

WOLFSON INSTITUTE OF POPULATION HEALTH NEWSLETTER ISSUE 76: 14 May 2025

In this issue of our Wolfson Institute of Population Health Newsletter, we celebrate the achievements and work of staff and students in late April and the first half of May.

FROM OUR DIRECTOR

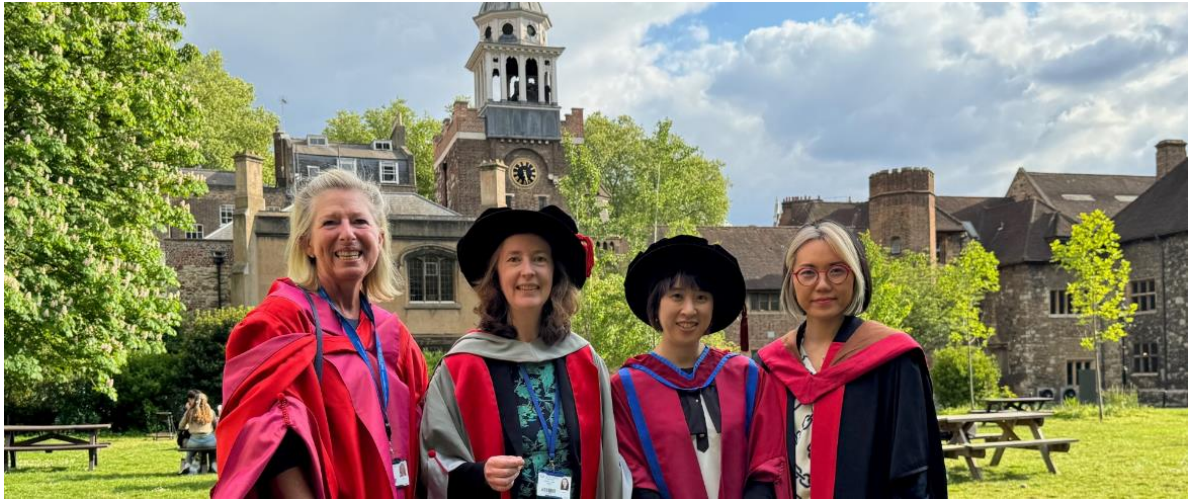
Dear Colleagues

I hope everyone is enjoying this beautiful spring weather, with wonderful shows of May blossoms. Our Institute members continue to publish impactful studies and disseminate their findings widely - do have a look at all the excellent examples from the last few weeks below.

I am delighted to announce some new appointments as part of our wider programme of moving all Institute leadership to three-year roles. Andrea Palinski will lead the MSc in Cultural Psychology and Psychiatry, Catherine Carr has been appointed as deputy director of the Psychological Therapies onsite course, and Maria Berta Ecija is our deputy director of Global Public Health online. I wish them all well in these exciting and important new roles.



On 8 May we hosted marvellous joint inaugural lectures by Professors Jennifer Lau and Claudia Cooper - hugely enjoyable and well attended. Congratulations to you both!



We have another 'double' for Professors Charles Marshall and Ruth Dobson on Thursday 22 May at Charterhouse Square - so do come and join us in their celebration.

One final date for your diary: on Tuesday 17 June we are holding our annual WIPH Showcase at Charterhouse Square, featuring talks by many Institute members plus our annual WIPH awards. We will have plenty of time for networking too, so do please make time to come along and hear all what our colleagues are up to.

With best wishes

Fiona

MEET WIPH

MEET - Bonnie Anderson (Clinical Trials Data Manager, CEM)

How would you describe your roles and responsibilities?

I look after a portfolio of studies at all stages, from study set-up to closure. My work includes writing the data management plan, liaison between database developers and study teams to deliver effective electronic data collection, conducting database training, reviewing data sharing agreements, facilitating secure data transfers, and all the other predictable (and unpredictable) stages along the way. Everything I do has a big focus on data protection and security.

