

**WOLFSON INSTITUTE OF POPULATION HEALTH
NEWSLETTER
ISSUE 66: 15 November 2024**

In this issue of our Wolfson Institute of Population Health Newsletter, we celebrate the achievements and work of staff and students in late October and the first half of November.

FROM OUR DEPUTY INSTITUTE MANAGER

Dear Colleagues

This newsletter is another great example of the breadth and depth of the work being carried out across the Institute, and I do hope you enjoy reading it.

I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome Charlotte Harding, our new Manager for the Centre for Primary Care, who joined us earlier this week. Please make her feel welcome if you see Charlotte around the Institute.

You may be aware, following yesterday's all staff notice, that all local Staff Survey Action Plans have now been published, and are available [here](#). The WIPH Action Plan was drafted over the summer, with support from a number of volunteers from across the Institute. I'm grateful to those who contributed their time to join the working groups and feed into our Action Plan. Do take a look, and if you would like to be more involved in the development and implementation of our plan, or have any questions, please contact me!

One of topics that stood out in our survey response was our working environment, and we were keen to include some actions around improving our physical working spaces. Following further discussion at our most recent Executive Board you will start to see some changes over the coming weeks across our sites.

Our initial focus will be on the Wolfson Building at Charterhouse Square, where we have committed to decluttering offices and storage spaces, better enabling hybrid working, and transforming some of our existing spaces into meeting rooms. We will be asking colleagues for help and support with this, as there is a lot to do - so please bear with us while we work through this!

With best wishes

Megan



MEET WIPH

MEET – Abdoulie Gibba (CCSPED), Clinical Trials Applications Developer

How would you describe your roles and responsibilities?

I design, implement, and maintain database systems that support efficient storage, retrieval, and management of our data. I analyse user requirements, optimise performance to ensure data integrity and accessibility, troubleshoot issues, and provide technical solutions to support our goals. I also ensure that our sensitive data is protected.

What has been your greatest professional achievement?

The successful development of the Best4 Screening and Heartburn Health databases, which were integrated with an application programming interface. Automating routine data import tasks by integrating our internal systems with external vendor systems will save significant time, and minimise potential human errors during data import and export.

What aspects of your role do you enjoy the most?

Problem solving: designing efficient data structures to handle complex requirements, writing optimised queries, and seeing everything come together seamlessly is incredibly satisfying. I enjoy the challenge of making systems run faster and more reliably, and knowing my work is contributing to smooth and effective data-driven decision-making. Also the collaborative aspect, working with different teams to translate their needs into technical solutions. There's a sense of accomplishment in creating a system that users can interact with easily, while ensuring data is secure and well-structured for current and future needs.

What would be your second choice as a profession

Business and farming both appeal to me. Business, because the connections established through team-work and collaborating with partners and clients lead to professional and personal growth, and I enjoy the interaction and support that come

from being part of a business community. And farming, because there is something empowering about nurturing seeds and seeing them develop into vegetables or fruits for harvest, and self-sufficiency provides a sense of accomplishment and a greater appreciation for the food on your plate.

What do you enjoy doing outside work?

I enjoy watching football (particularly Chelsea!), and also love travelling, for the opportunity to explore new cultures, meet different people, and gain new perspectives to broaden my understanding of the world. Swimming is another passion - a great way to stay fit, but also relaxing.

Something most people don't know about you?

My parents had no formal education, and our family faced significant financial challenges. Growing up as kids in Africa, we experienced firsthand the obstacles that come with accessing education when resources are scarce. On many occasions I was sent out of school because I couldn't afford the fees, often not attending classes for weeks. To help fund our primary education, my siblings and I worked on the farm from a young age. Despite the hardships, these experiences instilled in me a strong sense of resilience, the courage to face challenges head-on, and the patience to endure difficult situations, qualities that have become the foundation for my personal and professional growth.

