Navigating perceived overdiagnosis and overtreatment
ESRC DTP Joint Studentship

University of Leicester and University of Nottingham

The Midlands Graduate School is an accredited Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP). One of 14 such partnerships in the UK, the Midlands Graduate School is a collaboration between the University of Warwick, Aston University, University of Birmingham, University of Leicester, Loughborough University and the University of Nottingham.

We are now inviting applications for an ESRC Doctoral Joint Studentship between the Department of Health Sciences, University of Leicester (where the student will be registered) and the School of Sociology & Social Policy, University of Nottingham to commence in October 2018.

Supervised by Professor Natalie Armstrong (Leicester) and Professor Alison Pilnick (Nottingham), the successful applicant will investigate whether and how the concept of ‘overdiagnosis’ in medicine informs: (a) the decision-making process; and (b) the experiences of individuals who decline medical intervention following participation in screening programmes. The focus will be on the experiences of people who have an anomaly identified through screening or associated ‘risk management’ programmes (e.g. ductal carcinoma in situ following breast screening or raised prostate-specific antigen levels following testing for prostate cancer) and who are offered but who choose not to pursue further intervention. The specific clinical example(s) will be determined with the student, to reflect their own interests and allow their ownership of the project.

Key research questions will include:

- How do people who decline intervention post-screening account for their decisions, within and beyond the healthcare system?
- How do ‘decliners’ draw on and balance discourses of risk, obligation, uncertainty and responsibility?
- Does the concept of overdiagnosis have relevance beyond a clinical context?

Qualitative methodology will bring critical attention to the experiential realities of individuals as they make decisions and negotiate these, both with healthcare professionals and in their wider social/familial networks. The main data will comprise semi-structured interviews with individuals who decline treatment. Interviews will be analysed with a particular focus on the discourses participants draw on to frame both their decisions and their explanations for these. Interviews will be supplemented with a documentary analysis of relevant material, e.g. patient information leaflets, policy documents, and clinical guidelines.
Application Process

To be considered for this PhD, please complete the Joint Studentship application form available online here and prepare an accompanying CV. These should be emailed to: esrcdtp@leicester.ac.uk

Shortlisted applicants will be required to provide two references and attend an interview, expected to be held on 1st March 2018.

Application deadline: Monday 12th February 2018

Midlands Graduate School ESRC DTP

Our ESRC studentships cover fees and maintenance stipend and extensive support for research training, as well as research activity support grants. Support is available only to successful applicants who fulfil eligibility criteria. To check your eligibility, visit: www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/

Informal enquiries about the research or the Department of Health Sciences at the University of Leicester prior to application can be directed to Professor Natalie Armstrong (Natalie.Armstrong@le.ac.uk)