

Mental Health Service User & Carer Bulletin

Issue Six: March 2015

This is the sixth issue of the Mental Health Service User and Carer Bulletin from the CRN: Mental Health Coordinating Centre. This bulletin is available by post or email. In these bulletins we provide news about mental health research and advertise user involvement opportunities both within the NIHR and with other organisations.

These bulletins are additionally placed online at <http://www.crn.nihr.ac.uk/mentalhealth/>

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Please note that for events organised by LCRN's or local NHS trusts, travel expenses are usually only able to be offered to people living in the area covered by that LCRN or NHS trust. Please always check beforehand. The views expressed in articles in this bulletin are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of CRN: Mental Health or Kings College London.

Good-byes

Sadly we have said goodbye to some members of our patient and public involvement team this year who will be really missed.

Tim Rawcliffe- Tim worked as the PPI Development Officer for the North West Hub of the Mental Health Research Network for almost 10 years. In that time, Tim championed and facilitated meaningful involvement in the development of many large scale mental health research studies. Tim has now left his post at the Clinical Research Network and is working on an NIHR funded programme grant, PARTNERS2; a national, multi -site study exploring the provision of care for individuals with longstanding mental health problems, who are no longer under secondary services.

Kate Coulson has left her position in development to go back to clinical work as an Occupational Therapist. She said that she feels hugely privileged to have worked with you all and has learnt so much over the last 3 years. Kate would like to thank all the PPI coordinators across the MHRN and to Lisa, Megan and Thomas for all their support over the years! “Your enthusiasm and innovative ideas have been an inspiration throughout!”

Lisa Doughty has left her position as our PPIE Manager. She has now taken up her new post as a research assistant at the Kings College London Biomedical Research Centre. We wish her well.

Transition update

Following the local network transition last year the coordinating centre is transitioning to new structures. Whilst this bulletin will no longer be produced news will continue to flow via your local networks and we encourage our readers to sign up for the Campaign newsletter (see page 7).

Experience has shown us that by working collaboratively we can really achieve great things. The new structure will provide opportunities for collaboration on a larger scale and we look forward to sharing with you more opportunities for involvement which will be cascaded via the CRN both locally and nationally.

Staff within the coordinating centre are in the process of moving into roles within the new structure but this will take some time to complete. Zena Jones has been appointed Head of Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement, other PPIE roles will be appointed to over coming weeks.

A valuable legacy: Service user and carer involvement in CRN: Mental health

The CRN: Mental Health (formerly the Mental Health Research Network) was set up in 2003. Between then and now, service user and carer involvement in the CRN: Mental Health has gone from strength to strength.

Click on the below link to read interviews with Til Wykes (Director of the CRN: Mental Health) and George Szmukler (Associate Director with special responsibility for involvement), detailing the history of involvement in the CRN: Mental Health and their hopes for the future.

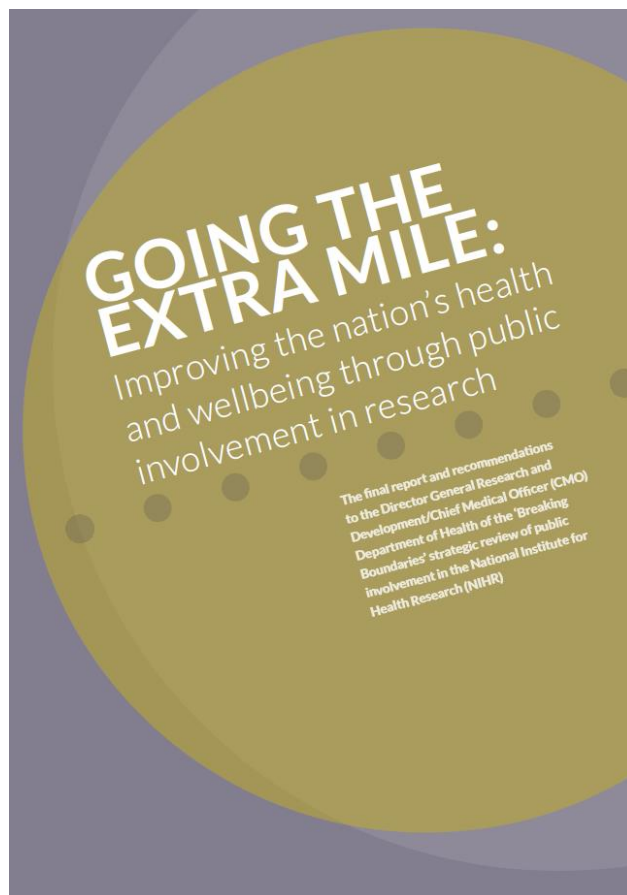
http://www.crn.nihr.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads//mentalhealth/sites/21/PPI_CASE%20STUDY_FINAL.pdf

Report and Recommendations of the Breaking Boundaries Review Released

A strategic review of public involvement in the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), 'Going the extra mile', is published. The report is based on the Breaking Boundaries strategic review of public involvement in the NIHR.

