International Critical Management Conference – Sub Theme Proposal:

# Inventing the future of work in health and social care

## Convenors

Jennifer Davies, *University of Birmingham*

Gavin Maclean, *Edinburgh Napier University*

Tamara Mulherin, *University of Edinburgh*

## Proposal

Healthcare continues to be one of the most politically important yet divisive issues for voters and politicians internationally. As politicians in the US battle the midterm elections, the rise of the ‘democratic socialists’ in the Democratic Party has placed questions over healthcare as a right or privilege centre stage. Within the UK, despite high levels of public support for the UK National Health Service, the notion of a universal health care provider is under constant challenge. Health care has been described as both needing, and being a fertile field for, critical scholarship (Learmonth, 2003). The need for more critical scholarship in the field becomes even more pressing if we consider the crises internationally over health and social care following the Great Financial Crisis and the effects of austerity politics; the rise of nativism internationally and the resulting effects on migration for health and social care providers; and the role of the private sector, market forces and ‘opening up’ public sector providers in healthcare sectors. To date however, the critical study of healthcare management and organization has remained significantly undeveloped in comparison to other disciplines (Kitchener, McDermott and Cooper 2017).

This sub-theme is concerned with critically exploring international perspectives on ‘working in healthcare’ with a particular emphasis on the following; possible effects of new forms of work delivered by workers undertaking new or revised roles, the implications of changes to the physical or discursive boundaries of the health service, and the impact of technological developments such as automation, ‘Big Data’, cloud computing, virtualization and Artificial Intelligence which are predicted to revolutionize how healthcare services are organized, managed, delivered and experienced. Conventional analysis suggests that technology will decrease the need for human labour in healthcare (and potentially result in a reduction in the workforce) however such claims need interrogating more closely, for instance Pope and Turnbull (2017) suggest that rather than removing labour, the use of technology in healthcare can paradoxically create new forms of work and intensify aspects of it. Critical exploration of the nature and implications of technological developments may allow for new practices to be creatively imagined and claimed as part of an emancipatory political project towards new forms of management and organisation in healthcare. We extend the concept of ‘working in healthcare’ beyond those in employed in health and social care roles to encompass a wider and more inclusive interpretation, which could include patients, volunteers, carers etc.

Submissions to this sub-theme might include contributions that critically consider, but are not limited to, the following topics:

* How is precarity of labour experienced within the healthcare workforce and impact on the delivery of services?
* What are the effects of market pressures, commodification and/or austerity on organisation and management of health care? (Particularly international perspectives - such as Greece, Ireland, US, potential effects of Brexit)
* What does the rise of big data/automation/new technologies mean for health care? How and to what extent are these technologies reinforcing current or opening up new ideological discourses and practices?
* How do/will emerging technologies and new ways of organizing the health care workforce affect and/or subvert professional identities? To what extent are effects role or profession dependant?
* What does the rise of the ‘quantified self’ and self-tracking technologies mean for how health is managed in contemporary healthcare organisations?
* What are the effects of new forms of work such as increased home-based care work and the move to ‘enhanced practitioners’?
* How will the rise of nativism and anti-immigrant politics worldwide affect health care provision - who will work in health and social care?
* How can scholars build capacities and take practical steps to alter public discourses about the delivery, management and organization of health care?
* What opportunities does technological change bring for conducting research with the health care workforce?

## Submission Details

Please submit a 500 word abstract (excluding references, one page, Word document NOT PDF, single spaced, no header, footers or track changes) together with your contact information to [workinginhealthcarenetwork@gmail.com](mailto:workinginhealthcarenetwork@gmail.com). The deadline for submission of abstracts is January 31st 2019, and we will notify you of our decision by the end of February.

## References

Kitchener, M., McDermott, A. and Cooper, S. (2017) ‘Critical healthcare management studies: green shoots’, *Journal of Health Organization and Management*, 31 (5), pp.530-541.

Learmonth, M. (2003), ‘Making health services management research critical: a review and suggestion’, *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 25 (1), pp.93-119.

Pope, C. and Turnbull, J. (2017) ‘Using the concept of hubots to understand the work entailed in using digital technologies in healthcare’, *Journal of Health Organization and Management*, 31 (5), pp.556-566.