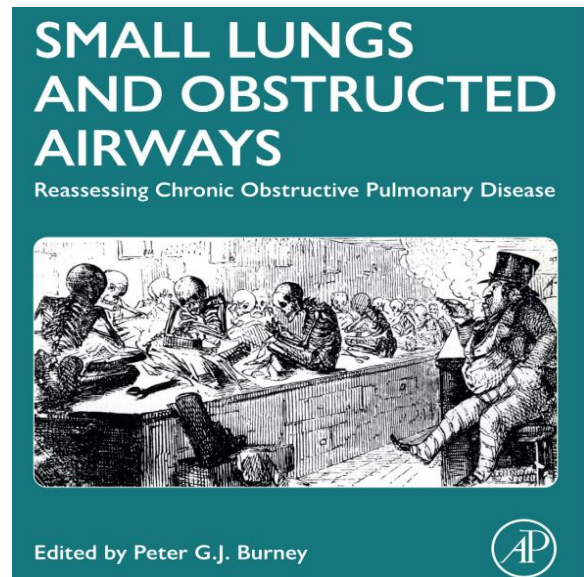


GENERAL INSTITUTE NEWS

New book: Small Lungs and Obstructed Airways

31 October (Seif Shaheen. Centre for Preventive Neurology)

A new book, re-assessing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, features 2 chapters authored by Seif Shaheen. Published by Elsevier Science, the book considers the link between chronic respiratory disease and associated mortality with smaller lungs rather than obstructed airways, and explores other factors contributing to poor lung health in addition to air pollution, occupational exposures, and cardio-metabolic disease. Seif is co-author on Chapter 5 (Infection), and sole author of Chapter 8 (Early life origins of impaired adult lung function).



Global Public Health Crisis: Prioritising Women's Health

31 October (Matina Iliodromiti. Centre for Public Health and Policy)



At a workshop in London, co-hosted by QMUL and Cornell University on day one of Cornell's 2024 Global Hubs Network Meeting, Matina Iliodromiti delivered a presentation on women's health research in East London. The workshop, 'Global Public Health Crisis: Prioritising Women's Health', focused on some of the most urgent challenges and opportunities in women's health, and how these findings can offer valuable insights on a global scale. The 2024 Global Hubs Network Meeting brought together nearly 100 representatives from 18 international universities across 9 countries to explore collaborative approaches to advance education, research, and societal impact.

The environmental impact of haematology

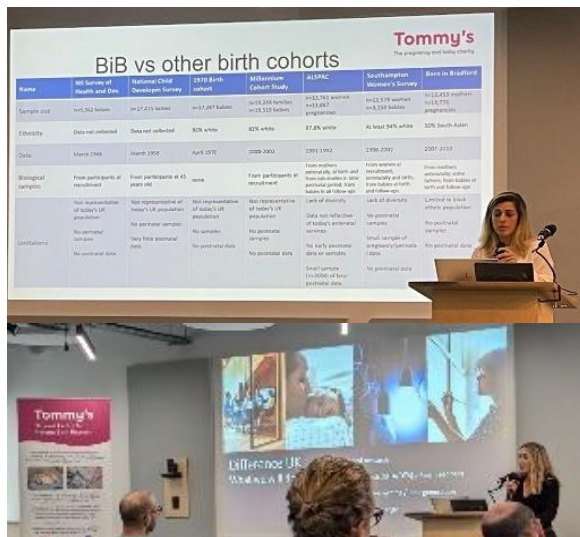
1 November (Stephen Hibbs. Centre for Primary Care)

Speaking on the environmental impact of haematology, Stephen Hibbs was featured on the European Haematology Association's 'EHA Unplugged' weekly podcast. In this episode the conversation highlighted how climate change alters aspects of haematology practice (eg: the risk of transfusion-transmitted infections due to evolving disease vectors), and practice changing initiatives (eg: using sevoflurane instead of desflurane as an anaesthetic) to reduce environmental impact, and concludes with Stephen advocating for practical changes in clinical practices and increased awareness of the healthcare sector's contribution to global emissions.



Annual Tommy's National Centre for Preterm Birth Network event

4 November (Matina Iliodromiti, Elena Greco. Centre for Public Health and Policy)



At the annual Tommy's Preterm Birth Centre Network event hosted by Imperial College London, Matina Iliodromiti and Elena Greco both delivered presentations. Elena spoke about co-production, and Matina presented with Nigel Simpson (Leeds University) on the importance of diverse and low agency birth cohorts to improve outcomes, facilitate innovation and promote equity. The Centre brings together experts with the aims of advancing understanding of the causes of preterm birth, and delivering new and innovative preventive treatments.