The review of public involvement in the NIHR, commissioned by the Director General Research and Development/Chief Medical Officer in March 2014, provided an opportunity for an independent review panel to assess how far the NIHR has been successful in achieving public involvement across its activities to date and to recommend a direction for the NIHR for the future that builds on these achievements.

Patients, carers, researchers and international, third sector and industry representatives contributed to the review by submitting documents, audio and video evidence, completing questionnaires and online surveys, and through taking part in workshops, meetings and social media, all of which informed the final report and recommendations.



Simon Denegri, the National Director for Patients and the Public in Research and Chair of INVOLVE, who led the review said:

'Every day patients and the public go the extra mile to help make UK research happen. They help decide research priorities, shape its design and spread the word about its importance to fellow citizens. The public have already made a huge difference to NHS research and the work of the NIHR. We must match their commitment with an equal resolve to involve voices from all parts of the community in all that we do'.

Read the full report at:

<http://www.nihr.ac.uk/get-involved/Extra%20Mile2.pdf>

Are you an experienced mental health trainer with expertise in bipolar or schizophrenia?

The PARTNERS2 research study, funded by the NIHR programme grant for health, is looking for an experienced mental health trainer to work immediately with the team to develop a training manual and deliver training to front line mental health staff. The trainer must have personal experience of schizophrenia, bipolar or psychosis and draw on these experiences in their work.

What is PARTNERS2?

PARTNERS2 aims to help primary care and community based mental health services work more closely together. We think this could be achieved by developing a system of collaborative care based in GP surgeries where many adult service users are seen regularly by an experienced mental health worker who acts both as overall co-ordinator or care partner (supporting individuals to access other services and activities) and therapist. This person would see the person regularly, help them help themselves and facilitate recovery in the broadest sense and, where required, call on the talents of other parts of the health service, particularly secondary mental health care and voluntary/community organisations. This is a simple idea - but we need to work through all the details carefully by testing things out and then set up a pilot trial to see if it makes a difference to the care provided and try out the use of a range of outcome measures.

More information is available at:

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/activity/mds/projects/HaPS/PCCS/partners2/index.aspx>

You can find out more about the service user and carer involvement in PARTNERS2 by clicking here:

<http://mcpin.org/wp-content/uploads/Our-PPI-plan.pdf>

Tender specification

We are looking to appoint a trainer to work for up to 4 months (April – July 2015).

This short project involves:

- Working with researchers on the PARTNERS2 team to write a training manual. This manual draws on a year of research into recovery, collaborative care and service user / care experiences of current care pathways for people with schizophrenia and bipolar.
- Working with researchers on the PARTNERS2 team to develop a 2-day training programme for mental health staff in collaborative care. The staff will be drawn from the three pilot areas – Devon, Birmingham and Lancashire.
- Working with researchers on the PARTNERS2 team to deliver the 2-day training programme on collaborative care as part of a training team that will include Academic GPs and/or psychiatrists (who are experts in collaborative care), PARTNERS2 lead researchers developing the intervention and other people as required. The role within the training team will be to specifically to draw on personal experiences of mental health problems alongside training expertise.

PARTNERS2 is based in Devon, Birmingham and Lancashire. The lead for the development of the training is in Exeter and thus the trainer needs to be able to travel easily to Exeter for face to face meetings.

The budget for the work is £300 per day (including VAT). We estimate that over the 4 months this will require up to 15 days. The maximum cost of this contract will be £4,500 including travel expenses.

Interested?

Please contact:

Vanessa: Vanessapinfold@mcpin.org or Ruth: R.C.Gwernan-Jones@exeter.ac.uk

To apply: please send your CV, including two referees and covering letter explaining why you are suitable and why you are interested in this work to either Ruth or Vanessa by 7th April 2015. We will short list from CVs and invite people to interview in order to commission this work.

Sign up to the McPin Foundation for more opportunities to get involved in mental health research!

Last month, the McPin Foundation released their first patient and public involvement bulletin. In these bulletins they provide news about mental health research and advertise any relevant user and carer involvement in research opportunities and events within the McPin Foundation (www.mcpin.org). They also advertise opportunities for people to get involved in mental health research with other organisations.

