



the institute of
mental health

Nottingham

Research and Education
Excellence **for Innovation**

In the **news...**

The Institute of Mental Health seeks to help transform the understanding and treatment of mental illness.

We are a partnership between two highly respected organisations, Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and The University of Nottingham.

Mental health and Covid-19: What does the future hold?

In partnership with the University of Nottingham's Institute of Policy and Engagement, we held a hugely popular online panel discussion in late November. Experts from across the Institute of Mental Health discussed the impact of Covid-19 on our mental and physical health, the wellbeing of the nation's workforce and how the pandemic has required a new way of thinking to solve healthcare and technological problems.

Prof Roshan das Nair (NEuRoMS project, neuropsychology), Dr Aislinn Bergin (NIHR MindTech MedTech Co-operative), Dr Juliet Hassard (Occupational Health Psychology) and Dr Sam Malins (Clinical Psychology) were joined by over 120 online viewers and a full recording of the event is now available to watch again [here](#).
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– watch again online
- **A year in review** – reflecting on 2020
- **Policy Impact award** for Horizon team
- **BBC Radio 4 interview**
- **Institute of Mental Health opens applications for 2020 Publication Awards**



Welcome

Our **January newsletter** shares updates and achievements from across the Institute of Mental Health and showcases the best in mental health research.

Professor Martin Orrell
Director, The Institute
of Mental Health



As we start a new year with mixed feelings about the year we have left behind, we shall endeavour to make this edition of our newsletter focus on the positive elements of our research from the past 12 months, read more on pages 3 and 4, as well as some highlights for the coming months.

One such highlight is the online event we are hosting in partnership with the European Association of Geriatric Psychiatrists on 22nd January, an opportunity for consultant old age psychiatrists to update and refresh their practice learning from an exclusive programme of speakers from across Europe and the UK. See page 14 for more details.

Congratulations to Dr Elvira Perez (Associate Professor of Digital Technology and Mental Health, MindTech) for her recent 'Best policy impact initiative' award, find out more about her work with the Horizon team on page 7.

Wishing you all a happy new year!
Stay safe and well.

Our buildings and projects are still operating with COVID safe restrictions in place, please visit our website [institutemh.org.uk](https://www.institutemh.org.uk) or follow us on Twitter [@InstituteMH](https://twitter.com/InstituteMH) for all our latest updates.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in numerous rapid and accelerated changes to working practices and the work environment. Juliet reflected on such rapid changes to the world of work and their impact on employee mental health and performance, referring to the latest findings from the WOW study (which was established in response to the rapid implementation of the government furlough scheme earlier this year).

Sam's research interests include optimisation of psychological therapies and the novel applications of psychological interventions. He explored how achieving engagement in clinical mental health services from a broad range of people will need to allow for personal differences, offering different points of access and multiple ways of engaging, including through digital technology.

The pandemic has led to a significant shift in the uptake and adoption of digital health interventions within the mental health system, where they are supporting services to remain available and accessible. The speed of this disruption has not just brought opportunities, however. Faced with the daunting task of overcoming these challenges, Aislinn explored how it is imperative that we access the existing evidence to ensure that interventions are suitable and implemented well.

Wrapping up the panel's presentations, Roshan brought his perspectives from his **recent work with the NIHR conducting a long-Covid review**. While the impact of COVID-19 on mood of the general population is beginning to be appreciated, Roshan examined how the pandemic has affected the many millions of people in the UK with pre-existing mental and physical healthcare conditions.

A full recording of the discussion
is available to watch again [online](#).





A YEAR IN REVIEW

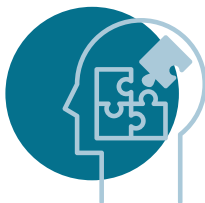
A year like no other. 2020 will be remembered for many things, but at the start of a new year we wanted to take the opportunity to remember some of the many successes that have been achieved by our research teams and colleagues in the face of unprecedented challenges.

JANUARY



Royal College of Psychiatry publishes guidelines on “*Technology use and the mental health of children and young people*” co-authored by Prof Chris Hollis and Dr Elvira Perez from the NIHR MindTech MedTech Co-operative.
[Read more](#) on how these new guidelines caught the media’s attention.