Children as young as two treated for obesity-related illness in England

5 November (Sonia Pombo. Centre for Public Health and Policy)

New NHS data show that thousands of children in England as young as 2 are being treated for health complications linked to severe obesity. In 2023-24, 9.6% of reception-age children were classified as having obesity, up from 9.2% in 2022-23. As experts warn of an escalating public health crisis, Sonia Pombo told the Guardian that: 'This is the result of the previous government's



hands-off approach to public health. The power is now in the hands of the new government to deliver meaningful and lasting change for improved health.'

Obesity

Children as young as two treated for obesity-related illness in England

NHS data shows one in 10 reception-age pupils now have obesity as experts warn of public health crisis

Andrew Gregory Health editor

Tue 5 Nov 2024 16:00 GMT

< Share



ACCESS International Consensus Group on Cervical Cancer

6 November (Matejka Rebolj. Centre for Cancer Screening, Prevention and Early Diagnosis)



ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION – CANADA (invite-only)

Turning the tide: collaborating to address cervical cancer screening participation and equity in Canada

Addressing Canadian cervical screening experts, Matejka Rebolj spoke about the international perspective on HPV self-sampling as a tool to increase cervical screening participation, as part of a series of events to support the ACCESS Consensus Group's White Paper 'Turning The Tide: Recommendations To Increase Cervical Cancer Screening Among Women Who Are Under-Screened'. Matejka has previously spoken in support of this initiative in roundtable discussions at the EU Parliament. ACCESS, an international consensus group on cervical cancer, is now preparing a statement specifically addressing access to cervical screening in the UK.

Website for cluster randomised trials (including stepped wedge)

6 November (Claire Chan. Centre for Evaluation and Methods)

A paper in *Trials* promotes a QMUL website, created as an online resource to facilitate quality trials and methodological research on cluster randomised trials (in which groups of individuals, or clusters, are randomised to treatment arms) and stepped wedge cluster randomised trials (where clusters are randomised to sequences). The website covers design, analysis and reporting for both types of trials and contains resources, including explanations of relevant papers, and a noticeboard for announcements and



events. Authors welcome suggestions from the research community on further resources or events to add.



Changing the culture and structure of mental health

6 November (Victoria Bird. Centre for Psychiatry and Mental Health)

INTERNATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH COLLABORATING NETWORK

Our Call for Transformation

LAUNCH CONFERENCE

CHANGING THE CULTURE AND STRUCTURE OF MENTAL HEALTH

Our Call For Transformation sets out the need for fundamental changes in mental health services and practices in the UK.

For many years traditional services have failed people and this must change.

This conference will set out what needs to be done in a Whole Person, Whole Life - Whole System approach.

We will outline examples of innovative practices and services in the UK and internationally.

Participants will be invited to adopt a conference declaration in support of our campaign for real transformation