The McPin Foundation exists to transform mental health research by putting the lived experience of people affected by mental health problems at the heart of research methods and the research agenda. To find out more about the McPin Foundation please have a look at our website: www.mcpin.org

Sign up to receive information on opportunities to get involved in mental health research at the McPin Foundation by clicking the following link!

<http://mcpin.org/resources/our-bulletin/>

If you would like to find out more about getting involved at the McPin Foundation, please email Thomas Kabir (thomaskabir@mcpin.org) or phone 0207 922 7874.

Kent, Surrey and Sussex – Research Matters Event

The Clinical Research Network: Kent, Surrey and Sussex will be holding a special event - Research Matters - for members of the public/patients from Kent, Surrey and Sussex on Saturday 16th May at The Holiday Inn, Gatwick.

The event is to celebrate research in Kent, Surrey and Sussex, to give the public from KSS a chance to have their say on some of the challenges that we face regarding clinical research, and to provide an opportunity for them to thank people who have been involved with research. Lunch will be provided for delegates, and travel expenses will be reimbursed.

Registration for Research Matters is now open, and it's first come, first served. Please go to <http://www.crn.nihr.ac.uk/kent-surrey-and-sussex/patient-carer-and-public-information/> and follow the Research Matters Event link for further information and to register.



McPin Public Involvement in Research Bulletin

Issue 1: January 2015

Happy New Year! This is the first edition of the quarterly McPin Public Involvement in Research bulletin. In these bulletins we provide news about mental health research and advertise any relevant user and carer involvement in research opportunities and events within the McPin Foundation. We also advertise opportunities for people to get involved in mental health research with other organisations.

If anyone has anything that they would like to be in our involvement bulletin or if you would like to be placed on the mailing list to receive future editions of the bulletin then please let us know. You can email us at contact@mcpin.org or phone 0207 922 7874.

To sign up as a supporter of the McPin Foundation and to receive our organisational newsletter, also produced quarterly and distributed by email, please click [here](#) or go to www.mcpin.org





National Institute for Health Research
Clinical Research Network:
Kent, Surrey and Sussex

Research Matters

Saturday 16th May

Holiday Inn, Gatwick 10am-3pm

- Learn about & celebrate (the birthday of) Clinical Research
- Have your say & contribute your ideas about some of the challenges for Clinical Research
- An opportunity for us (CRN) to say thank you



For more information please contact Margaret Hall
email: margaret.hall@nihr.ac.uk www.crn.nihr.ac.uk/kent-surrey-sussex

Coming together to learn, celebrate & make a difference

Contribute to a new health research journal!

The innovative, new co-produced open access journal, Research Involvement and Engagement, has recently launched with publisher BioMed Central Ltd.

This is a very exciting time for PPI as RIE is currently looking for patients and members of the public to help make the journal work.

RIE focuses on patient and the wider public involvement and engagement in research at all stages. The journal provides a platform for all articles that develop our understanding of the concept, theory, and methods of involvement and engagement in research, as well as evaluations and analyses. It aims to improve and expand patient and public involvement in research, including greater collaboration across all health and social care.

Visit <http://www.researchinvolvement.com/> to learn more.

Unlike traditional academic journals, all articles within *RIE* will be reviewed by at least one academic and one patient reviewer; with both reports carrying equal weight in the editorial decision. ***RIE* is currently looking for patient reviewers to sign up to the journal**; due to the subject area of the journal, the patient reviewers will be viewed as subject-area experts.

At *RIE*, we are aware that patients and the public do not have the same advantages that academics receive when reviewing articles; therefore, we are looking to give some of these advantages to our lay reviewers as well, including a structured reviewer form, designed specifically for evaluating PPI in research. We will also be providing access to training and materials to help with reviewing articles; support and feedback for any articles you may want to write or submit; and waiver of publication costs for articles submitted to *RIE*.

RIE's co-Editors-in-Chief, Sophie Staniszewska, PPI lead at the Royal College of Nursing Research Institute at Warwick Medical School, and Richard Stephens, an involved and engaged patient and carer from the UK, said: *"Research Involvement and Engagement aims to develop the evidence-base underpinning patient and public involvement and engagement in health research. Our joint editorship is a genuine collaboration between a patient and an academic, and signals our intention to work towards the co-production of knowledge that informs health care practice. We want to walk the walk as well as talk the talk, and we look forward to you joining us as fellow travellers on our journey, and as fellow contributors in this new journal."*

If you would like to get involved with Research Involvement and Engagement, or would like to inquire into becoming a patient reviewer for the journal, please contact us at researchinvolvement@biomedcentral.com or tweet us at [@MedicalEvidence](https://twitter.com/MedicalEvidence).

