

## Measuring health literacy around alcohol and sexual health in secondary schools

**Dr Marcus Grace (Education)**

**Professor Paul Roderick (Medicine)**

**Dr Cynthia Graham (Psychology)**

**Dr Janice Griffiths (Education)**

This studentship is linked to current international research projects in Education, Psychology and Medicine at the University of Southampton, and will make a significant contribution towards developing a realistic instrument for measuring the skill set underpinning adolescent health literacy. The World Health Organisation recognizes the vital importance of health literacy among teenagers as future citizens, and the eventual aim of this project is to apply the instrument in English secondary school situations to inform curriculum development and the role of school health professionals. The focus is on establishing a better understanding of adolescent health literacy around alcohol and sexual health in schools, as an important starting point for developing an authentic instrument for measuring health literacy in the future in these areas and more widely. Alcohol and sexual health in young people are key public health issues and whilst there have been some favourable trends in both in the UK, there is still concern about levels of alcohol misuse and rates of sexually transmitted infection and unintended pregnancies.

While definitions of adult health literacy have been broadly defined, relatively little research has been carried out about health literacy among adolescents around the school leaving age. This is their last opportunity to formally engage in learning about important health issues. Alcohol and sexual health are two fundamental strands of health literacy, to which adolescents can readily relate - and this relevance and interest can potentially lead to positive changes in their attitudes and behaviour.

The aim of this PhD project will be to carry out a systematic review of studies measuring health literacy in adolescents, particularly in relation to alcohol and sexual health, with due regard to their reliability and validity. This will include such aspects as addiction, social marketing and peer pressure and relationships. There will also be a qualitative stakeholder concept mapping component, seeking key stakeholders views on what we mean by alcohol/sex health literacy in adolescents, what critical skills are required by teachers and students, and how we can intervene to improve these skills. These findings will be compared with the existing health education practices in schools and colleges. A range of methodologies could be used and developed depending on the background and skill set of the individual applicant.

The successful student will have a first or 2:1 degree in a relevant discipline, such as Education, Psychology or relevant health or social science. A relevant MA/MSc degree with research component is desirable. The project will be supervised by Dr Marcus Grace and Dr Janice Griffiths (Education), Professor Paul Roderick (Medicine) and Dr Cynthia Graham (Psychology), with additional advice from the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Don Nutbeam. The planned start date is October 2014. The closing date for receiving applications is 25<sup>th</sup> July, with an interview in early August. We intend announcing the name of the successful candidate by mid-August. Please direct any informal enquiries to Marcus Grace ([mmg1@soton.ac.uk](mailto:mmg1@soton.ac.uk))

The studentship is to be funded at RCUK level, currently £13,726 per annum, with a Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) of £750. The studentship is open to British and EU nationals only. International students can apply, but they must be able to meet the difference between home/EU and International tuition fees themselves. Funding duration is three years. Please apply for the MPhil/PhD in Education via the following link:

[https://studentrecords.soton.ac.uk/BNNRPROD/bzsksrch.P\\_Search](https://studentrecords.soton.ac.uk/BNNRPROD/bzsksrch.P_Search)

Please also email [edpgr@soton.ac.uk](mailto:edpgr@soton.ac.uk) to indicate that you have applied for this studentship.