

University of St Andrews, School of Medicine

**Lead Supervisor:** Gozde Ozakinci, PhD

**Funding Status:** Funded studentship by Scottish Graduate School of Social Science –Doctoral Training Centre (EU/UK only)

**Application deadline:** 5<sup>th</sup> May 2014

**Project title:** A theory-guided exploration of the illness perceptions of working age attendees of cardiac rehabilitation programme: Facilitation of long-term lifestyle change

**Project description:** This is an opportunity for an exceptional student to undertake an MSc in Health Psychology and following its successful completion, a PhD (1+3) within the Health Psychology Unit at the School of Medicine, in collaboration with Fife Sports and Leisure Trust (FSLT).

This 1+3 Studentship will fill in an important gap in our understanding of how individuals who are in employment manage health behaviour change following a cardiac event and will provide a unique training opportunity to the successful candidate.

Cardiac rehabilitation assists individuals, following a cardiac event, to preserve or resume optimal functioning and by improved health behaviours, slow or reverse disease progression. It has been widely researched and overwhelming evidence shows that it is associated with reduced cardiac mortality (26-36%) and total mortality (13-26%). It can improve functional capacity and quality of life, aid early return to work and the development of self-management skills. The typical patient receives hospital-based rehabilitation (phases I & II) and after 6 weeks of initial recovery phase is referred to community-based rehabilitation programmes (phases III/IV).

This studentship will focus on the experiences of working age individuals in attending exercise-based cardiac rehabilitation classes and initiating and maintaining lifestyle change, using a theory-based, mixed-method approach. Most research has so far focused on the experiences of older age groups (>65 years old) in cardiac rehabilitation but increasingly, working age individuals are referred to these programmes. The need to return to normal function and work coupled with the fast recovery due to better treatment options may impact on how lifestyle advice is received and acted upon. By also interviewing family members, we will be able to gather a fuller picture of the impact of the cardiac event and issues around initiating and maintaining health behaviour change.

The Student will be registered at the University of St Andrews. Dr Gozde Ozakinci will be the academic supervisor. The Student will have access to two experts, Dr Ed Wallace (Former GP & now Clinical Director with NHS Fife and Independent Director, FSLT) & Ms Jacquie Stringer (Wellbeing manager at FSLT) who will assist with supervision of the Student. The Student will have unique access to opportunities and observations about how community-based rehabilitation programmes operate.

The successful candidate will be in an academically stimulating and rich environment in the School of Medicine and will have an opportunity to interact with researchers from diverse health psychology and public health background. The student will first complete the British Psychological Society accredited MSc in Health Psychology programme (1 year) to gain solid theoretical background and critical skills. Successful completion of this MSc is required before the student can proceed to the PhD programme.

The successful candidate will also be a part of a thriving postgraduate community. The School is very well equipped for a whole range of research activities in health psychology. All postgraduate students are encouraged to attend regular seminars, required present in the Work in Progress talks in the School of medicine, and present their work at national and international conferences.

**References:** To determine your eligibility, please check these requirements:  
<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/postgraduates/prospective-students/eligibility/index.aspx>

Applications are invited from outstanding eligible candidates, who hold or expect to gain a first or upper second-class degree or equivalent in Psychology or in closely related discipline/field. Applicants should be available for interview on selected dates still to be determined during end of May-beginning of June. This studentship will start early September 2014.

**Application information and enquiries:** All interested candidates should send (1) a cover letter outlining the interest and experiences relevant to the project (500 words) (2) submit a formal application using research application form: - <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/study/pg/apply/research/> . You should specify School of Medicine on the application form.

**Application Enquiries:** Informal enquiries may be addressed to Dr Gozde Ozakinci ([go10@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:go10@st-andrews.ac.uk)). Please also see following webpages for further information on the MSc in Health Psychology (<http://medicine.st-andrews.ac.uk/postgraduate/msc/>) and research programme run by Dr Gozde Ozakinci ([www.st-andrews.ac.uk/~go10](http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/~go10)).