FEBRUARY



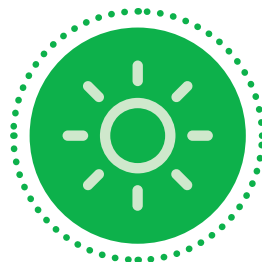
NEON programme launches world’s first research study to help researchers understand how recovery narratives (personal stories of mental health problems and recovery) can be of benefit to people with mental health problems.
[Read more](#) on how this project has expanded and received further funding following unprecedented demand during the pandemic.

MARCH



Research activities halted and the Institute closes its doors in response to the global Covid-19 pandemic.

APRIL



During lockdown we see a surge in the nation’s awareness of the importance of good mental health and positive wellbeing. The MindTech team are awarded £100,000 to facilitate research into technology to support young people’s mental health in lockdown.

[Read more](#) about the MindTech team’s work.

MAY



The Centre for Mental Health and Human Rights at the Institute of Mental Health is designated as a new World Health Organization (WHO) collaborating centre on Mental Health, Disability and Human Rights.
[Read more](#) about the role of WHO Collaborating Centres.

In response to the furlough scheme introduced during lockdown, the [WOW study](#) is launched to track the wellbeing of furloughed employees.



JUNE



New rapid-results research projects set up to help people with [multiple sclerosis during the pandemic](#).

Philanthropy to help the community: Generous [donation from Santander](#) UK funds new mental health research.



JULY

Prof Ellen Townsend establishes the [Reachwell collective](#) of academics in response to concerns over the mental health of children and young people during the pandemic.



AUGUST

As experts in their fields of research, leading researchers and academics from across the Institute of Mental Health featured in the local and national media this year. Highlights included:

Tom Dening, [Metro](#)

Roshan das Nair, [The Observer](#)

Mike Slade, [BBC Radio 4](#)

Ellen Townsend, [BBC Radio 4](#)



SEPTEMBER

Results emerge from mental health research conducted at the start of the pandemic by teams from across the Institute; the CANDAL team are first to announce findings exploring the [impact of home schooling](#) on parents and children.



OCTOBER

The [NHS CHECK](#) study launches, investigating experiences of NHS staff during pandemic and subsequent support/change needed. Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust becomes one of the UK's top recruiting NHS trusts.

Professor Roshan das Nair co-authors the [NIHR Long Covid review](#).



NOVEMBER

The Institute's Centre for Social Futures leads a multi-disciplinary [Florence Nightingale](#) project through this bicentenary year of her death. Featuring digital exhibits, events and a new book focusing on the importance of the home in her life.



DECEMBER

The first [virtual MindTech annual symposium](#) is held, with sold out events and an international programme of speakers.



...What will **2021** bring?

New paper published celebrates benefits of improving cognition for people with dementia

A new paper was published at the end of last year in the Journal of Medical Internet Research by Harleen Rai, sharing the development of the Thinkability app. Designed in partnership with people living with dementia and their carers, the app supports improving cognitive skills and follows the key principles of cognitive stimulation therapy (CST).

The app has been developed using research led by Dr Harleen Rai (Institute of Mental Health), software developed by Eumedianet in the Netherlands, and the app forms part of the Europe-wide INDUCT programme of dementia research projects.

Previous cognitive stimulation therapy (CST) research has proven that by following key CST principles, there is an improvement in the cognitive behaviours of people living with dementia.

The “Thinkability” app uses these key principles to create a series of activities and games that can be used by someone living with dementia and their carer to stimulate conversations, learning and fun. The activities have different skill levels to reflect the capabilities of people living with the different stages of a mild/moderate diagnosis of dementia. The activities within the app explore different topics and each activity is presented in a different way eg. audio clips accompany a quiz about musical instruments, a short video accompanies a physical exercise activity. The app has been in use around the world for several months:

“As an occupational therapist, cognitive stimulation and engagement of the elderly in acute care is challenging at the best of times, with COVID-19 we faced even greater barriers with this population. Using the Thinkability App during the pandemic, on the acute care units for those admitted with baseline cognitive impairment or new onset deliriums, helped with responsive behaviours and allowed the social engagement the patients may have been missing out on as a result of no visitor policies. Patients ability level varied, however the flexibility of the Thinkability App allowed for customisation of activities to maximise participation and engagement based on the individual.”

Kristin, Occupational Therapist, Toronto



Find out more:
www.thinkability.eu

The app is available to download
from the Apple/Google app stores.