What has been your greatest professional achievement?

This is a hard question to answer so early in my career, but getting the database live for the biggest trial the Pragmatic Clinical Trials Unit has ever set up was very exciting!

What aspects of your role do you enjoy the most?

I most enjoy the collaborative parts of my role across multiple teams, and the satisfaction that comes with finding a good solution to a tricky problem.

What would be your second choice as a profession?

I would love to be a florist - I think because being surrounded by flowers would be such a lovely environment to work in every day. (Perhaps I should just take my laptop to the local florist to work there?)

What do you enjoy doing outside work?

My love of travel was one of the main reasons for moving to the UK from New Zealand 3 years ago. My holiday plans run on a very relaxed agenda, but with a big focus on eating the best of the local food and wine. My favourite holiday was camping in the south of France in a renovated 1980's Renault van last Summer. Beaches, forest, the Verdon gorge, lavender farms, fresh bread and cheese... bliss.

Something most people don't know about you?

I grew up on a tiny island in New Zealand, just East of Auckland, called Waiheke - which, translated from Te Reo Māori, means cascading waters. Our cross-country running course went through paddocks and across the beach!

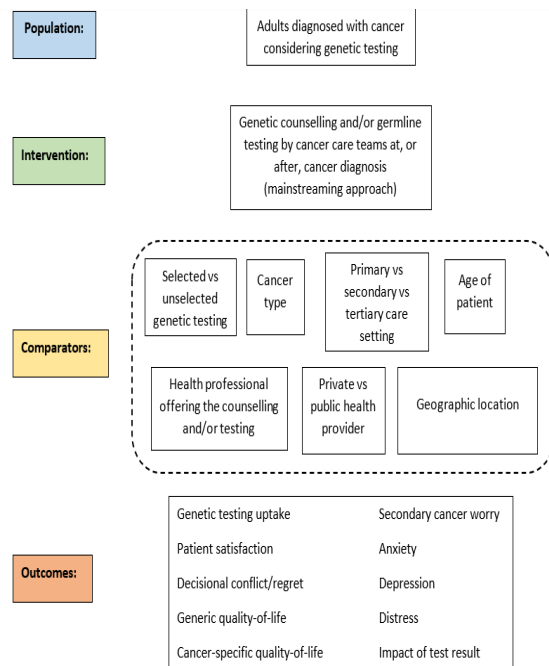


GENERAL INSTITUTE NEWS

Mainstreaming genetic testing: uptake and patient-related outcomes

23 April (Ashwin Kalra, Subhasheene Ganesan, Jacqueline Sia, Kyriaki-Barbara Papalois, Sam Oxley, Lea Mansour L, Caitlin Fierheller, Priyanka Deshmukh, Hamda Mohamed, Amanda Dibden, Oleg Blyus, Michail Sideris, Rosa Legood, Ranjit Manchanda. Centre for Cancer Screening, Prevention and Early Diagnosis)

Assessing patient outcomes of testing, by non-genetics health professionals, for cancer susceptibility genes following a cancer diagnosis, a review and meta-analysis of 29 studies finds high uptake and satisfaction and low decision conflict, regret, and post-test distress, but that quality and quantity of evidence across different types of cancers varies significantly. Identified studies covered ovarian, breast, prostate, endometrial and multiple cancers, but no studies were identified for colorectal cancer. **Results** showed pooled genetic testing uptake of 91% across all cancers, and unselected testing uptake of 95%. Decisional regret, pre- and post-test depression scales and post-test distress were low.



Tower Hamlets Civic Awards

23 April (Sara Paparini, Alastair Noyce. Centres for Public Health and Policy/Preventive Neurology)



Congratulations to Sara Paparini and Alastair Noyce, who both received Tower Hamlets Civic Awards at a ceremony at the Ecology Pavilion in Mile End on the evening of 23 April. Sara was recognised for her outstanding contributions to health equity and community engagement, and for tackling systemic health inequities. Alastair's award highlighted his contribution to improve quality of life for local people through his work on nitrous oxide misuse, including recognizing the problem in East London, describing the burden of disease, setting up a standardized care pathway, and community education.