NIHR Clinical Research Network – 'Campaign' Newsletter

'Campaign' is the Clinical Research Network's newsletter for patients, carers and the general public.

Stories include:

- Public awareness campaigns, such as OK to ask and Research changed my life.
- National initiatives you may find interesting. For example, they are establishing a group that will bring together managers who work with patients, carers and the public, lay representatives and Network staff. This group will help coordinate and share good practice for patient, carer and public involvement and engagement
- National questionnaires and surveys that will help to shape our patient, carer and public involvement and engagement work

If you would like to sign up to receive Campaign please click [Here](#)

AN INVITATION TO THE LAUNCH OF **PSYCHIATRY AND THE BUSINESS OF MADNESS**

When: June 12, 7:00 p.m. | **Where:** Palgrave Macmillan, The Stables Building,
2 Trematon Walk (near Kings Cross Station), London, N1 9FN.

MANDATORY RSVP: To attend you must be on the confirmed guest list.

Please RSVP to lauren8spring@gmail.com

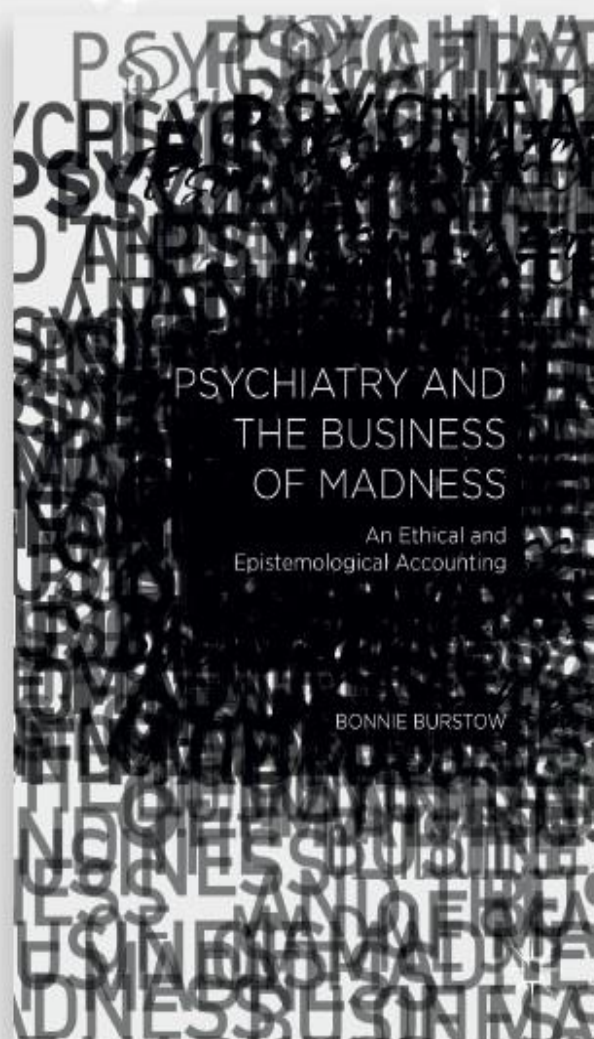
You are cordially invited to the UK launch of Bonnie Burstow's revolutionary new book—*Psychiatry and the Business of Madness: An Ethical and Epistemological Accounting*—the very first in a series of international book launches. Why is everyone so excited about this book? Because it is the most hard-hitting and comprehensive critique of institutional psychiatry that has come out in decades. Speakers at the launch include the author herself, Ian Parker, Cheryl Prax, and Julie Wood. The evening will culminate in a spirited survivor speak-out. Join us, and if so inclined, become a speaker yourself.*

Bonnie Burstow is a one of the world's leading psychiatry abolition theorists, a philosopher, an activist, a prolific author, and a faculty member at OISE at the University of Toronto. Her books include: *Psychiatry Disrupted: Theorizing Resistance and Crafting the Revolution*; *Radical Feminist Therapy: Working in the Context of Violence*; and *Shrink-Resistant*. Please visit bizomadness.blogspot.ca for updates on Bonnie's research.

Ian Parker was co-founder and is co-director (with Erica Burman) of the Discourse Unit (www.discourseunit.com). He is Professor of Management at the University of Leicester. He is a member of the Asylum: Magazine for Democratic Psychiatry collective, and a practising psychoanalyst in Manchester. His books include *Revolution in Psychology: Alienation to Emancipation* (Pluto, 2007).

Cheryl Prax is a survivor and an activist who has contributed to Asylum. She is well known for her tireless work in Speak Out Against Psychiatry and her combatting of ECT.