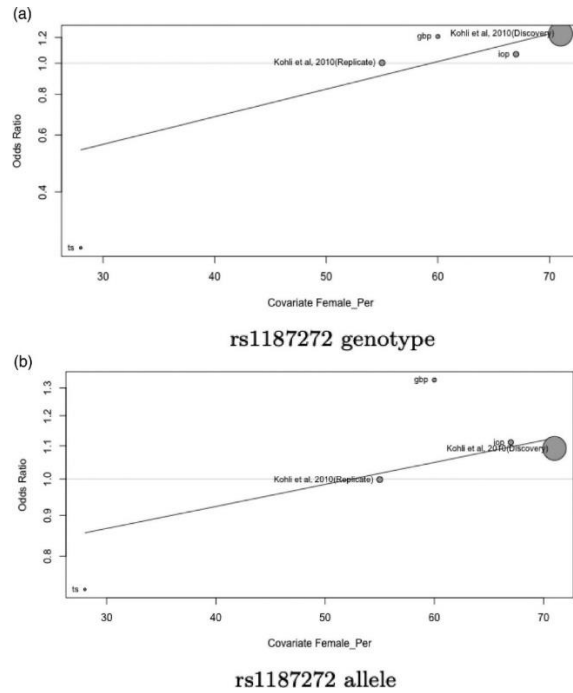


Launching a 10yr campaign ('Our Call for Transformation'), to transform mental health services and practices in the UK, a landmark mental health conference held at QMUL has addressed the systemic failures of the current mental health system in the UK, and proposed compassionate alternatives for both crisis intervention and longer-term support. Sponsored by the International Mental Health Collaborating Network, E. London NHS Foundation Trust, and QMUL, the conference on 'Changing the culture and structure of the mental health system' welcomed a raft of distinguished speakers, including Victoria Bird, who both participated in and co-organised the conference.

Association of NTRK2 gene with suicidality

6 November (Georgina Hosang. Centre for Psychiatry and Mental Health)

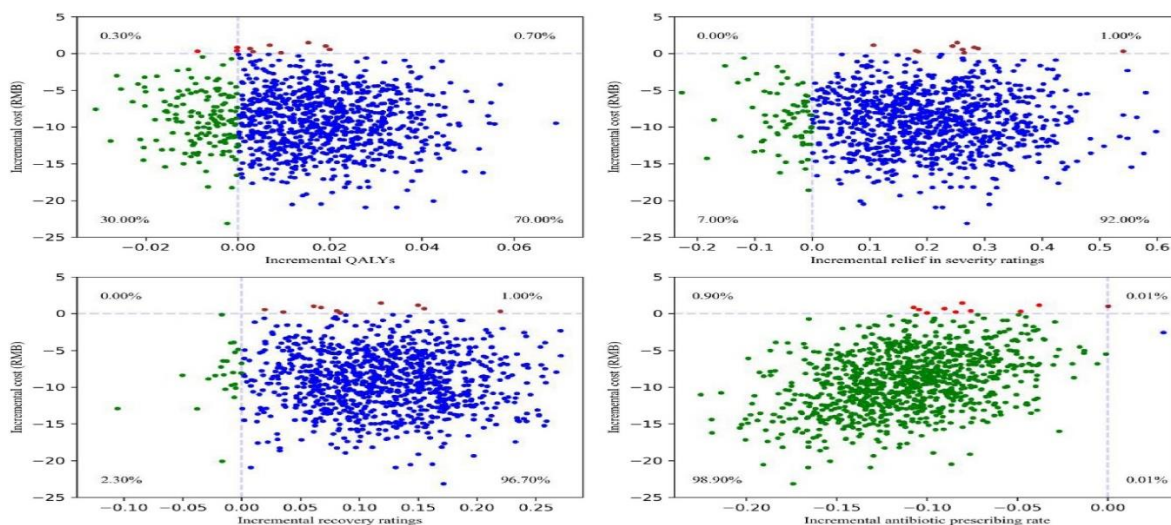
Building on previous work showing a supporting a role of the brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) gene in suicidal behaviours, researchers have explored the association between NTRK2 single nucleotide polymorphism (SNPs) and suicidal ideation/behaviours. The NTRK2 gene encodes neurotrophic receptor tyrosine kinase 2, a receptor for BDNF. A literature search and meta-analysis on 20 NTRK2 SNPs across up to 8467 samples revealed 3 SNPs to be nominally associated with suicide attempts, but none of these survived multiple-testing corrections, and none of the haplotype blocks showed significant involvement in suicidality. These results suggest that the NTRK2 gene may not have a major role in suicidality.



An intervention to reduce antibiotic prescribing in rural China

6 November (Beth Stuart. Centre for Evaluation and Methods)

Results from an RCT evaluating an intervention to reduce antibiotic use in patients with respiratory tract infections in rural China show that participants in the intervention group compared with controls had a lower antibiotic prescribing rate (55.25v66.67%), markers of antibiotic use (defined daily dose:1.57v2.75), prescriptions of ≥ 2 types of antibiotics (9.78v11.58%), and obtaining antibiotics from retail pharmacies (3.68v5.78%) or from other clinics (2.70v4.05%). The intervention resulted in a cost reduction of 1.471 USD per consultation episode and an incremental cost-effectiveness ratio of -1233.33 USD/QALYs, and was not associated with any major adverse event. The intervention consisted of a half-day clinician training, a WeChat-based peer support group, a decision aid, a public commitment letter and a patient leaflet.



Building Creative Health workshop

7 November (Alison Thomson, Megan Clinch. Centres for Preventive Neurology/Public Health and Policy)

As part of the Being Human Festival, Alison Thomson, Megan Clinch, and visual artist Liz Atkin conducted a workshop on 'Building Creative Health', in which participants explored how to make access to healthcare more creative, and how to use creativity to support health. The workshop centred on discussions, creativity and collaborative drawing, and participants were encouraged to create a shared vision of an inclusive and accessible future for what is meant by 'creative health.' The festival is the UK's national festival of the humanities, and is led by the School of Advanced Study (U. of London).



Micro-costing genomics: Challenges and opportunities

7 November (James Buchanan. Centre for Evaluation and Methods)

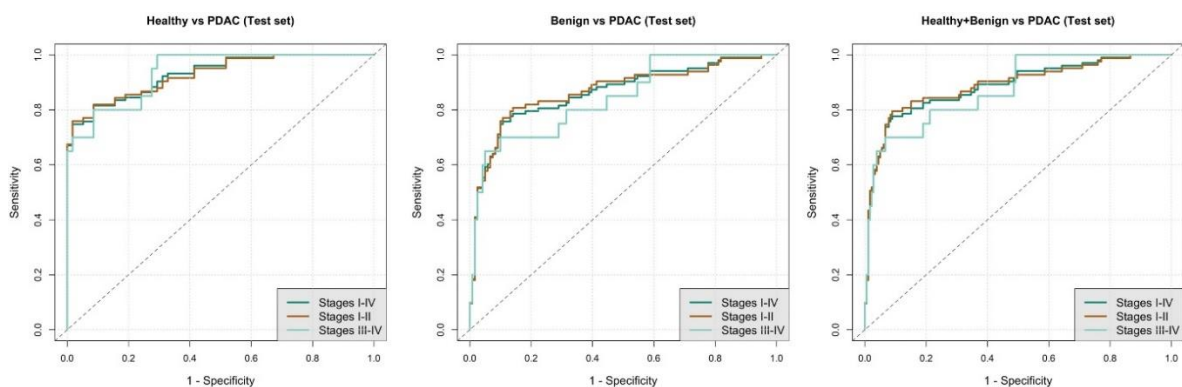


A commentary on micro-costing analyses of genomic sequencing presents strategies to improve the quality and consistency of micro-costing estimates and discusses key challenges, including multiple purposes of genomic technology, disaggregation and sourcing of resource use and unit price, rapid development of technology, uncertainty and variation in workflow processes and related resource utilization, generalizability and transferability of findings, and the critical role of clinical expertise and collaboration. Authors say the relevance of studies has been limited by the level of detail used to document inputs, assumptions, and data sources and that, to produce more generalizable evidence, micro-costing studies of genomics should clearly define the technologies analysed, document factors like sequencing methods and cost adjustments, and explore uncertainty through probabilistic analysis.

PancSure test for detection of pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma

7 November (Oleg Blyuss. Centre for Cancer Screening, Prevention and Early Diagnosis)

To address the lack of a non-invasive test for earlier detection of pancreatic cancer in higher risk individuals, researchers have devised PancSure, a test based on protein biomarkers LYVE1 and REG1B, measured in urine by enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay, and commonly utilized serum/plasma CA19.9, with an updated version of the PancRISK algorithm for data interpretation. Validated in a cohort of 565 patients, PancSure is a noninvasive clinical-grade test with a 48hr turnover, ready for implementation without any costly instrumentation, thus providing a viable solution for the earlier detection of pancreatic cancer in at risk groups for improved patient care.



DHSC announces publication of HPVValidate cervical self-sampling results

8 November (Matejka Rebolj, Jo Waller. Centre for Cancer Screening, Prevention and Early Diagnosis)

The Department of Health and Social Care has announced publication of the final results from the HPVValidate study, commissioned and funded by Public Health England to evaluate HPV self-sampling v standard clinician-taken cervical screening tests. The study followed a 2019 National Screening Committee recommendation that evidence was needed on the potential of HPV self-sampling, which could be offered to people who rarely or never attend cervical screening and are at higher risk of HPV infection and associated disease, to improve the NHS Cervical Screening Programme in England. The DHSC blog, co-authored by Matejka Rebolj and Jo Waller, summarises results from 2 reports on the accuracy and acceptability of self-collecting samples, and attitudes to self-sampling as a choice in future cervical screening. Participants' experiences of self-sampling were 75% excellent/25% good, and 85% said they would like to be given a choice between self-sampling or clinician screening, but 48% would prefer a recommendation of which method they should use.

Blog

UK National Screening Committee

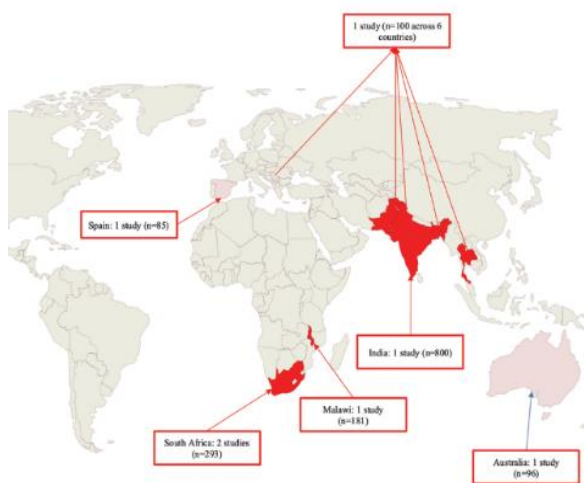
HPVvalidate cervical screening self-sampling study publishes final results

Dr Jo Waller, Dr Matejka Rebolj and Carolina Martinelli, 8 November 2024 - NHS Cervical Screening Programme



Cardiac imaging and circulating biomarkers in patients with Pulmonary TB

8 November (Dominik Zenner, Centre for Public Health and Policy)



A review of evidence on the prevalence of cardiac pathology, based on cardiac imaging and circulating biomarkers, in patients with pulmonary tuberculosis (PTB) finds only one study that evaluated cardiac biomarkers, and studies evaluating myocardial or coronary disease on advanced imaging remain limited. Pericardial effusion was the commonest reported cardiac pathology in PTB. Authors call for more research to determine prevalence of, and disease mechanisms associated with cardiac pathology among patients with PTB.

British Association of Art Therapists annual conference

9 November (Megan Tjasink, Centre for Psychiatry and Mental Health)

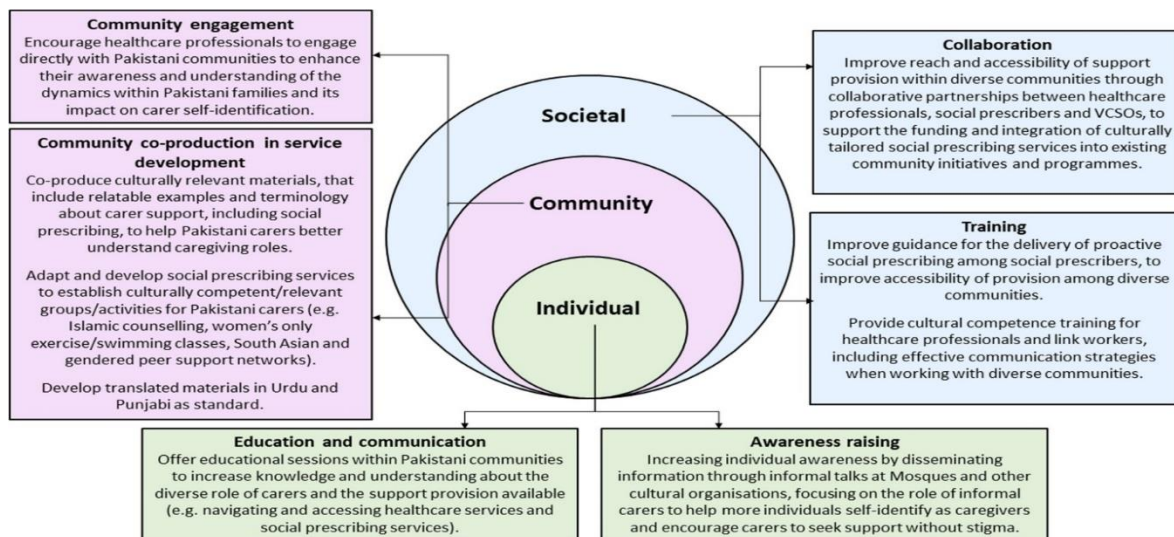
At the 2024 Annual Conference of the British Association of Art Therapists, held in London, Megan Tjasink presented on 'Art therapy to reduce burnout and mental distress in healthcare professionals in acute hospitals: a randomised controlled trial'. Megan delivered findings from the CHArt trial, a 6-week intervention of specified group art therapy for healthcare professionals at risk of burnout. The theme of this year's conference was 'Art therapy and innovation: attending to context and relationship.'



