

NCMH Insider

The latest news and research from the National Centre for Mental Health (NCMH)

June 2018

Cardiff and Met Korfball

Taking a shot at stigma

Inside:

- + Let's talk about self-harm
- + Express yourself: mental health art competition
- + Harnessing the power of big data
- + Take my advice: mental health at work

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A word from the Director



Professor Ian Jones

Director, National Centre for Mental Health

Welcome to the second issue of NCMH Insider.

I feel as though there are many congratulations in order! Firstly, I'd like to say congratulations to Mair who received an award for citizenship at the St David's Awards.

Mair is one of our research champions and an active mental health campaigner doing a lot of work with Hafal, and I am delighted that her hard work and dedication has been recognised.

Secondly, I'd like to congratulate Cardiff and Met Korfbal on raising over £200 for Hafal and encouraging people to take part in our research at their 'Take a Shot at Stigma' event in Cardiff (p. 4).

Last but by no means least, I would like to congratulate the finalists of the art competition we ran in collaboration with My Discombobulated Brain (p. 10).

Elsewhere in this issue, you can learn more about our research into undetected PTSD (p. 5) and find out about a new project aiming to harness the power of big data in mental health research (p. 7).

We are also pleased to launch our re-branded

public involvement group, PÂR (Partnership in Research). The aim of the group is to give people with lived experience a voice in shaping the future of mental health research in partnership with researchers at NCMH and beyond.

Lastly, we share some interesting statistics from the results to date from our online survey (p.14).

I hope you enjoy reading this issue, and if you have any feedback please get in touch using the details below.

Do we have your email address?

NCMH Insider is published three times a year; in February, June and October. In the future, we plan to send the February and October editions electronically.

To make sure you receive these editions, we would appreciate you taking a moment to update your details by visiting:
www.ncmh.info/update

News



Taking a shot at stigma

Cardiff and Met Korfball, who are sponsored by NCMH, held a fundraising tournament with a twist.

10 teams from across Cardiff came together for a fun and speedy tournament to raise money for Hafal. Players also took part in mental health research when they weren't playing.

Through a raffle and bake sale over £200 was raised for Hafal and 23 players took part in our research.

Jess Hall from Cardiff and Met Korfball said,

"We were thrilled with the turn out. After being sponsored by NCMH it was important to us to provide an opportunity for the team to get involved in mental health research, raise some money and help make a difference for mental health.

"We also had to chance to continue spreading the word about how great korfball is and for the new players to see we're a fun community to be a part of."

NCMH at the MRC Festival of Medical Research

We'll be joining Cardiff University's MRC Centre for Neuropsychiatric Genetics and Genomics in celebrating the annual MRC Festival.

Join us at DEPOT Cardiff on Wednesday 20th June for an evening of funfair games adapted to reflect mental health research, engaging science talks, prizes and freshly made pizza.

To find out more and book your free ticket, visit: mrcsciencefair.eventbrite.co.uk

SCIENCE
FAIR





Research update: undetected post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

A study led by Dr Catrin Lewis has found that people with a range of mental health problems, like bipolar disorder or depression, may also be affected by undetected PTSD.

2,001 NCMH participants were asked to complete a Trauma Screening Questionnaire (TSQ), 1,946 had a diagnosis (current or past) of a mental health problem.

Dr Lewis explained, "Our main findings revealed that 40% of participants reported exposure to a traumatic event that could result in PTSD and prevalence of participants screening positive for current PTSD was 22%.

"These numbers are lower than those reported by many previous studies but could be reflective of the sample being drawn from the UK and the consequence of the stringent approach taken to the determination of trauma exposure."

Participants were asked 'What is the worst traumatic event you have experienced in your life?'. The researchers sought to anchor the participant's traumatic stress symptoms to a single traumatic event.

Dr Lewis continued, "There was strong evidence that undetected PTSD was more prevalent in women than men and that those with a younger age of contact with psychiatric services were more likely to have undetected PTSD.

"Further analysis revealed that 13% of our participants had probable undetected PTSD. This suggests PTSD is commonly missed by health services and may be indicative of events that individuals have a reluctance to divulge and that clinicians are wary to ask about."

The most commonly reported traumas were childhood abuse, transportation accidents and sexual assault.

