

OPTIMISING PATHWAYS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CARE AFTER TRANSIENT ISCHAEMIC ATTACK AND MINOR STROKE

A Newsletter from the OPTIMISE Study Team

Spring 2025

Top stories in this newsletter



OPTIMISE project
update



Meet the team: Amber



Participate in research



Meet Kate, Public and
Patient Involvement Lead

OPTIMISE project update

We have submitted study documents to University of Nottingham for ethical approval which is a process of reviewing adherence of our study to ethical and data protection research principles. Once we receive ethical approval, we will launch an online survey for healthcare professionals to explore available support for mood and cognitive changes after a diagnosis of TIA/minor stroke and identify the barriers to providing that support.

We look forward to starting the recruitment in due time and will keep you updated on our progress!

Meet the team: Amber-Lea Fitzgerald



Amber is an Assistant Psychologist working with Eirini in the NHCT Stroke Clinical Psychology Service. Her role in the service is to support with establishing a mood screening pathway, support with formulation, and deliver staff training on low level psychological intervention. She is contributing to the OPTIMISE project on a voluntary basis to gain experience in our research process and to support with dissemination activities. She's passionate about educating teams on the role psychology plays in supporting mood and cognitive changes after stroke.

Research Participation Opportunity

What mood support do people need after Transient Ischaemic Attack?

Samantha Barton, Trainee Clinical Psychologist under Eirini's supervision, is looking for **professionals in an academic, clinical or research role** to participate in an **interview** or **focus group**. See the study poster on the next page for more details and if you have any questions about the study or would like to participate, please email Samantha on: samantha.barton@nottingham.ac.uk

WHAT MOOD SUPPORT DO PEOPLE NEED AFTER TRANSIENT ISCHAEMIC ATTACK?



University of
Nottingham
UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

WHAT IS THIS STUDY ABOUT?

People often develop anxiety, depression, and other mood problems after being diagnosed with a Transient Ischaemic Attack (TIA). These mood problems can impact their adjustment to work and daily functioning.

WE NEED YOUR INPUT

We are seeking your views on what is important in developing a mood support pathway for individuals diagnosed with TIA.

HOW TO I GET INVOLVED?

For further information contact Samantha Barton at:

Samantha.barton@nottingham.ac.uk

Ethics reference number: 3205

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

- Anyone aged 18 years or older.
- Professionals in academic/clinical/research roles who have a special interest.

WHAT WOULD I BE EXPECTED TO DO?

Participate in interviews or focus groups via Microsoft Teams with other professionals with a special interest in mood problems after a TIA.



BENEFITS OF TAKING PART:

- Involvement in shaping TIA services to incorporate mood support.
- Access to developing research regarding mood pathway development for people with a TIA.

Eirini's presentation for Stroke Association

On Thursday, 13th of March, Stroke Association held an Online Information Session and our Lead Investigator, Dr Eirini Kontou presented on the topic of Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing after Stroke.

In her session, she explained that stroke affects much more than just physical or cognitive abilities — it also impacts emotions and everyday life.

Many people after stroke experience a range of feelings from grief and sadness to anger and loneliness, with depression affecting up to half of those affected. Eirini emphasized the importance of a trusted support network, self-care, and practical strategies like talking therapies and social connections to help manage these challenges. She also cleared up common misconceptions about mental health after stroke, encouraging individuals to seek help when needed and providing key resources and signposting information, such as [Stroke Association Helpline](#), [Talking Therapies](#) or [Carers UK](#).

Overall, her talk offered hope and practical advice, highlighting the need for personalized psychological care as a crucial part of stroke recovery. A member of our Patient and Public Involvement Network (Brian) was able to provide valuable advice on the content, and this approach was well-received by those who attended the session.

You can find more online events like this one on Stroke Association's website:

[Online Stroke Activities | Stroke Association](#)

Tips on how to respond to emotions after stroke



- ❖ Look around for people you trust and lean on their support.



- ❖ Be kind to yourself and to others during your recovery.



- ❖ Remember that adjustment takes time and is different for everyone.



- ❖ Seek out practical support whenever it is available.



- ❖ Don't forget the basics: a healthy diet, enough sleep, and regular physical activity can make a big difference.

Patient and Public Involvement

Here in the Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) of OPTIMISE we have just had our Spring PPI meeting. It's been wonderful to get everyone together again face-to-face, and we even had a member of the group join online and stay connected to us in this way. Great news for our group conversations and a big thank you to all our group members.

Meet PPI Lead - Kate



Kate Horton is the public involvement lead at the Institute of Mental Health, Nottingham and is our Patient and Public Involvement lead on the OPTIMISE project. Kate has lots of experience in running Patient and Public Involvement groups with projects and is now working with us on OPTIMISE. Kate helps in organising the meetings, talking to group members to make sure they have everything they need to be able to be at meetings and part of the conversation. She also helps with the newsletter content and reviewing meeting materials to make sure they're clear and can help us have the best Patient and Public Involvement conversations. They steer us in how our PPI methods can be developed to make sure we're getting the right voices and experiences into our work.

Our next meeting will take place in July 2025. If you are interested in finding out more about the PPI group, click [HERE](#) or email us:

Optimise_Study@nottshc.nhs.uk

Thank you for reading!

"Is the spring coming?" he said. 'What is it like?'

'It is the sun shining on the rain and the rain falling on the sunshine...'

-from The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett