



Economic
and Social
Research Council



The Use of Touch in Dementia Care: an empirical investigation.
ESRC DTP Collaborative Studentship

University of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

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.

The University of Nottingham, as part of Midlands Graduate School is now inviting applications for an ESRC Doctoral Studentship in association with our collaborative partner Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to commence in October 2023.

Healthcare practitioners (doctors, nurses, therapists, their assistants and students) regularly touch patients with dementia when delivering healthcare. A distinction has been made between 'necessary' touch, for example dressing a wound or examining a patient, and 'non-necessary' touch for example holding a patient's hand, putting a hand on their shoulder, or hugging them. 'Non-necessary' touch is regularly used by healthcare practitioners caring for patients with dementia but is rarely seen in other healthcare settings. However, the distinction between 'necessary' and 'unnecessary' touch may be an oversimplification as we do not understand what interactional purpose touch serves in this context. This project will use the sociological method of ethnomethodologically informed conversation analysis to examine the use of touch as it occurs between patients and staff on hospital wards. Multimodal analysis will begin with an existing corpus of video recorded data from the acute hospital context, but the successful candidate will also collect and analyse new data to supplement this. The project aims to provide a more detailed contribution to the empirical basis for delivering dementia care; and to develop a training resource for staff grounded in this empirical research. The student will be based in the School of Sociology and Social Policy, and the supervisory team are Prof Alison Pilnick (Sociology), Prof Sarah Goldberg (Health Sciences), and Dr Rebecca O'Brien (Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust).

Application Process

To be considered for this PhD, please complete the Collaborative Studentship application form [available online here](#). Please upload an anonymised CV and cover letter as part of the online application process. Shortlisted applicants will also be required to provide academic transcripts and two references.

Applicants should have a minimum of a 2(i) undergraduate degree or Merit at Masters level, and be able to demonstrate an interest or relevant experience in the topic or method of the project.

Please note that a 3 year PhD award can only be made to candidates who have already fulfilled ESRC Core Training requirements. 1+3 and 3.5 year awards are available if training elements still need to be completed.

Application deadline: 12 noon February 22nd 2023

Shortlisted applicants will be contacted on Feb 28th and interviews will be held on Tuesday March 7th.

Midlands Graduate School ESRC DTP

Our ESRC studentships cover fees at the home rate, a maintenance stipend, and extensive support for research training, as well as research activity support grants. Support is available to both home and international applicants. For further details, visit: www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/.

Informal enquiries about the research or the School of Sociology and Social policy prior to application can be directed to alison.pilnick@nottingham.ac.uk