The team's findings have shown the need for routine assessment of trauma histories and symptoms of PTSD among people with any mental health problem.

Dr Lewis concluded, "This work indicates the continued and pressing need to identify people with trauma histories and PTSD, and improve patient outcomes.

"Increasing the confidence of clinician's in their ability to ask about trauma history and offer appropriate evidence-based treatment may reduce the issue of PTSD.

"PTSD is a treatable but commonly missed disorder. We already have the diagnostic tools to detect it easily and quickly but further work is needed to develop appropriate treatments for those with PTSD and other mental health conditions."

Harnessing the power of big data in mental health research

A team of NCMH Principal Investigators, led by Professor Jeremy Hall, has been awarded a £1m grant to help improve early interventions and treatment in mental health.

In recent years, major progress has been made in understanding the genetic basis of many diagnoses, and a substantial part of this has been due to large scale data sharing.

Professor Hall said: "In order to capitalise on this progress there is now a need to extend this large-scale data driven approach forward by integrating genetic information with clinical, environmental, developmental and biological data at scale in mental health to transform the management of psychiatric disorders.

"Our mission is to build a platform that will enable the extension of collaborative efforts required for fundamental progress in this area."

The new project aims to take several approaches, firstly linking more than 15,000 biological samples donated to Cardiff University and the National Centre for Mental Health and linking them to electronic health records.

In addition, the project will develop a school-based cohort. This will enable us to track the mental health of young people as they grow up, and to identify risk and protective factors



at an early stage. This will have a significant impact on mental health promotion in schools, and enable development, implementation and evaluation of early, universal preventative mental health interventions.

Dr James Walters, one of the grants co-applicants, explained: "This project will help us gain insights into the effects of genetic and other risk factors which will help us understand the nature of mental health conditions and ultimately lead to improved diagnoses and treatments."

This project is being funded by the Medical Research Council as part of the UK government's National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF).

Citizenship award for NCMH Research Champion



We are delighted to hear that Mair, an NCMH Research Champion, has received a citizenship award at the annual St David Awards.

Mair took part in our research in 2016 and has since been a dedicated mental health campaigner in Wales, calling for improved services and increased public awareness.

Professor Ian Jones said: "It's fantastic to see Mair's contribution recognised in this way and on behalf of everyone at NCMH - congratulations!"

**Nothing about me
without me**



Partneriaeth mewn Ymchwil
Partnership in Research

Public involvement at NCMH

PÂR is our public involvement group, giving people with lived experience a voice in shaping mental health research in partnership with researchers.

Our members either have experience of a mental health condition themselves or care for a family member or friend who has.

The group was previously known as the Service User and Carer Research Partnership. It was initially formed in 2009 and was funded by the Mental Health Research Network Cymru (MHRNC).

Since 2015, the group has been supported by NCMH and has since developed to cover all of Wales with hubs in the north and south.

Leadership of PÂR is shared between academic lead, Professor Catherine Robinson, an NCMH Principal Investigator based at Bangor University's Centre for Mental Health and Society, and service-user lay leads Alan Meudell and Huw Davies.

Successes

Since its inception the group has had many successes. For example, members facilitated a workshop to look at research priorities for mental health service users in South Wales.

The findings of the workshop were presented at a conference and later published in the Research and Involvement Journal in 2017.

Individual members have also had their own successes in a diverse range of roles, from taking advisory positions in research projects to embarking on their own PhDs.

Get involved

We are looking to expand the membership of the group and raise awareness of what can be achieved in mental health research through collaboration.



There are lots of ways you can use your experience to contribute to mental health research, including:

- Meet with researchers and generate research ideas
- Provide feedback on research proposal and grant applications
- Attend events where we promote involvement in research

We can provide support to help make the most of your involvement.

PÂR works with Health and Care Research Wales' Involving People Network who offer a range of free training and support events about getting involved in research.