Culturally relevant social prescribing to support Pakistani carers in the UK

10 November (Megan Armstrong, Nathan Davies, Abi Woodward. Centre for Psychiatry and Mental Health)

Investigating the potential role of culturally relevant and adapted social prescribing to meet the needs of Pakistani carers (who experience higher levels of social isolation compared with White British carers), researchers conducted interviews with Pakistani family carers and social prescribing stakeholders in London and Sheffield. Authors identify a lack of knowledge of social prescribing within Pakistani communities, and say there is a need for more culturally competent support, culturally relevant education, awareness-raising, and collaboration among primary care and voluntary/community sector organizations to better support Pakistani carers through social prescribing, which acknowledges and addresses the complexities.



Barts Clinical Trials Unit launches first newsletter

12 November (Cherelle Salmon. Centre for Evaluation and Methods)



The first issue of the new quarterly Barts Clinical Trials Unit (CEM) Newsletter has been published. The Autumn 2024 newsletter includes news on trials, publications, milestones, PPIE, and events, and has been disseminated to a range of stakeholders, including funders, charities, other academic groups, and local communities. If you have news you'd like included in a future edition, please contact the Editor.

Cancer stage at diagnosis in migrants v non-migrants

12 November (Adam Harvey-Sullivan, Parveen Dhesi, Joseph Hart, Helena Painter, Fiona Walter, Garth Funston, Dominik Zenner. Centres for Primary Care/Cancer Screening, Detection and Early Diagnosis/Public Health and Policy)

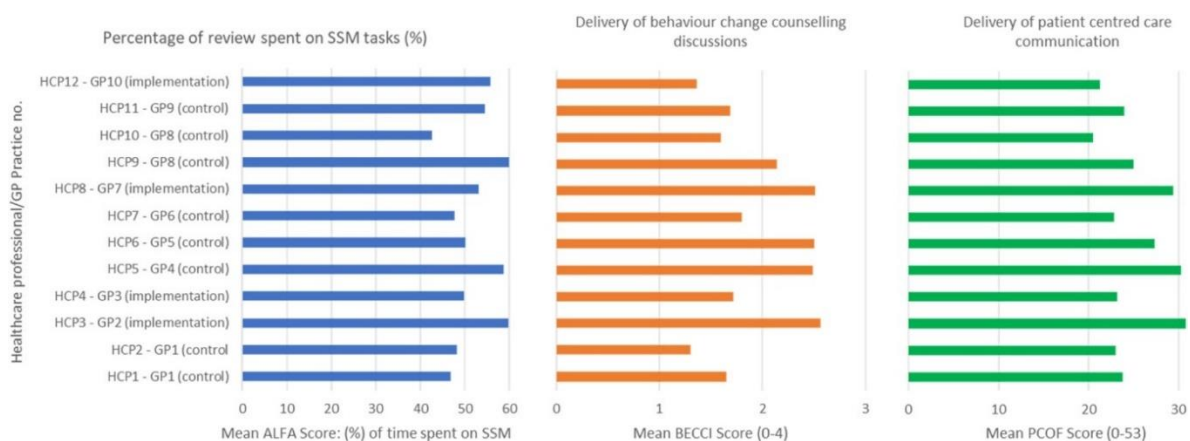
Comparing the differences in cancer stage at diagnosis between migrants and non-migrants, researchers conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of 34 studies conducted in OECD countries. Findings showed that migrants were significantly less likely to be diagnosed with early stage cancer compared with non-migrants (OR 0.84), a difference maintained across cancer types, although only statistically significant for breast (OR 0.78) and prostate cancer (OR 0.92). Authors say that variation by cancer type, study location and region of origin highlights the need for further research to understand these differences.