Patient Engagement in an Asthma Online Health Community

25 April (Helen Wood, Georgios Karampatakis, Steph Taylor, Chris Griffiths, Anna De Simoni. Centre for Primary Care)

An interview study examining the experiences of moderators in an asthma online health community (OHC) identifies challenges and possible areas to optimize the safety and effectiveness of patient engagement. Moderator views, gathered through semi-structured audio-recorded remote interviews, covered moderation processes, challenges to effective moderation, and OHC effectiveness. Details included applying OHC guidelines to deal with inappropriate content, difficult issues such as mental health, and factors that increased the effectiveness of the OHC, including keeping users safe, generating more OHC activity, encouraging discussion, and raising awareness of the OHC. Building on the challenges identified by the moderators, recommendations were made to optimize the safety and effectiveness of the asthma OHC.



Impact of a photographic exhibition by participants with memory problems

25 April (Sinead McIntyre, Claudia Cooper, Natalia Chemas, Alexandra Burton, Michaela Poppe, Ellie Whitfield. Centres for Psychiatry and Mental Health/Preventive Neurology)



To evaluate how *Memories we treasure* (a photography exhibition by participants with memory concerns in the APPLE-Tree dementia prevention programme) contributed to an understanding of life with memory loss and reduced stigma, researchers interviewed co-producers and surveyed attendees. Three themes emerged: increasing understanding by giving voice to participants; honouring participants as artists, valuing and respecting their messages; and emotions of fear of losing treasured memories and hope of living successfully with memory loss. Researchers explore how the findings reflect notions of empowerment, to express how living with memory loss feels as a means of activism to reduce associated stigma, and empowerment to change future dementia risk through lifestyle changes.

Assessing the impact of low-dose computed tomography (LDCT) test results on smoking cessation in high-risk current smokers in the SUMMIT study, researchers examined smoking cessation in >5000 participants at 1yr follow-up. Results showed 12.6% of individuals self-reporting smoking cessation at 1yr, with higher quitting odds in those receiving indeterminate pulmonary nodule findings requiring a 3-month interval LDCT, those with urgent findings requiring secondary care referral, and those with a possible new chronic obstructive pulmonary disease diagnosis (v those with no actionable LDCT findings). Older age, Asian ethnic background, current high smoking intensity, motivation and number of quit attempts, and low nicotine dependence were associated with increased odds of quitting. Clear communication of severity of LDCT findings and behavioural smoking cessation support targeted to high-risk individuals may increase their chances of complete smoking cessation and reduce lung cancer mortality.

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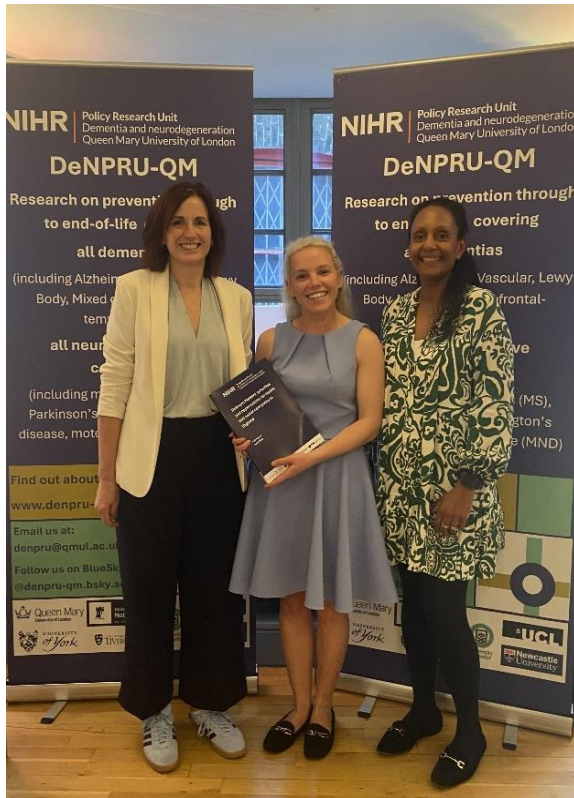