Find out more about joining PÂR:

**E: par@cardiff.ac.uk
T: 029 2068 8401**

Express yourself

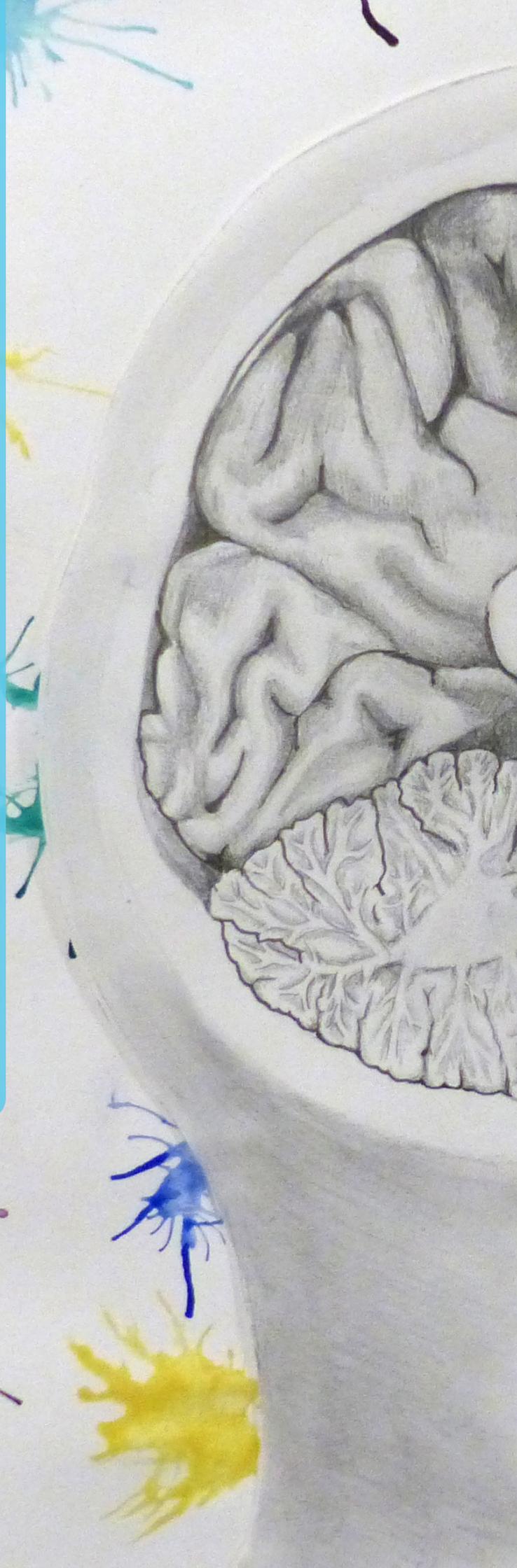
We teamed up with My Discombobulated Brain and Tilly Ellis, a medical student at Cardiff University, to run our second student art competition.

We asked students at Cardiff University to get inspired by mental health and create a piece of original artwork to display at an exhibition to celebrate University Mental Health Day.

Sadly this year's exhibition had to be cancelled due to the heavy snow that brought Cardiff to a standstill. We were thrilled to still be able to get the submissions judged!

Congratulations to winners LMJ, Kirby Evans and Rucira Ooi who took first, second and third prize respectively. Congratulations as well to runners-up Hayley Moulding, Megan Hunter, Angharad May, Rebecca Fraser, Naomi Warne.

To see more photos of our competition entries visit the NCMH Facebook page.





Take my advice

Joanne is a research nurse and mental health campaigner. In 2016, she decided to tell her line manager that she was struggling to cope.



I first received support with my mental health when I was 16 years old, which was also around the time I got my first job.

I have been in some form of employment pretty much since then. There were three years where I did my nurse training, which often felt like having a full-time job.

This was when I first identified that exhaustion and night shift work were some of my triggers.

However, it wasn't until Jo began to work full-time when she was 21 that her mental health started to cause her problems at work.

Mental health at work

I was working in the civil service job, and I ended up taking a period of long-term sickness due to my mental health. I struggled at this point in my life to articulate how I felt, and I never once confided in my manager or colleagues.

As a result of this, I impulsively decided to leave that job and become a nurse instead, as you do.

Fast forward 10 years to the present day, and my current job. I'm a registered nurse and I work within a clinical specialty.

❖ In 2016 I experienced a marked and rapid deterioration in my mental health and I was struggling to cope.

My sleeping pattern had gone out of the window and I had swung into a deep depression.

I emailed my manager and asked if I could speak to her in private, and it was like the floodgates just opened and it all came rushing out. I told her everything that had happened over the years, and about my diagnosis.

