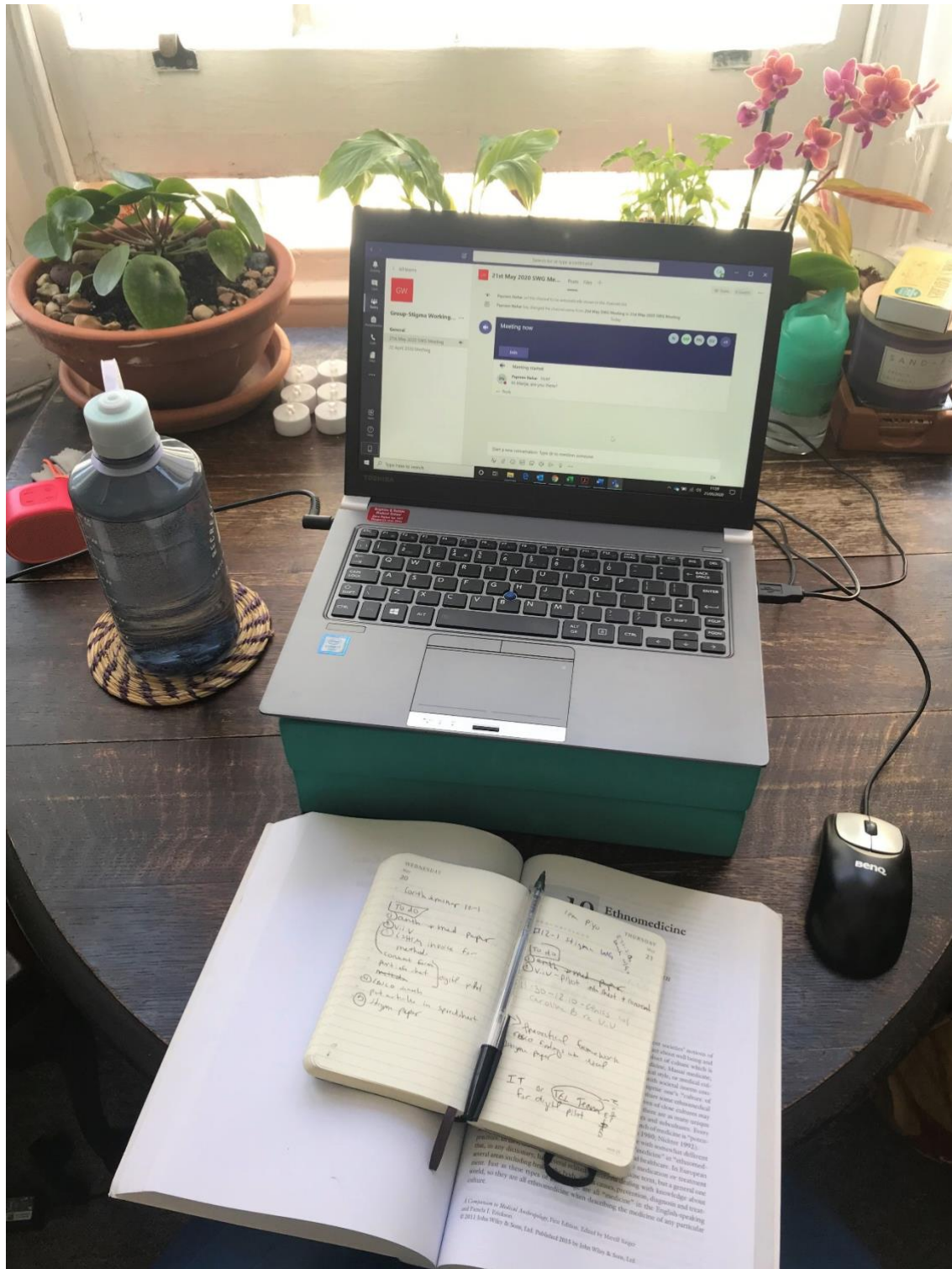


A day in the life...of an Early Career Researcher: a lockdown photo-diary

Caroline Ackley



Picture 1: My workspace

As an Early Career Researcher (ECR) on a fixed-term contract the uncertainty brought about by COVID-19 has been extremely difficult at times. I am grateful to the [University College Union](#) and the [Sussex Precarious Academics](#) network for facilitating dialogue and open communication with the University of Sussex. It is helpful to know that, for those of us on fixed-term, casual, or agency contracts, there is a concerned network of academics and staff using their positions of power to highlight systemic issues affecting the entire University and BSMS.



