



The Sir Geoffrey Wilkinson Studentship at LSHTM

Annual Report prepared for the Trustees of The
Wilkinson Charitable Foundation

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LONDON
SCHOOL of
HYGIENE
& TROPICAL
MEDICINE



Overview

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the Trustees of the Wilkinson Charitable Foundation for your support of PhD students at LSHTM's Centre for History in Public Health, through the Sir Geoffrey Wilkinson Studentship. In this latest report, we are pleased to introduce you to the latest Studentship recipient, Lily Slanickova, and provide an update from Alice Gambell.

We hope you enjoy reading about their PhD projects and hearing the true impact of your generous donation. The knowledge and experiences that they are developing during their time at LSHTM, would not have been possible without these Studentships. Thanks to your support, both Lily and Alice are able to develop their understanding and gain the expertise needed to be leaders in their chosen fields.

Thank you once again for your kind support of LSHTM. We look forward to continuing to share updates from Lily and Alice and hope to arrange an opportunity for you to meet both of them in person.

Introducing Lily Slanickova

To those at the Wilkinson Charitable Foundation. I hope this message finds you well.

My name is Lily and I am delighted to introduce myself as the 2024 recipient of the Sir Geoffrey Wilkinson Studentship at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. I am very grateful and proud to have been awarded this studentship which has allowed me to start my PhD journey.

My PhD project focuses on the insufficiently researched topic of 'contested illnesses'. The study will explore the experience of healthcare in Britain for those with Fibromyalgia since its contemporary recognition as an illness in 1976. This historical study seeks to understand the impact of classificatory and diagnostic changes to Fibromyalgia on the experience of care for patients living with this illness; how changes in healthcare regulations and practitioners' perceptions of Fibromyalgia shape the lived experience of the illness and impact the healthcare experiences of these patients. Fibromyalgia as a 'contested illness' is a neglected yet important and illustrative case for us to understand further how classificatory, diagnostic, and care practices are too disconnected from patient experience.

Before starting this PhD, and after completing my undergraduate degree in Sociology at the University of Sussex, I completed a Masters in Science, Technology and Society at University College London which introduced me to the classification of diseases. Throughout my academic journey, my interest in 'contested illnesses' has increased both from a classificatory and health equality and access perspective. I am not only excited about the opportunity to contribute to important historical research but also hope to make a meaningful impact through this research.

In just the month that I have been here, I already feel well supported and inspired by my supervisors and the wider academic community at LSHTM, something that this generous scholarship provided by the Wilkinson Charitable Foundation has made possible. This generosity will have a profound impact on my educational journey. Thank you once again for this support and I look forward to sharing my research progress with you in the future.

Warm regards,

Lily



Update from Alice Gambell

To all at the Wilkinson Charitable Foundation,

Firstly, I cannot believe a year has passed by that quickly. It has been a roller-coaster of a year.

After completing my ethics application with the university and receiving approval, I focused on a recruitment drive for interview participants. I also had a protracted ethics application with the Ministry of Justice which seemed to take an age, but I finally received approval from the Ministry of Justice to speak to people on probation.

This past year has been a lot of admin-based work relating to advertising and recruitment, but it has all been worth it, as it has helped me secure interviews and expand my network. So far, I have gathered oral histories from ex-prisoners, prison doctors and nurses, and health inspectors. I have recorded some fascinating interviews which capture diverse perspectives and experiences of prison healthcare over the past 25 years. When conducting the interviews, I felt so lucky to be privy to such interesting unique and rich stories and experiences. Furthermore, everyone I have spoken with has told me that they very much enjoyed being interviewed and that they were glad this research is being done. Receiving such positive feedback has made me want to undertake more oral history projects in the future. By the end of November, I should have conducted all my final interviews.

Alongside the interview work, I have also continued with my archival research. Following on from my archival research of prison healthcare in the 1990s, I have now moved on to the early to mid-2000s and will then progress on to 2016 up to 2021. Once I have completed all my interviews, I will go back into archival research full-time. I have also contacted two other oral history archives relating to prisons in England and Wales. They are very supportive of my research and have agreed to provide me access to their archives in case there is any healthcare related material that would provide valuable insight into my field of study.

In the next few months, I will start to write up my current findings from the interviews and start thinking about how best to structure my findings. I also want to attend some conferences and finally pluck up the courage to present a paper of my own at a conference!

Finally, 2023/24 has been a bit of a difficult year for me in terms of my health and personal issues which have impacted my studies. Being granted funding for a fourth year has been an absolute life saver and I cannot thank you enough. Without your financial support continuing this research project would not have been possible.

Everyone I have spoken to (academics, health professionals, policy makers, and ex-prisoners) has been so supportive of this research and I feel so privileged to be provided with the opportunity to undertake a piece of research both I and others are passionate about. So, once again, thank you for your continuing support, I really appreciate it.

Thank you!

Alice Gambell