I just felt like such a failure. But my manager was wonderful: she comforted me and made sure that I knew my welfare and taking the time needed to get better was the priority.

During my absence, my manager kept in touch with me via text message, which I really appreciated as I often found it impossible to talk on the phone. I felt 'in the loop' about what was going on, and when I was ready to go back it helped that I wasn't suddenly overwhelmed with three months' worth of information to digest.

Reasonable adjustments

Between my occupational health nurse, my manager and myself, we devised a plan of reasonable adjustments to help me at work.

These include things like taking additional short 'reset breaks' when I'm feeling stressed, and adjusting my working time with earlier starts and finishes to allow me to spend more time with my husband, who is my main source of support.

We also have a 'catch up' session together each week, usually over a coffee, where we talk about how I'm feeling.

I haven't always been 'out' about my mental health problems – in fact, this is the first job where my manager and immediate colleagues have even known about them.

Their support has been invaluable, and with some tweaks to my working pattern, I am better able to manage my mental health at work.

I've been back for eight months and I'm doing well. I still get bad days, sometimes bad weeks too. By making some reasonable adjustments, my employers are helping me manage my bipolar and keep me healthy at work.

It's so important we talk about mental health at work. I'm not saying that everyone should go to work tomorrow and disclose their personal situation but the conversation around it being normal is happening in the media, between family and friends. Why should work be any different?

If you would like to share your story in a future issue of NCMH Insider or on our blog, contact us at info@ncmh.info.

Our online research



3000 people have taken part in our research online. This is what we have learnt:

Demographics



78% identify as female



45-64 is the most common age range



51% are employed, 17% are retired and 11% are students

Lifestyle



74% do not smoke



63% have had an alcoholic drink in the past week

Experiences



64% have been diagnosed with, or received treatment for, a mental health problem



70% are currently receiving treatment - either medication, talking therapies or a combination of both



Depressive disorder is the most common diagnosis (75%), followed by anxiety (57%), PTSD (10%), postnatal depression (10%) and bipolar disorder (7%)



19% experienced an episode of illness during pregnancy or within six months of childbirth



Meet the team: Božo

I'm Božo Lugonja and have been working as Research Coordinator with the National Centre for Mental Health since July 2014.

My background is in biomedical research and before coming to the NCMH I hadn't worked in mental health research at all.

I've never really worked in an environment like NCMH before; there's a huge mix of roles, with scientists, clinicians, bioinformaticians, psychologists and admin staff all working together to reach our goal of better understanding mental health conditions.

Primarily my role involves curating all the samples that are donated to NCMH and projects that NCMH support. Day to day this means I spend my time managing the samples, how they're used and making sure that we adhere at all times to our ethics and the Human Tissue Act.

This involves being meticulous about the very smallest of details, something that definitely scratches the scientist itch in me!

I'm also responsible for coordinating our genotyping projects, which involve working with local researchers and international collaborators on exciting projects looking at

the genetics behind a range of mental health conditions.

Outside of work, I'm really passionate about science communication and volunteer as Vice-Chair for the British Science Association Cardiff branch. We regularly hold Science Cafes and public engagement events around Cardiff and South Wales. I really enjoy hearing about and bringing exciting new science to the public.

Alongside my regular role, I try to get involved in NCMH public engagement events whenever I can. I get the opportunity to meet potential participants, explain our work and hear stories about their experiences.

I also host our podcast, Piece of Mind. In each episode we discuss a particular mental health condition from the perspective of a researcher and someone with lived experience; we've had some great conversations and have cleared up a lot of misconceptions and stigmas.

Our participants are core to our work and all our samples are donations from real people who want to help our research; it's a real privilege to be working on such a positive project.

About NCMH

The National Centre for Mental Health (NCMH) brings together world-leading researchers from Cardiff, Swansea and Bangor Universities to learn more about the triggers and causes of mental health problems.

We aim to help improve diagnosis, treatment and support for the millions of people affected by mental ill-health every year, as well as tackle the stigma faced by many.

To find out more, or to help with our research, visit ncmh.info or phone us on 029 2068 8401.



Ymchwil Iechyd
a Gofal Cymru
Health and Care
Research Wales



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NCMH Insider is also available in Welsh. To request a copy please contact info@ncmh.info