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DeNPRU launches new report: 'Delirium Matters'

29 April (Liz Sampson. Centre for Psychiatry and Mental Health)



Delirium Matters: Priorities and opportunities for health and social care policy in England, a report written by Liz Sampson from the NIHR Dementia and Neurodegeneration Policy Research Unit (DeNPRU-QM), was launched at an evening event in Whitechapel on 29 April. The report is the output of one of the substantive projects agreed with the DHSC, and focuses on delirium, its lack of presence across health policies, its significance as an important issue that needs to be better addressed in health and social care, and recommendations for what can be done to improve patient care, patient safety and potential cost savings. The report reveals that delirium costs the NHS \approx £10.8 billion annually, but with up to a third of cases being preventable, the potential saving to the NHS could be between £1.8–2.8 billion/year.

Potential expansion of the soft drinks industry levy: ITV interview

29 April (Kawther Hashem. Centre for Public Health and Policy)

WIPH Public Health Nutrition lecturer Kawther Hashem was interviewed for ITV news on the potential extension of the Soft Drinks Industry Levy. The government proposal, to end the sugar tax exemption for dairy and non-dairy drinks like oat or rice milk and to include milkshakes and similar drinks in the levy, was issued for consultation on 28 April. The consultation also includes a proposal to lower the sugar content threshold in drinks from 5g to 4g/100ml, which would affect an additional 866 products. Kawther told ITV news that the extension of the already successful sugar levy would lead to an even bigger impact on population health.



Cancer and Primary Care Research International Network Conference

29-30 April (Kirsten Arendse, Georgia Black, Stefanie Bonfield, Zhezhou He, Laura Marlow, Mel Ramasawmy, Runguo Wu, and Yin Zhou. Centre for Cancer Screening Prevention and Early Diagnosis)

A strong CCSPED team delivered multiple presentations at the [Ca-PRI 2025](#) Conference in Manchester. Speakers on day 1 were Georgia (Current evidence in navigating diagnostic uncertainty with e-safety-netting tools in primary care), Stefanie (Understanding attributes relevant to the anticipated uptake of lung cancer detection tests), Kirsten (A population-based cohort study on the external validation of a CA125 and Ovatools for ovarian cancer detection in primary care), and Runguo (Cost-effectiveness analysis of implementing risk-based triage for ovarian cancer detection using Ovatools in UK primary care). Zhezhou presented a poster on a systematic review of health economic methodologies in the detection of upper gastrointestinal cancers. Presenters on day 2 included Laura (Role of cancer expectations throughout the diagnostic pathway among people with a cancer signal found in the NHS-Galleri trial), Mel (How 'interim' diagnosis affects cancer diagnosis), Christina (Computerised clinical decision support systems for disease detection in primary care), and Yin (Cancer risk in patients with multiple or recurring symptoms in primary care). Well done all on this fantastic output!