Julie Wood is a CPA, CA who has spent most of her life working in the government and non-profit sector. More recently, she has joined her husband to support various ventures related to providing the public with information about the true risks of prescription medication (see SSRIstories.com, RxISK.org).



*If you are interested in being a part of the speak-out, please indicate that in your RSVP or simply speak during the speak-out portion.

**You will not be allowed to enter if you are not on the confirmed guest list
so please RSVP to lauren8spring@gmail.com. We surely want to see you!**

Relaunch of I4A project as the Patient Research Ambassador Initiative

The Patient Research Ambassadors Initiative (formerly Involvement4Access project) is a joint partnership between the NIHR Public Engagement & Participation Directorate, NIHR Clinical Research Network and NHS England. Its aim is to help open up research opportunities and choices for patients by promoting the role of Patient Research Ambassadors in local NHS care organisations. The initiative provides the tools, guidance and information needed for NHS Trusts and GP surgeries to develop these roles to help optimise patient experience in respect to health research in their organisation.

The Patient Research Ambassadors Initiative (PRAI) has a vision of a patient-centred research culture as part of NHS organisations across England. Simon Denegri, Chair of PRAI and NIHR National Director for Public Participation and Engagement in Research says:

“We know that 95 percent of patients and the public feel it’s important that clinical research takes place in the NHS*. Patients using NHS services should have greater access and better information about clinical research happening locally so they have the knowledge required to make informed choices about their care options. Patient Research Ambassadors are a great way of ensuring this happens and help the Trust achieve a more patient-centred research culture.”

Patient Research Ambassadors are patients, carers or lay people with a passion for clinical research. They want to help improve the way other patients are informed about research so that they have more opportunities and choices about participating in research studies as part of their NHS care.

More details and information is available on the [Patient Research Ambassadors website](#), including a new booklet on the Patient Research Ambassador role.

Benefits Advice Service for patient and public involvement in research

New confidential service launched on 29 January 2015

- A new service offering personal advice and support on how payment of fees and expenses for public involvement might affect people in receipt of state benefits
- National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) in partnership with others is offering a service that covers advice on payment of fees and expenses for public involvement in health or social care research, service design or service delivery
- The service will be provided by Bedford Citizens Advice Bureau, initially as a pilot for one year.

Who is the Benefits Advice Service for?

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) is offering this confidential service to:

- **members of the public involved** with NIHR organisations or NIHR funded research projects.
- **staff within NIHR organisations** who are supporting members of the public to get involved.

INVOLVE is funding this service on behalf of, and for the NIHR. Other partners who are also part of the service are:

- NHS England
- Health Research Authority(HRA)
- Involving People (Wales)
- Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) and Think Local, Act Personal (TLAP)

Further information is available on the INVOLVE website : www.invo.org.uk/resource-centre/benefits-advice-service/

Training Opportunity! Building Research Partnerships – Wednesday 22nd April 2015, Bristol

This is a great opportunity for researchers and members of the public to find out more about involvement in research. Register now for this free training opportunity.

**Have you ever wanted to get involved in research, but don't know where to start?
Are you a researcher who would like to involve the public in your research, but don't know how to recruit or train them?**

For: People interested in getting involved in research, and researchers interested in involving patients and carers in their research

What: The workshop will outline the different types of research methods and terminology used in research and how the public can get involved, as well as exploring the issues related to becoming and being a member of the public involved in research. The workshop will be run by experienced facilitator Jamie Spencer. Free. Lunch provided

When: Wednesday 22nd April 2015 9.30am - 4.30 pm

Where: University of the West of England (UWE), Glenside Campus, Blackberry Hill Bristol BS16 1DD

More info: Kim Thomas, PPI Administrator, kim.thomas@nihr.ac.uk 0117 3421251

Booking: Please register [here](#).

Prudential Ride London - Surrey 100 – Help raise money for mental health research!



Sunday August 2nd 2015

The McPin Foundation needs you!

Ride London is a 100 mile cycle ride from London to Surrey, taking place on Sunday 2nd of August 2015 – it will be a truly special event for all involved!

It's not too late to join our team and ride for mental health research. Help us make a difference by raising funds to support a cause that affects us all.

Do you fancy a challenge for 2015? Is supporting mental health research something that's close to your heart?

If you'd like to find out more then please either email contact@mcpin.org or phone 020 7922 7877.

The McPin Foundation are a small mental health research charity based in London. You can find out more about us at www.mcpin.org

Jobs at McPin!

The McPin Foundation are currently recruiting for 3 new positions, including a Public Involvement in Research coordinator post, a Researcher post and a Senior Researcher post. Click [Here](#) to find out more.