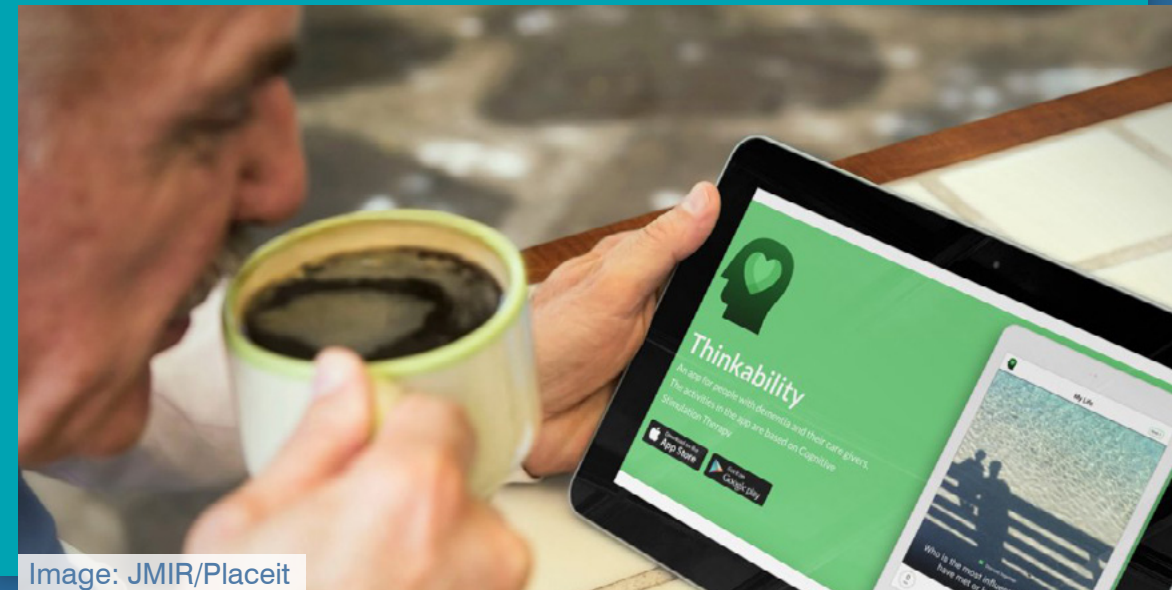


Image: JMIR/Placeit

Online learning tool improves GPs' understanding of ADHD

A new paper has been published in the [JMIR Medical Education](#) journal evaluating a new online tool developed by Dr Blandine French (CANDAL) et al. The paper's findings, "Evaluation of a Web-Based ADHD Awareness Training in Primary Care: Pilot Randomized Control Trial with Nested Interview", have also been turned into a [video abstract](#) explaining more about this highly successful learning tool which has already been adopted by the Royal College of Physicians.



Find out more:
adhdinfo.org.uk



2020 MindTech Symposium

The 2020 MindTech Symposium was held online as a free virtual event for the very first time.

The symposium took place over Wednesday 2nd and Thursday 3rd December and this year's topic was: 'Digital Mental Health in the Age of Covid-19'.

A sold out programme of presentations and debate included speakers from across the globe presenting the latest research and best practice in digital mental health.

Recordings of the four symposium sessions are now available to view on the MindTech website:

- The Digital Mental Health Response to COVID-19: A Global Perspective
- How has digital mental health risen to the COVID-19 challenge?
- Virtual Patient and Public Involvement - the way forward?
- Rethinking mental health services for a 'new normal' following COVID-19



To watch highlights from the symposium visit:
www.mindtech.org.uk

Morality of mortality

Prof Ellen Townsend appeared on BBC Radio 4's Moral Maze programme to discuss the "Morality of mortality" – what has the pandemic revealed about our attitude to our own mortality and how we value human life?



Listen again (from 10:45)
bbc.co.uk



‘Universal Points of Care’ paper published

A journal paper was published 26th November in the JMIR Journal of Formative Research, coming out from MindTech’s collaboration on the European RADAR-CNS (Remote Assessment of Disease and Relapse – Central Nervous System) project. The paper is a joint effort with King’s + College London and RADAR’s Patient Advisory Board.