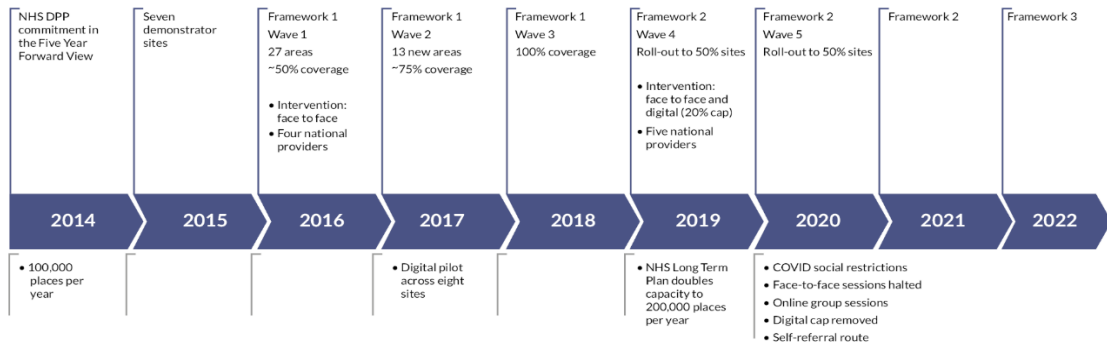


Assessing effectiveness of the NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme

30 April (Jamie Ross. Centre for Primary Care)

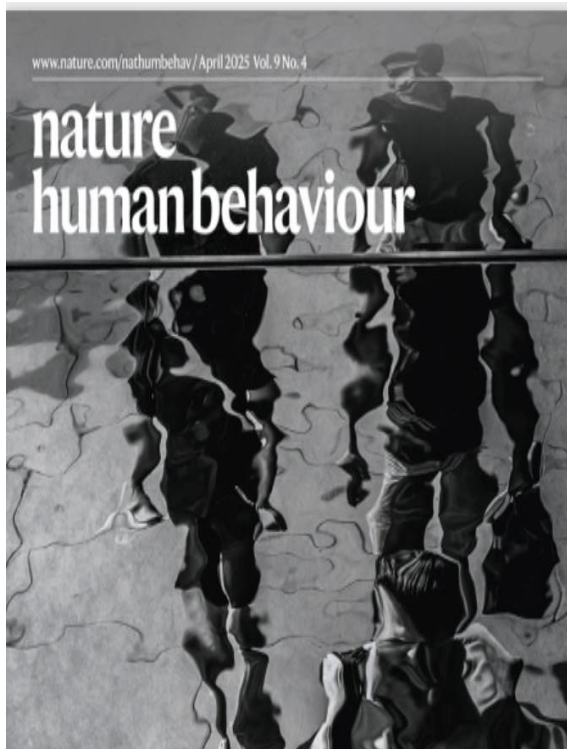
An assessment of the NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme (NHSDPP) measures T2D incidence, cost-effectiveness, access to the programme, and fidelity of intervention delivery, with results showing that the NHSDPP is associated with significant reductions in T2D incidence and is highly likely to be cost-effective. Identified aspects that influence programme access and delivery included uptake and adherence being influenced by participants' psychosocial beliefs, and large differences in the number of referral between general practices. Authors say future research should address whether programme prevents or delays T2D when longer-term follow-up data are available. They identify factors that could improve recruitment, retention, and inequalities, and recommend a robust assessment of the link between fidelity and outcomes. WIPH author on this paper, Jamie Ross, was co-investigator and work package lead for evaluating the digital pathway.

Timeline of the NHS-DPP.



High-income country COVID lockdowns: Adverse birth/pregnancy outcomes

30 April (Iona Hindes, Jennifer Jardine, Dominik Zenner, Stamatina Iliodromiti, Centre for Public Health and Policy)



A review assessing the association of COVID-19 lockdowns with adverse birth and pregnancy outcomes (ABPOs) in 28 high-income countries examines 132 studies. Findings show that the rate of preterm birth was reduced in the first lockdown in high income countries (evident in European countries and in Australia), where the lockdowns may have been stricter and various socioeconomic and environmental factors may have been affected. The decrease was more evident in pregnancies from white backgrounds, and more women screened positive for depression during the first lockdown compared with the pre-pandemic period. Authors say more research is needed on the impact of ethnicity and deprivation on pregnancy outcomes.

