**NRSMHN 2023 ASM**

**Speakers short talk summaries**

**Professor Bryn Lloyd-Evans**

*Loneliness and mental health: current evidence and future directions*

Prof. Lloyd-Evans will provide an overview of current evidence about the relationship between loneliness and mental health, approaches to addressing loneliness in mental health populations and current evidence for their effectiveness. He will then discuss promising directions for further research. This will include an update on his current NIHR trial of the Community Navigator programme: a social intervention to reduce loneliness for people with depression in secondary mental health care.

**Stephanie Allan, Leonie Richardson & Alie Phiri**

*Talk title: The AVATAR2 trial*

AVATAR2 is a Wellcome Trust funded multisite randomised controlled trial of AVATAR Therapy for people with a diagnosis of psychosis who hear distressing voices. The AVATAR2 trial is testing the efficacy of two forms of AVATAR therapy in reducing voice-related distress (compared to Treatment as Usual): AVATAR-brief (standardised focus on exposure, assertiveness and self-esteem) and AVATAR-extended (phase 1 mirroring AVATAR-brief augmented by a formulation-driven phase 2). Recruitment to the trial ended in November 2022. An important component of the trial was developing Patient and Public Involvement Group to support a range of activities involved in AVATAR2. Working with people who have personal experience of mental health problems, or supporting someone who does is increasingly expected when designing, testing or evaluating interventions.

**Chris Wright**

*Experiences from Large-scale Implementation of Digital Mental Health in Scotland*

The presentation will share the key learnings from large-scale implementation of digital therapies into mental health services in Scotland.  Providing insight into the approaches, creation of national focus and policy, changing culture and building for the future.

**Dr Tara French**

*Enabling digital inclusion in mental health*

The Scottish Government, Digital Health & Care Directorate, have launched a new Digital Inclusion programme focusing on mental health and housing. The programme aims to develop, test and implement a range of digital inclusion models that enable people to access mental health and housing supports (and wider services) and feel empowered,digitally confident and experience improved wellbeing through the wider opportunities and connections to communities that digital inclusion brings. The presentation will share an overview of the programme, learning from engagement and ‘Digital Pioneer’ funded projects that are supporting people to be digitally included across different areas of the mental health context in Scotland.

**Dr Sharon Smith**

*Can digital technology assist with the demand for Neurodiversity support?*

The growing demand for assessments across Scotland has overwhelmed current services and waiting lists grow ever longer causing frustration for both the public and the clinicians involved. In Edinburgh we have been seeking ways to improve the situation. We have proposed an innovative digital pathway which would follow a more stepped care approach and provide personalised resource and guidance prior to assessment whilst also improving the information gathering necessary for the assessment process. I will discuss some of the hurdles and opportunities of this approach and, also, the potential for research within the proposed pathway.

**Professor Jonathan Cavanagh**

*Understanding how mechanisms of neuroinflammation relate to mental health*

I will discuss the preclinical work we are doing in the lab including new work on spatial biology in the brain and clinical experimental medicine studies using neuroimaging. Both areas will relate to how we understand how immunobiological changes impact on the brain and subsequent psychiatric symptoms.

**Professor Daniel Smith**

*Light, lithium and circadian rhythms in bipolar disorder: introducing the HELIOS-BD and AMBIENT-BD studies.*

This talk will focus on the importance of sleep and circadian rhythms in bipolar disorder, with two new major projects funded by the Wellcome Trust starting in Scotland in early 2024. The first study is called **HELIOS-BD** (after the Greek God of the Sun) and will investigate the mechanism of action of lithium in bipolar disorder, testing the hypothesis that lithium works by making people with bipolar disorder more resilient to light-induced circadian disruption (more details at [www.heliosbd.com](http://www.heliosbd.com)). The second study is called **AMBIENT-BD** and will make use of new radar technology to monitor rhythms of sleep in bipolar disorder in order to predict future symptoms and relapse. Both projects have been designed in collaboration with Bipolar Scotland and have a major component of service user involvement. For example, in HELIOS-BD people with lived experience of bipolar disorder will help develop innovative AI-generated images and representations of depression and mania. In AMBIENT-BD, people with lived experience of bipolar disorder will produce original musical compositions derived from their own sleep and circadian data, to demonstrate how these data can generate music that represents individual experiences of bipolar disorder.

**Sarah Donaldson**

*Prolonged release opioid for recovery (PROP) study*

The use of pharmacological approaches has been a mainstay of the treatment of opiate dependency for many years. The use of Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST) is well evidenced and for the vast majority of patients there is a requirement to attend a pharmacy on a daily basis to receive this medication. This creates an environment where change is difficult to achieve.  A new Long-Acting Buprenorphine (LaB) subcutaneous injection that is given as a once weekly or monthly dose is now available. In this study we seek to understand patient’s views, meaning and values of delivering OST in this way through the use of qualitative interviews. The study also considers if LaB can provide an opportunity to improve wellbeing and change therapeutic relationships, allowing a greater focus on achieving holistic gains that go beyond health-related domains, supporting a recovery journey.

**Professor Simon Hackett**

*Arts Psychotherapies: Increasing accessibility and involvement in psychological therapies development and research for under-served groups.*

Arts Psychotherapies (art/drama/music/dance therapy) provide a range of accessible and engaging approaches that can help a range of people with mental health difficulties who might otherwise struggle to access purely talking therapies. Interpersonal Art Psychotherapy has been developed specifically for people with a learning disability, autism, and mental health difficulties as an accessible and person-centred approach. Creative methods in research have also allowed under-served groups to be actively involved in the design, delivery, and dissemination of art psychotherapy and mental health research.