Picture 3: Sussex UCU Newsletter



Picture 2: Sussex Precarious Academics are a group of precariously-employed workers across numerous schools at the University of Sussex, including Doctoral Tutors, School Tutors, fixed-term lecturers and researchers, and temporary module convenors

Many of us feel anxiety and worry about the future of higher education, the university, our students, and staff in precarious positions, but at this time of difficulty I have found much-needed support from the department, no matter how small. A call with Mel or my mentor, an email from Esther or Anne, and (now that lockdown has eased) a socially-distanced walk with Giovanni have all helped keep me connected with the collaborative and positive environment GHI provides.



Picture 5: Orchid from GHI for my birthday celebrated in lockdown



Picture 4: Taking a rest on the beach after a socially distanced walk

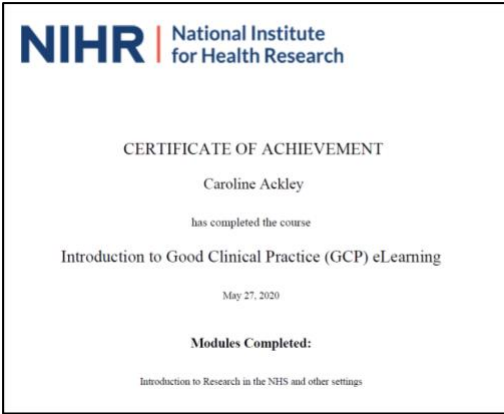


Picture 6: Capturing the sunset

Support in the small successes I have achieved during lockdown has also been vital. The Research Office, the Ethics Committee, and the Dean have all been much more available for calls and email exchanges than I had anticipated. They have all shown support for ECRs by giving us an equal seat at the academic table and by taking our research seriously.



Picture 7: Call to discuss a digital research pilot with Giovanni and Debbie



Picture 8: Certificate of GCP for upcoming research

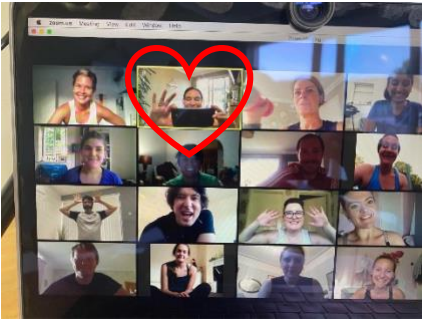
I find that a structured routine helps my mental and physical health. It also aids my focus when I need to complete work tasks. I usually start my day with a walk or run outside, do a virtual [Sussex Sport](#) class with [Ria](#) or [Gemma](#) at lunch, and end my day with another outside walk. I could easily spend my entire day outside at the seaside or in the nearby hills! I have also done Skype baking sessions and quiz nights with family to keep up with the latest from my 9 nieces and nephews (one of which was born during the pandemic).



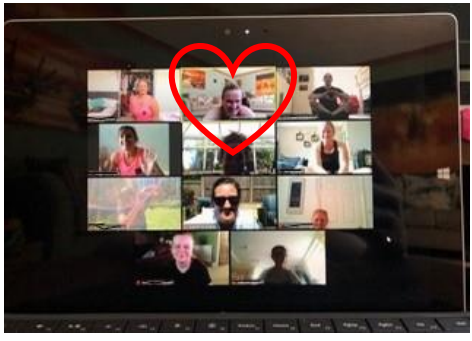
Picture 12: After the Run for Heroes 5k challenge



Picture 11: Chaotic call with nieces and nephews



Picture 10: Snapshot after a class with Gemma (in the heart)



Picture 9: Snapshot after a class with Ria (in the heart)

I hope each of you is finding the support and connections you need until we can meet again!