Keeping children with intellectual disabilities safe in hospital

30 April (Charlotte Kenten, Centre for Psychiatry and Mental Health)

Addressing a lack of evidence to inform provision of safe hospital care and treatment to children with intellectual disabilities, researchers conducted interviews with 52 parent/carers and 98 staff in English hospitals. Authors conclude that equal priority should be placed on the non-medical and medical needs of patients, and that the importance of children and their parents both feeling and being safe in hospital should be recognised. They say that the use of a risk assessment instrument to facilitate this has the potential for multiple improvements at all levels.



Launch of the Academic Centre for Healthy Ageing

30 April (Adam Gordon, Liz Sampson. Centres for Primary Care/Psychiatry and Mental Health)



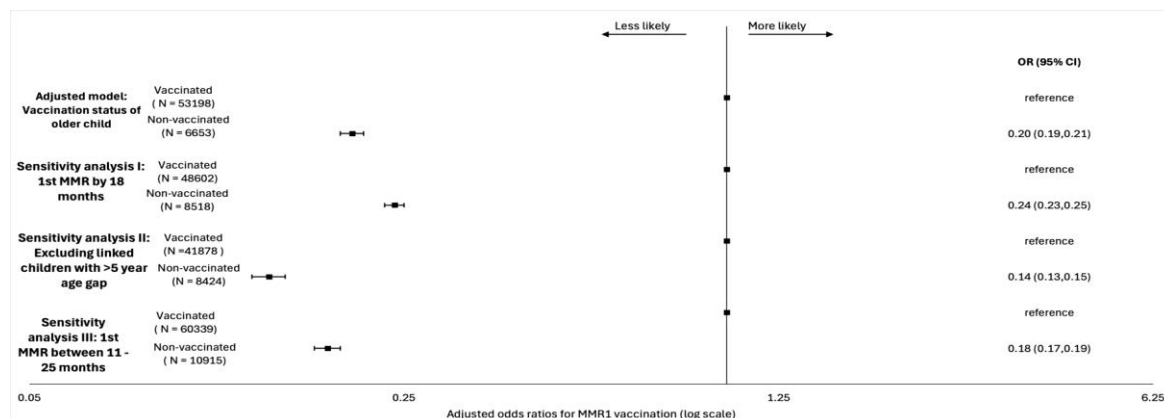
The launch of the Academic Centre for Healthy Ageing (ACHA) brought together over 200 researchers, healthcare providers, and members of the local East London community to celebrate this collaborative project from QMUL, Barts Health NHS Trust, and Barts Charity. ACHA professorial chairs Liz Sampson and Adam Gordon spoke, with Liz highlighting the critical interface between physical and mental health and discussing how delirium remains a focus for the centre, and Adam describing plans for a 'care home living lab' model and emphasizing the importance of a different approach to technology. Based at Whipps Cross Hospital, with strong community links, ACHA will focus on improving the health, wellbeing and care of older people in NE London and beyond.

Household determinants of delayed MMR vaccination in NE London

2 May (Milena Marszalek, Nicola Firman, Marta Wilk, Ana Gutierrez, Kelvin Smith, Carol Dezateux. Centre for Primary Care)

A longitudinal analysis using e-health records of 71,509 children in NE London finds that timeliness of first MMR (MMR1) is associated with sharing a household with an older child who did not receive an MMR1 between ages 12-24 months, independent of household composition and size. This association strengthened after excluding

households with an age interval >5yrs. Authors say the lack of timely protection increases the risk of measles outbreaks and that interventions are needed to improve MMR1 timeliness.



Launch event for youth mental health intervention project findings

6 May (Fiona Samuels, Jennifer Lau, Francois van Loggerenberg, Aisling Murray. Centres for Public Health and Policy/Psychiatry and Mental Health)

At a launch on 6 May, findings were presented from NIHR-funded WIPH work to co-design an integrated mental health intervention focused on addressing youth mental health. Parents, students and school staff participated in the project, conducted in association with U. Warwick in 6 schools across Tower Hamlets and Birmingham. The launch, hosted by the Tower Hamlets Women’s Inclusive Team (who are also partners on the project), welcomed representatives from schools, the NHS, and councils. Plans to pilot the co-designed intervention are underway.



