

## **RPL Workshop Report**

On 13 June 2014, the Risk, Policy and the Law research strand of the Centre for Medical Humanities was officially launched with a one-day interdisciplinary workshop on 'Health Inequalities'. The workshop was chaired by the strand's co-convenors Julia Moses (Department of History, Sheffield) and Matthias Benzer (Department of Sociological Studies, Sheffield).

The workshop featured papers from various disciplinary perspectives, including history, sociology, economics and medicine. In the first panel, Arthur McIvor (Scottish Oral History Centre, University of Strathclyde) examined health inequalities and risk against the backdrop of deindustrialisation through a rich historical study of coal mining communities, paying particular attention to health experiences and questions of male identities. Drawing on qualitative interview data, Kate Reed (Sociological Studies, Sheffield) raised the problem of health inequalities in the context of genetic screening and in relation to the notion of choice. Her critical analysis mobilised sociological conceptions of different forms of capital.

In the second panel, Rod Lawson and David Fishwick (Medicine, Sheffield) discussed health indicator data which show geographical and socioeconomic variations in outcomes of respiratory disease management, despite overarching national guidelines. Their considerations also led them to pose critical questions about work-related health risks. Aki Tsuchiya (Economics and ScHARR, Sheffield) discussed the trade off between maximising population health and reducing health inequalities. She demonstrated the challenges this policy problem creates for microeconomic analysis.

The papers sparked a lively, genuinely interdisciplinary debate on health inequalities. The workshop closed with a discussion on the future of the Risk, Policy and the Law research strand. It was agreed that health inequalities form a suitable theme for uniting the series of events planned for the next academic year.

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