The study developed a new method of inquiry ‘Universal Points of Care’ based on generalised use case scenarios. It asked consortium members about the potential of Remote Measurement Technology in clinical practice across its three conditions of interest: Epilepsy, Multiple Sclerosis and Depression. The findings were followed up with in-depth interviews with healthcare professionals in the UK, on which another paper was published in July.

Dr. Michael Craven at The University of Nottingham said,

“It was a nice joint effort. We are currently writing up the wider online survey of 1000+ clinical views of the potential of RMT that was completed at the end of 2019, which will further complement the two papers already published”.



Find out more:
www.radar-cns.org

Award win for Dr Elvira Perez



The University of Nottingham’s Institute of Policy and Engagement have announced the winners of this year’s Policy Impact and Public Engagement awards. Dr Elvira Perez (Associate Professor of Digital Technology and Mental Health, MindTech) has been awarded the ‘Best policy impact initiative’ award.

The award recognises Dr Perez’s work on the UNBIAS project (Emancipating Users Against Algorithmic Biases for a Trusted Digital Economy) leading the Horizon team at the University of Nottingham. The project has informed and influenced government policy decisions for age appropriate digital design.

Congratulations to Elvira and the team!





International funding awarded to Nottingham experts to support global recovery from Covid-19

A new project, led by experts from the University of Nottingham, has received international funding to help improve the emotional, economic and behavioural resilience of students to Covid-19 in African Universities.

The project, jointly led by experts from the University of Zambia, has received funding from the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and the Newton Fund.

The funding will enable experts from the UK and across developing countries, to work in partnership to address the negative psychological and economic impacts of Covid-19 on communities that are already vulnerable due to long-term conflict, food and water shortages and crowded living conditions.

Professor Cris Glazebrook from the School of Medicine at the University of Nottingham, and Professor Anitha Menon from the University of Zambia, are leading the project in collaboration with Professor Heather Wharrad in the School of Health Sciences and Dr Bethan Davies from NIHR MindTech MedTech Co-operative and academics from the Universities of Malawi, Copperbelt and Apex in Zambia.

The team are also working with a local social enterprise, [BongoHive](#), to produce a culturally sensitive and engaging online education programme (Covid-19 Education for African Students - COVEDAS), to help prevent the spread of Covid-19.

The pandemic has increased rates of mental health problems in students, which can impact negatively on academic performance. This is a particular concern in low-income countries, such as Zambia and Malawi, where students have limited access to mental health services.

As part of the project, the team will increase emotional resilience in vulnerable students by providing access to moodgym – an interactive, online therapy that helps people to learn and practice skills to manage symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Professor Glazebrook said of the project:

“We want to see if combining moodgym with a university-wide online Covid-19 prevention programme will improve students’ mental health and enhance their ability to withstand the health and economic challenges of Covid-19. The online Covid-19 prevention programme, adapted for each local area, will portray health-promotion behaviours such as social distancing and face coverings as a normal part of student life.”

The team will collect feedback from the prevention programme and survey data before and after the moodgym/ Covid-19 prevention programme intervention to look for improvements in depression, academic performance and Covid-19 prevention behaviours. They will also check whether benefits are felt equally by men and women.

The findings will help to establish if this is a sustainable and effective model for supporting the mental and physical health of students in low income countries.

Institute of Mental Health opens applications for **2020 Publication Awards**

We are now accepting entries for our annual Publication Awards, highlighting the best mental health research publications of 2020.

The awards aim to celebrate and promote the publications produced in the fields of mental health or intellectual disability research by people working within Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, the University of Nottingham or affiliated to the Institute of Mental Health.

The award categories are as follows:

- A.** Best overall publication
- B.** Best publication when the author has no more than six previous publications
- C.** Best publication flowing from work during doctoral studies or as part of a doctoral dissertation
- D.** Best publication by an employee of Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust who does not have a substantive contract with a university
- E.** Best publication co-authored with a person with lived experience of mental distress or a current or former user of mental health services
- F.** Best publication by a member of the Institute of Mental Health who is a person with lived experience of mental distress or a current or former user of mental health services

Nominations can be made by the author or by others (professors are not eligible for prizes). A publication may be submitted in more than one category but can only win one prize.