New algorithms to help GPs predict undiagnosed cancer

7 May (Julia Hippisley-Cox, Carol Coupland. Centre for Cancer Screening, Prevention and Early Diagnosis)



Researchers have used anonymised e-health records from over 7.4 million adults in England to create two new algorithms, which could lead to better clinical decision making, and potentially earlier diagnosis of cancer. The advanced predictive algorithms use information about patient age, family history, medical diagnoses, symptoms, and general health, and incorporate results from 7 routine blood tests measuring full blood count and liver function as biomarkers, to improve early cancer diagnosis. The algorithms accurately predict a patient's chances of having a currently undiagnosed cancer, including hard to diagnose liver and oral cancers. The new models could revolutionise how cancer is detected in primary care, helping GPs predict which patients have undiagnosed disease and making it easier for patients to be treated at much earlier stages.

QMSU Awards: Student Voice Champion

7 May (Jennifer Randall. Centre for Public Health and Policy)

Congratulations to WIPH Senior Lecturer in Global Public Health, Jennifer Randall, who received the Student Voice Champion award at the Queen Mary Students' Union Education Awards held on 7 May. The award is made to a member of academic or support staff who has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to student representation, and nominations may only be made by Course and School Reps. Anyone who knows Jen's approach to teaching and care for our students knows this is very well deserved!



Multi-cancer blood test could thwart progression to late stage cancer

8 May (Peter Sasieni. Centre for Cancer Screening, Prevention and Early Diagnosis)



A single blood test to detect chemical signals of many different types of cancer could detect disease at an early stage, when it is easier to treat, potentially thwarting progression to late stage cancer for up to 50% of patients. Adding this multi-cancer early detection (MCED) test to usual care yearly or every two years could improve patient outcomes, according to a WIPH-led modelling [study](#) published in *BMJ Open*. Researchers conclude that both annual and biennial screening with an MCED test have the potential to intercept 31-49% of cancers at stage I-II that would otherwise present at stage III-IV.

CCSPED Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) Celebration Event

8 May (Judith Offman, Jane Rigney, Suzanne Scott, Mel Ramasawmy, Soumya Arun, Nia Otake John, Subhasheene Ganesan, Elisavet Moschopoulou. Centre for Cancer Screening Prevention and Early Diagnosis)

CCSPED hosted their second PPI Celebration, an event “filled with insightful discussions and a shared commitment to collaborative research”, at Empire House on 8 May. Following a welcome from Suzanne Scott, presentations were made on three trials: [YORKSURE](#), [BEST4](#) and [PROTECT-C](#), discussing their objectives and PPI contributions. PPI representatives from each study shared their experiences of collaborating with the research team, and participated in two interactive workshops, on PPI video production, and exploring Artificial Intelligence in research.



British Maternal and Fetal Medicine Society Conference: winning poster

8-9 May (Moonsun Bhaj. Centre for Public Health and Policy)

Congratulations to Moonsun Bhaj, whose abstract ‘How mode of delivery impacts neonatal outcomes in preterm gestations’ won the prize for the highest



scoring poster at the British Maternal and Fetal Medicine Society conference. The conference was held at the ICC in Belfast on 8 and 9 May.



Salt in ready meals ‘unacceptably high’

13 May (Research and Action on Salt and Obesity team. Centre for Public Health and Policy)

Reducing Salt Intake: A Strategic Priority for Public Health

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reinstatement of salt reduction as a priority public health initiative, learning from the successes of the earlier programme under the Food Standards Agency, and leveraging its simplicity and effectiveness as a preventive measure.
- Conduct an urgent review and evaluation of the current salt reduction programme, as originally committed for 2022, to assess its progress and identify areas for improvement.
- Implement mandatory salt reduction targets for food businesses, backed by enforceable financial penalties for those who fail to comply.
- Consider fiscal levers on unhealthy food, building on the success of the Soft Drink Industry Levy to encourage businesses to actively engage in reformulation, as proposed by Recipe for Change [2].