Sharing Best PPI Practice – CRN: Mental Health Event

On 5 December 2014, CRN: Mental Health hosted a ‘Sharing Best Practice in Patient and Public Involvement (PPI)’ event at King’s Fund in London. The day aimed to celebrate and cascade the specialist skills, knowledge and resources developed within the network to support PPI in Mental Health research. Resources promoted ranged from guidelines on good PPI practice and budgeting for involvement, to specialist advisory groups and informed consent training resources.

The morning began with a welcome address from Professor George Szmukler, in which he summarised the last 10 years’ achievements in Mental Health PPI. Professor Szmukler highlighted that there are now 2,000 people on the database who wish to be involved in research; that 700 studies have gone through the Mental Health Delivery committee, all with service user involvement; and that an international review in 2010 found that the Network had made ‘world-leading developments in PPI’. Lisa Doughty and Megan Rees then took over as the joint Chairs, introducing the current position of PPI in Mental Health. The Specialty sees around 120 research studies per year, which all have meaningful PPI from the outset, and the team often receive requests from other organisations within NIHR for advice and help, due to the transferable models that they have developed. CRN: Mental Health send out a monthly Mental Health Service User and Carer Bulletin to engage with this large community, and work with a number of external organisations to optimise their limited pool of resources.

Attendees then heard from representatives of three of the PPI groups that CRN: Mental Health facilitates: the Young People’s Mental Health Advisory Group, the Carer Reference Group and the Military Mental Health research steering group. A common theme through all three presentations was the great benefits that come from being involved in shaping and improving research. Positives mentioned include: training provided, knowledge gained, the feeling of ‘giving something back’ and the experience of working with like-minded people.

All three specialist groups were set up to answer a need for specific input into Mental Health research, and a growing demand from researchers to access the specific knowledge and experience members hold. Prior to their development, people under the age of 30, those who care for mental health service users, and military veterans, were all under-represented in, or absent from existing advisory groups.

After lunch a presentation about the FAST-R service (Feasibility And Support to Timely recruitment for Research) was given by Jim Drennan and members of the FAST-R team. An extremely popular service with researchers, FAST-R enables service user and carer input into research proposals and documentation within seven working days. Jim revealed that more than 100 studies have now been reviewed by FAST-R, which has over 20 skilled and experienced service users and carer advisors on the team. FAST-R has received feedback that 100% of researchers who used the service would recommend it and would use it again.

Other presentations included details of informed consent training resources, guidelines for employing service user and carer researchers and Cochrane collaborations. Simon Denegri, National Director for Public Participation and Engagement in Research and chair of INVOLVE, closed the event by talking about and taking questions on the future of PPI in NIHR.

Young People's Mental Health Advisory Group: ReThinking Mental Health Research event

On 29th January, CRN: Mental Health hosted a ground-breaking young people's mental health research event at British Library in London. Planned by the Young People's Mental Health Advisory Group, the event was entitled, '**Young People ReThinking Mental Health Research**' and aimed to highlight the need for research in this area as well as the difference young people can make to the research process.

Over 160 delegates from within the NIHR family, Mental Health Trusts, Universities, Charities and Young People's groups attended to learn about current research and the work of the group.

The event was opened by Charles Walker, MP, who has been a committed campaigner in the area of Mental Health since entering parliament in 2005. Touching upon his own experiences, Charles talked about the past silence around mental health but how we are now talking and more open about it. Charles described the growing crisis within our schools and how Young People should be demanding improvements in the system – making the point now is the time for action. Charles closed by emphasizing how Mental Health does not define us; but the generosity of our spirit and how we can support each other at difficult times.

Josh, Gus, Sarah and Will from the group then took to the stage to quiz the audience on their knowledge of young people's mental health and mental health in general. The stark facts presented were followed up by a presentation by Cynthia Joyce on why we need more research into mental health and how the public can help. The morning finished with a thought-provoking debate on gender and mental health, discussions on which extended well into the lunch break!

After lunch, the Young People's Advisory Group presented an informative and thought-provoking presentation on the group, why they formed, how they make a difference to research and their experiences of being involved. After this two of the Young People, Matilda and Susannah, enjoyed quizzing Sir Iain Chalmers, Professor Til Wykes, Professor Janet Treasure and Jonathan Sheffield on the Psychiatrists couch.

A drama piece explored stigma and suicide, and this was followed by updates on current research from Professor Graham Thornicroft and Professor Swaran Singh on the topics of stigma and transition respectively. Finally the young people encouraged the audience to make pledges committing to how they will make a difference for their 'Tree of Hope for Young People's Mental Health Research' before closing.