Please submit your entry (in PDF format) to Darren Wright at darren.wright@nottshc.nhs.uk by **31 March 2021**

Each award carries a prize value of **£100**

New paper champions research agenda for social, cultural and community engagement

The MARCH Network, funded by the UKRI, has published a paper exploring the development and co-production of a new cross-disciplinary research agenda on social, cultural and community engagement (SCCE) and mental health. Published by BJPsych Open, **“Social, cultural and community engagement and mental health: cross-disciplinary, co-produced research agenda”** is particularly timely given the extreme pressure on mental health services predicted to follow the current COVID-19 pandemic.

It is important to identify how resources from other sectors can be mobilised, and what research questions are going to be most important to fund to support SCCE for mental health.

Cabin Fever for Christmas

Prof Paul Crawford (Director of our Centre for Social Futures) talks to us about the challenges of a Christmas with confinement, ahead of the launch of his new book later this year.

In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic and the greatest confinement of people to their homes in history, we are all dealing with the mental health fallout. People have lost family or friends to Covid-19 or had to adjust to new and frightening changes caused by sudden unemployment. Indeed, many of us will have experienced multiple kinds of losses, disruptions and shocks.

What has been particularly striking since March 2020 and even now, is the impact on large swathes of the global population from prolonged periods of social isolation at home, in lockdown or its tiered variants. This phenomenon has brought unseasonal and now wintery bouts of cabin fever — with increased irritability, depression and anxiety.

Of course, buoyed by vaccine success, we look forward to a more open, less confining 2021, but this winter will remain for many people in the UK and elsewhere, a profoundly challenging time of waiting, waiting, waiting. It will be a time when cabin fever regains its grip following the summer lull. As the harsher weather limits garden meet-ups and social restrictions remain, and as the dark nights enwrap us, we will all tire of being within four walls (again).

Many people, as we saw in the initial lockdown, will struggle with intense levels of loneliness or domestic conflict and violence. Even for those able to get a Christmas squeeze by enfolded into their family bubbles, this may not herald joy and peace. The fragility of these ‘bubbles’ will be tried and tested in domestic claustrophobia, probably sparked by ownership of the remote, loss of Wifi or encroaching

elbows on the sofa. It may even bring further misery in a rise in Coronavirus cases. Sadly, some people risking family hugs before the vaccine arrives us will not get to taste or even smell the turkey. For others, turkey may not even get onto the table in the first place.

In our book, *Cabin Fever: Surviving Lockdown in the Coronavirus Pandemic*, my son and I explore the definitions and social and cultural history of cabin fever. We discuss its origins emerging from the physical fever caused by typhus through to the use of the term to refer to psychological responses to prolonged isolation or confinement. Offering insights on cabin fever in different contexts (at sea, on land, in the air and in space) the book draws on an array of evidence of the impact of this folk syndrome. In the brunt of the pandemic, it has become increasingly clear that adapting to lockdown has become a matter of personal and public endurance and creativity. This book provides an important account of the threat of cabin fever in the pandemic and the best-known antidotes for it.

While we remain in our cabins, licking the wounds of 2020, and possibly pulling crackers on our own, we should try to open our hearts and minds to be part of a more creative society in the future — less dependent on the pre-pandemic fixes we all thought we loved. First, we will have to dig deep to defeat cabin fever, to endure this winter season and find fresh mentalities in a new era for all of us. We hope the book provides some useful reflections and responses to this challenge.



Find out more about “Cabin Fever”
www.amazon.co.uk

BBC Radio 4 interview for NEON project



The role stories can play in a person's mental health recovery journey was explored on BBC Radio 4's "All in the mind" programme as Professor Mike Slade appeared to promote the ongoing work of the large-scale NEON trial.

Over 875 individuals have signed up to take part in three online trials, which are led by Mike Slade at the University of Nottingham and Institute of Mental Health:

- The NEON Trial is for people with experience of psychosis in the last five years
- The NEON-O Trial is for people with experience of non-psychosis mental health problems
- The NEON-C Trial is for people who care for others affected by mental health problems

The NEON-O Trial has already recruited more than four times its original target and has now been scaled up with additional NIHR

extension funding to almost 1000 participants; allowing more people to engage with the online intervention. This will enable the trial to provide much stronger evidence for the impact of receiving recovery narratives on people's quality of life and will shape future health service policy around the integration of lived experiences of mental health into health treatment.

Trial participants receive immediate or delayed access to more than 500 stories of personal recovery drawn from 40 different collections and individuals, and everything is done online, which means that participation has not been disrupted by COVID-19.

[Listen again](#) to Mike's interview and the experiences of volunteers participating in the trial.



