

# Behaviour Change: Making an Impact on Health and Health Services

European Health Psychology Society & British Psychological Society  
Division of Health Psychology Conference 2016

Aberdeen, 23-27 August 2016.

Robbert Sanderman It was a memorable event in Aberdeen last summer. It was the 30th conference of the EHPS as well as of the Health Psychology Division of the BPS. A great joint event of the two organizations in lovely Aberdeen. A special year and therefore a surprise for 'our' Marie Johnston, who has been around since the start of EHPS, and got a very nice and personal gift as a "big thank you Marie"; no doubt well-deserved. Well-deserved because we owe her a lot; for all her input, guidance, mentoring, inspiration and so much more.

Below you will find a couple of facts and evaluations on the basis of – among others – answers of around 200 delegates on a questionnaire which was distributed in the week after the conference.

We had excellent keynotes:

- Prof John Cacioppo, University of Chicago, who gave a keynote entitled "The Social Brain, Health, and Well-Being",

- Prof Marie Johnston, University of Aberdeen, who talked about "Making Behavioural Science Fit for Behaviour Change Interventions".

- Prof Kevin Patrick, US San Diego School of Medicine with a keynote entitled "From Personal Health Data to Population Health Improvement: New Data, New Insights and New Challenges", and

- Prof Aleksandra Luszczynska, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Wroclaw on: "Ways

to Increase the Impact of Behaviour Change Interventions in a Real-World Setting".

They were very well evaluated (around 50% said 'excellent' and around 40% good/very good). However, it is obvious that we can't satisfy everyone with all we have to offer at our conferences. This can be seen from individual remarks delegates gave, for example about the Keynotes as well as the State of the Art Lectures (also well-received; although slightly less than the keynotes). I would say it will be hard to get any better in the future because, what some people clearly like, others don't like and will rate therefore as less good. However, I found it particularly remarkable that the ratings (of the 200 respondents) rarely resulted in a rating of 'poor', i.e.: keynotes (1), state of the art (1). The same holds for the other categories: pre-conference workshops (0), symposia (0), roundtables (0), oral paper presentations (0) posters (2). So, overall the ratings were very skewed (which is good for such an event), towards above the average score: indicating (very) good to excellent. Hence, we can thank all the presenters for their well-received presentations, and of course the scientific committee for putting this all together so nicely and handling the enormous task. In particular, we would like to thank Wendy Hardeman (Chair of the Scientific Committee) for doing such a great job, supported by Kevin McKee (Co-Chair) and their SC-team. Wendy did a lot to further improve EHPS procedures and I am sure her work will be of great help for the EHPS conferences to come. This also

holds for the terrific work of Easy Conferences. The EHPS started to work with this company for the Cyprus conference and we are glad with the continuing partnership, it improves our services and surely helps to professionalize our conferences even further.

Following the ratings, we could simply conclude with- all good to excellent so no need for reflection. However, if we have a look into the individual remarks there is still a lot to learn from. So, for example some people would like to have more opportunities to talk one-to-one with poster presenters, find sessions with so many talks too much to digest, suggested excluding the chairs of a session having a time-slot in the same session, would like to have e-mail details of delegates in order to get into contact more easily, topics or themes they miss out, and many many more comments. We would like to thank the delegates who gave all the valuable comments and for being so positive in a lot of the written comments. The EHPS and future organizers will surely make use of it. However, we must be realistic in that, certain suggestions to change may lead in the future requests to change it back. We have already seen this in the past. Nevertheless, we are committed to make use of the comments and keep improving our conferences. By and large the comments do support the very positive evaluation of the Aberdeen event.

Now, if we have a look at the organizational part (conference site, social program, catering and the like) we can conclude that the delegates were very enthusiastic about the conference. Many explicit very positive remarks about the practicalities of the conference were made; like "What to change? Nothing!"). Also comments to improve or to change things (most people made positive comments about the conference building, but reported a desire to have the conference more centrally located in the city). The local organizers did a fantastic job and big thanks goes out to Marijn de Bruin (Chair) and Clare Cooper (Co-Chair) and Nikki Pearce (local conference bureau) for their fantastic work and for

giving us an unforgettable event.

Robbert Sanderman  
Past-President EHPS



Robert Sanderman  
University of Groningen and at  
University of Twente, The  
Netherlands

r.sanderman@umcg.nl