A big thank you and congratulations to all members of the Young People's Mental Health Advisory Group for all their hard work in contributing to and taking part in this event.



Susannah is a member of the Young People's Mental Health Advisory Group, you can read her story here:

http://www.crn.nihr.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/mentalhealth/sites/21/SUSANNAH%20PAGE_CASE%20STUDY_FINAL.pdf

Mental Health in the news

The Guardian, 'Claims about co-pilot Andreas Lubitz's mental health only serve to stigmatise depression' – March 27th 2015

<http://www.theguardian.com/science/head-quarters/2015/mar/27/andreas-lubitzs-germanwings-crash-mental-health-stigma-depression>

Daily Mail, 'Being highly educated DOESN'T make you any happier than being a school dropout, study reveals' – March 27th 2015

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-3012726/Being-highly-educated-DOESN-T-make-happier-dropout-study-reveals.html>

This article refers to a study conducted by Warwick University, which suggests that education may not improve our life chances of happiness. You can read more about this study by clicking:

http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/newsandevents/pressreleases/education_may_not/



A Manifesto for Better Mental Health

Rethink and various other mental health organisations have joined together to write a manifesto for better mental health which includes 5 key actions ahead of the general election in May 2015.

You can read full details of the manifesto here:

<http://www.rethink.org/get-involved/campaigns/a-manifesto-for-a-better-mental-health>



Will Stringer, one of the members of the Young People's Mental Health Advisory Group appeared in the Warrington Guardian on 20th February 2015.

You can read his story here:

http://www.warringtonguardian.co.uk/news/11807167.Super_League_stars_can_help_mental_health_sufferers_seek_support/

Videos: 'What it's like and how it feels to enter the care system'

A collection of award winning videos created by young care leavers in Cambridgeshire.

My Name is Joe

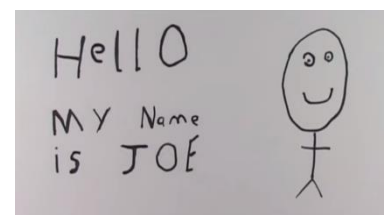
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArBjWe3lWs0>

Finding My Way

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L1qZggHoFmM>

Our House

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fs-RVgsFfcA>

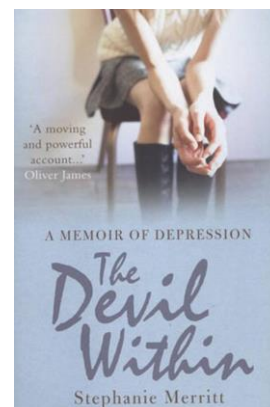


The Devil Within: A memoir of depression

Author: Stephanie Merritt

Published by: Vermilion

ISBN: 9780091917463



This memoir sees British writer Stephanie Merritt give an honest account of her battles with depression, eating disorders, bipolar disorder and post-natal depression. The book covers a large timespan: from adolescence into the author's late 20s.

Written in 2008, Merritt has come a long way from a life of extreme turbulence, and is now a successful feature writer for The Guardian and The Observer. More than anything, this book is a work of hope for the times when mental anguish can subsume any prospect of a more positive future.

The most striking feature with this novel is the clarity of prose when describing such a turbulent rollercoaster ride of euphoric highs and devastating lows. This narrative educates readers about mental health issues in a way that may not be fully captured by medical journals or academic text. There is also a great deal of humour amidst the chaos. As a reader, you can't help but feel swept along with the writer's journey. Several of life's milestones are covered: first love, university, unemployment and financial difficulties, family relationships, grief, religion, work, motherhood.

It is apparent during Stephanie's teenage years that she always held a drive to succeed in her personal and professional life. Studying provided a temporary escape from the ruthless school bullies who made fun of Merritt's appearance, middle class background and ultimately her self-esteem. As a high achiever destined for Cambridge, it may have been unwisely assumed that Merritt's demons were behind her. Yet striving for perfection is both a blessing and a curse: the thoughts and feelings internalised from childhood later become deep-rooted in Merritt's psyche.

It is during university that Merritt begins to experience greater extremes in her moods. For the first time, Merritt belongs to a social circle and is free to live as an independent young adult. As a result, alcohol and late nights fuel periods of hypermania and extravagance.

The writer's description of life during her university years is likely to resonate with many readers - particularly those with bipolar disorder - as the onset of the condition often arises during the late teens into the early twenties. It is the seemingly minor details or the briefest of stories that can reassure a fellow sufferer that there is someone else who feels the same way. In fact, it was only much later on that Merritt was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder Type II, after returning to the doctors during a depressive episode.