New research from the WIPH RASO team shows that one in five ready meals on sale in the UK are unacceptably high in salt, fat, and saturated fat. The survey of 1513 ready meals found that 100% of ready meals by Wasabi, Jamie Oliver, and Kitchen Joy would trigger a red warning label for high salt content. To mark Salt Awareness Week (12–18 May), the team have produced a new policy brief and short video demonstrating the importance of reformulation. They are calling on the government to bring an end to food industry ‘voluntary inaction’, for immediate review of outdated salt reduction targets, and for new, stricter, mandatory salt targets with financial penalties on food businesses for failure.

Cambridge University Science & Policy Exchange Health Inequalities Panel

13 May (Alison Thomson. Centre for Preventive Neurology)

Presenting at the Cambridge University Science and Policy Exchange Health Inequalities Panel, Alison Thomson argued that participatory modes of knowledge production are vital if we are to confront, and ultimately redress, these inequities. The event, held at the Cambridge University Museum of Zoology, focused on health inequalities, their impact on research, and the policy responses they demand. Alison presented alongside Dr Shobhana Nagraj and former Director of the NICE Centre for Public Health, Prof Mike Kelly.



The Conversation: do we want to know our risk of Alzheimer’s disease?

14 May (Claudia Cooper. Centre for Psychiatry and Mental Health)

THE CONVERSATION

Academic rigour, journalistic flair



Author



Claudia Cooper

Professor of Psychological Medicine, Queen Mary University of London

In an invited commentary for *The Conversation*, Claudia Cooper considers a new US study finding that most participants wanted to know their risk of Alzheimer's disease, but that numbers dropped sharply when participants were given the opportunity to know their risk score. Claudia reflects that we are closer to delivering accurate detection of the disease than curative treatment, presenting a dilemma about how much to know about personal risk. Rights-based approaches situate this dilemma with the participant to decide whether to know (rather than researchers to decide whether to tell). She concludes that disclosing results compassionately and clearly is challenging, and for some the knowledge will cause distress, however well it is conveyed: "The option to receive results should come with warnings".

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Inaugural Lectures: Professors Charles Marshall and Ruth Dobson

22 May, 5:30pm

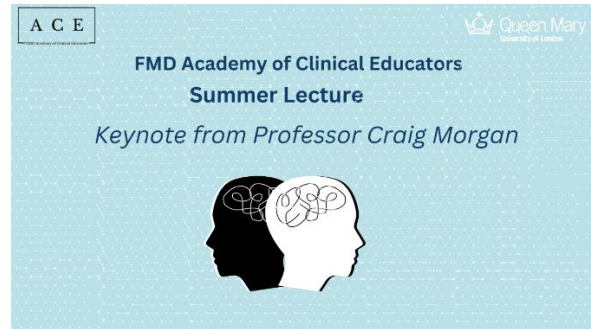
All are welcome to attend the inaugural lectures by Charles Marshall ('Holding Back the Years: finding ways to predict and prevent dementia') and Ruth Dobson ('A series of (un)fortunate events: a journey through pregnancy, prediction, and prevention'), to commence at 5:30pm on Thursday 22 May, in the Derek Willoughby Lecture Theatre at Charterhouse Square. Register [here](#).



FMD Academy of Clinical Educators Summer Lecture

28 May, 4-7pm

The FMD Academy of Clinical Educators invite you to attend their summer lecture, featuring a keynote address by Professor Craig Morgan (KCL), on 'Psychosis: A population perspective'. The event will be hosted by Jennifer Lau and Nathan Davies at The Old Library, Garrod Building, Turner Street Whitechapel. Please register [here](#).



Many thanks to all who so enthusiastically contribute. Please send any news items for the next newsletter to j.a.mackie@qmul.ac.uk