£7000); Recording equipment (~£2000); participant reimbursement (~£4000). |
| Training and development provision by host: |
| ***Formal training:***  This project strongly benefits from access to a wide range of excellent quality training, delivered across the collegiate university. The supervisors have in-depth knowledge of the formal training available which is designed to provide an excellent environment to support students to develop:  Departmental Training  The student will be working as part of the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences. The DPhil in primary care programme offers detailed doctoral training delivered by world leading experts; this includes methods focussed training (for example in statistics; Qualitative methods; and patient and public involvement) and career focussed training (for example grant application workshops; and focussed development days). The department also has a dedicated information specialist, who provided 1:1 training and support in undertaking systematic reviews. Together this training supports students to develop all aspects for their research skills during the course of their doctorate. The department also runs leading short courses in Qualitative research methods, (<https://www.phc.ox.ac.uk/study/short-courses-in-qualitative-research-methods>) including in conversation analysis, interview skills, and thematic analysis (all highly relevant for this DPhil). The department provides the ideal training environment in which to carry out this work.  Divisional Training  Students undertaking a Primary care DPhil also have full access to the wide range of training available through the medical sciences division (<https://www.medsci.ox.ac.uk/study/skills-training>). This includes specific training to support with: key doctoral milestones (such as transfer of status, confirmation of status and the final viva); scientific writing (led by experts from the EQUATOR network); data collection and analysis approaches (including those relevant to this DPhil: focus groups and interviews); and personal development sessions including in teaching and research leadership.  College-Based Training  All students are part of a college within the University of Oxford. Whilst exact training available varies according to college; all colleges offer training for students. For example, Somerville college has a dedicated ‘skills hub’ supporting students a huge range of training opportunities including internships, mentoring, academic writing, and supporting those from underrepresented groups to navigate academia.  University Training  The wider university of Oxford also offers skills training to all students. This includes:   * IT-specific training available through the university’s IT learning centre- <https://skills.it.ox.ac.uk/home-> comprising for example sessions on: technical skills, such as how to manage a thesis document in word; analysis software (Including stata, R, and NVivo); digital skills for effective workflows; and specific software that will be necessary in this project, such as the Adobe suite for managing, handling, and anonymising recorded data. * Dedicated training from the Bodleain libraries team; including training on how to search for relevant literature and use reference management software. * Career-focussed training from the university careers service, supporting students to plan for the next steps in their career whether in academia or beyond. This includes mentoring, mock interviews, micro-internships, and CV support. * Formal programmes available through the Oxford Centre for Teaching and Learning, including Higher Education Academy Associate Fellowship courses for DPhil students, to gain a teaching qualification (AFHEA).   The SPCR also provides an excellent doctoral training scheme, supporting the student to develop networks beyond the department. Where relevant we will seek out additional training, accessing dedicated department training support funds to do so. |
| ***Informal training:***  All supervisors are dedicated to creating a supportive supervision environment; meeting regularly with students and identifying and capitalising on key teaching and learning moments throughout the DPhil journey.  The student will benefit from working within the supportive health behaviours research group. There are plenty of opportunities for informal training including through: regular group meetings, where research and learning is shared; team journal clubs; a collaborative office environment with opportunity to engage with researchers at all levels; and a group of conversation analysis who meet regularly (<https://www.phc.ox.ac.uk/research/research-themes/health-behaviours-theme/orca-oxford-research-in-conversation-analysis>).  We will support the student to attend conferences to present their research; and to publish in high impact journals. Supervisors have an excellent track record here, including winning awards for excellent supervision. |
| ***PPIE*:**  Formal PPIE training is available (see above) and the department research infrastructure provides acces**s** to both a PPI specialist, and a public engagement specialist to support researchers and students. The student will also benefit from access to an existing PPI panel, comprising diverse people with lived experience who are interested in supporting projects focusing on weight and clinical communication. Supervisors have a good reputation for doing creative and meaningful PPIE and encouraging and supporting others to do the same. The department has PPIE funding available to support students and researchers to firmly and meaningfully embed PPI throughout their work, and engage the public in dissemination. |