The latter part of Merritt's story focuses on her journey through pregnancy as a single mother and the subsequent depression after giving birth. This honest account of thoughts and feelings pertaining to this part of Merritt's life may help expectant and new mothers who feel a similar way.

To conclude, this memoir is a must-read for anyone interested in the realities of living with a mental health condition. More specifically, I recommend this memoir for people with Bipolar Disorder Type II, post-natal depression and clinical depression. I also recommend it for people in their 20s who may feel there isn't hope in the future, as well as to professionals who fear they can't sustain their career aspirations if they have mental health problems.

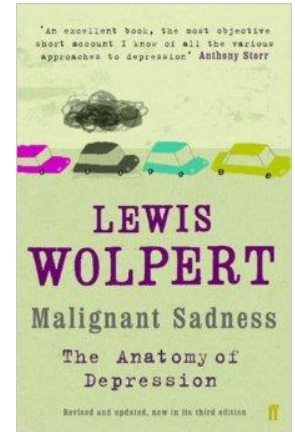
Reviewed by Emma Wilson

Malignant Sadness – The Anatomy of Depression

Author: Lewis Wolpert

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The author is a Professor of Biology at University College London, a happily married man and father and yet this academic, successful in his working and private life, descended into a serious depression convinced he would never work again let alone recover. His raw honesty is very brave, considering the stigma attached to mental health. However, when he wrote an article about his depression in the Guardian newspaper he received a great deal of positive response which astonished him, but he emphasized that "*It was quite easy for me to write about since I had a secure academic position and so nothing to lose.*" Thank goodness he did write about it and as a result depression was discussed in a much more open manner.

The focus is on 'serious depression', severe, clinical, chronic and major are other terms that are used to describe the type of depression that has such a profound effect on a person's every day life it is disabling in every way possible. Analogies are used to leave you in no doubt how serious the illness of severe depression is ie: "*Normal sadness is to depression what normal growth is to cancer.*" As a carer of a close relative who suffers with severe depression regularly, this analogy completely resonates.

The book is not a quest in indulgent self pity, far from it. The author identifies the following four reasons for writing his book:

1 TO HELP THOSE LIVING OR WORKING WITH A SUFFERER TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF DEPRESSION

2 TO HELP DEPRESSIVES TO UNDERSTAND THEMSELVES

3 TO REMOVE THE STIGMA ASSOCIATED WITH DEPRESSION

4 TO TRY AND UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF THIS DREADFUL AFFLICTION IN SCIENTIFIC TERMS

Wolpert navigates the history of depression throughout the centuries, throughout different cultures and not for the faint hearted, describes explicitly the depths to which mental and comorbid physical health can decline when out of control. Equally, this is balanced in chapter 12 What Works? Every conceivable aspect of management tool for depression is covered here, from medical trials, therapies, drug medication, natural remedies, self-help and placebo. It is clearly emphasized that everyone is unique and it is trial and error to find what works for each individual and equally important, tremendous leaps in improved treatment have been made in the last century and we are entering an exciting new era where medical technology is advancing at an incredible pace increasing our understanding of mental health.

Has Wolpert achieved his four reasons for writing his book?

In a word, yes.

1 This book undoubtedly helps you to consider the driving force behind bizarre and inappropriate words used and actions taken by the depressed individual, a major culprit for this being 'anxiety.' Irrational anxiety to the non-sufferer, but a reality for the sufferer. Understand the origins of the anxiety, in the mind of the sufferer and you have a starting point.

2 Clear, unambiguous examples of the authors's and others experiences are given, both positive and negative, from the depths of despair to hope for the future, during and post recovery. Information is knowledge, knowledge leads to greater understanding and understanding assists greatly in management of oneself.

3 Wolpert explores historical and cultural attitudes towards mental health which is both enlightening and fascinating. He is frank in his writing of the far reaching effect on family and friends. He explores the guilt and shame experienced by sufferers and relatives alike, which feeds a wall of silence and perpetuates the stigma. He advocates an openness and honesty about depression because "Ignorance about depression is a major obstacle to helping."

4 To understand this illness in scientific terms, to date, is as, or even more complex than the mind itself. In all honesty I struggled to understand some of the concepts at times. However, what was overwhelmingly apparent was the minds capacity to swing in and out of reality and the control and power it can exert over the physical body. The known scientific reasons, or current thinking for the latter are explained in detail and although will satisfy some questions, I believe will throw up more questions than answers.

If you are looking for a 'cure', you won't find it - BUT it is being sought. What you will find, is hope and a future, Lewis Wolpert is living proof of both.

Reviewed by Lynne Pearson