Find out more:
www.recoverystories.uk

Annual forensic mental health lecture

The University of Nottingham's Centre for Forensic and Family Psychology annual lecture was held online on 1st December, this year's speaker was Lawrence Jones, Consultant Clinical and Forensic Psychologist at Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust's Rampton Hospital. The lecture explored working with people living with personality disorder in high secure settings.

First publication for psychiatry mentoring scheme

The [first paper on the PsychStart scheme](#) has been published in the BJPsych Bulletin. The mentor scheme for psychiatry trainees began in Nottingham and has been supported from the start by the Institute of Mental Health.



Find out more:
www.psychstart.co.uk

Appointments and appearances



Dr Eirini Kontou

Clinical Psychologist

A clinical-academic clinical psychologist (who holds appointments at Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and at the University of Nottingham), Eirini has been awarded the NIHR Development and Skills Enhancement Award to work at the Institute of Mental Health with Professor Roshan das Nair on gaining expertise in clinical trials of complex interventions.

Eirini has a long-standing interest in research with a focus on the psychological aspects of stroke and other physical health conditions. Eirini has recently completed a prestigious Stroke **Association Postdoctoral Fellowship** looking at developing and evaluating a group psychoeducational programme for people after transient ischaemic attack and minor stroke. She also had a Postdoctoral Bridging Gold Award from NIHR ARC East Midlands for clinical academics. She is a member of the East Midlands Clinical Academic Careers Advisory group and an Associate Fellow (AFBPsS) of the British Psychological Society representing her profession at the UK Stroke Forum Steering and Scientific Committees.



Dr John Tully

Clinical Associate Professor
in Forensic Psychiatry

A clinical academic in forensic psychiatry, John's main research interest is the neuroscience of antisocial personality and psychopathy.

As a clinician, he works as a consultant forensic psychiatrist in Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust prison mental health service.

John is leading the establishment of 'Forensic Research Nottingham' at the Institute of Mental Health. This will be a multidisciplinary research group, which will bring together expertise from Notts HC Trust forensic services and multiple IMH centres. The aim is to provide a forum for successful research collaboration across clinical and academic settings.

2021 Health Humanities Conference

The Health Humanities Conference, 'Health and our Environment', will be taking place online on Thursday 25th February 2021.

This conference was originally scheduled to go ahead in March 2020 but was cancelled due to COVID-19 and the majority of our original speakers are still able to participate.

This conference aims to bring together postgraduates, early career researchers and more experienced academics from a wide range of disciplines across the Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Health Sciences to discuss and explore the multifaceted relationship between our health and environment. Further details of the conference, including the programme and speakers' talks can be found on the conference [website](https://www.institutemh.org.uk).

Clinical practice in Old Age Psychiatry an update

**Friday 22nd January 2021,
10.00 – 14.40 (UK time)**

[Click to register online](https://www.institutemh.org.uk) for online conference

Cost: £60.00 - EAGP and Royal College of Psychiatrist members
£75 - all non-members

We are delighted to announce that the Institute of Mental Health will host this strategic conference which is in partnership with the EAGP (European Association of Geriatric Psychiatry) and The Faculty of Old Age Psychiatry, The Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Building on the successes of the first and second refresher courses held in Leuven, Belgium, in 2016, and Nottingham UK, in 2019 this online virtual learning and networking event for old age psychiatrists will include invited speakers from across the UK and Europe. The clinically focussed event will provide an engaging and stimulating programme for old age psychiatrists and trainees and improve their knowledge and practice.

Confirmed speakers:

- Professor Rob Howard, University College London (UCL) – Late life psychosis
- Professor Marie Åsberg, Karolinska Institutet (Stockholm) – Preventing depression in elderly
- Professor David Taylor, Maudsley Hospital & King's College (London) – Optimising drug treatment in elderly
- Dr Didi Rhebergen, GGZ inGeest (Amsterdam) – Late life depression
- Dr Annemieke Dols GGZ InGeest (Amsterdam) - Older Age Bipolar Disorder
- Dr Kumar K Rudra, Consultant Geriatrician & Senior Lecturer (Hon), King's College (London) – Medicine for Old Age psychiatrists
- Dr Volen Ivanov, Ph.D. Psychologist, Karolinska Institute (Stockholm) – Hoarding and squalor syndrome



Find out more:
www.institutemh.org.uk