Supported Self-Management in Primary Care Asthma Reviews

12 November (Liz Steed. Centre for Primary Care)

A project nested in the IMPLementing IMProved Asthma self-management as RouTine (IMP²ART) programme investigates how healthcare professionals (HCPs) deliver supported self-management (SSM) for asthma in clinical practice, and to what extent patient-centred care and behaviour change discussions are delivered. From video-recordings of HCPs conducting routine face-to-face and telephone asthma reviews, results showed that HCPs in UK primary care spent half the time delivering components of SSM, in both face-to-face and remote reviews. Reviews carried out in IMP²ART implementation group practices demonstrated more behaviour change and collaborative SSM strategies than those in the control group.



Inaugural Lecture: Sarah Finer

12 November (Sarah Finer. Centre for Primary Care)



Our congratulations to Sarah Finan, on presenting her inaugural lecture on 'Looking East to Discover the Finer Things in Life and Diabetes' at the Perrin Lecture Theatre in Whitechapel on Tuesday 12 November. Sarah shared her personal story, from her family's radical past in Whitechapel, to her role as co-lead of the Genes & Health study, and also spoke about her work on reducing health inequalities by addressing the specific challenges faced by Black African and Black Caribbean communities through personalised medicine.

36th International Papillomavirus Conference (IPVC 2024)

12-15 November (Jo Waller, Matejka Rebolj, Adam Brentnall, Belinda Nedjai, Sofia Vidali, Efthymios [Makis] Ladoukakis, Zhe [Scott] Yang. Centres for Cancer Screening, Prevention and Early Diagnosis/Evaluation and Methods)

Teams from CCSPED and CEM presented their work at the IPVC Conference in Edinburgh. Jo Waller displayed a poster on attitudes to self-sampling as a choice in future cervical screening. Matejka Rebolj co-chaired a session with Adam Brentnall on the validation of self-sample HPV tests and a roundtable event on building collaboration in cervical screening, and also presented a poster on the HPVvalidate report results on self-sampling devices and HPV test combinations. Belinda Nedjai co-chaired a session on detecting and managing cervical precancerous lesions in women living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa, and presented findings from a study utilising DNA methylation to stratify HPV-positive individuals living with HIV. Belinda also co-chaired a session on integrating evidence into action for cervical cancer prevention in the Middle East/N.Africa, and was a speaker in a session on liquid biopsies for HPV-related disease in clinical practice. From Belinda's team, Sofia Vidali, Efthymios (Makis) Ladoukakis, and Zhe (Scott) Yang all presented posters.



IPVC 2024

Report on dementia training for care workers highlights NIDUS intervention 13 November (Claudia Cooper. Centre for Psychiatry and Mental Health)

A new Alzheimer's Society report, '*Because we're human too: Why dementia training for care workers matters, and how to deliver it*', highlights the NIDUS-Professional intervention as a best practice exemplar case study. NIDUS (New Interventions for Independence in Dementia Study)-Professional is a training and support programme for homecare workers. The report, launched at a parliamentary reception, cites a recent evidence and policy review from the QMUL NIHR Dementia and Neurodegeneration Policy Research Unit (DeNPRU, co-directed by Claudia Cooper), and describes NIDUS-Professional as 'impactful, simple to use by social care staff and for people living with dementia to receive'. The Alzheimer's Society is calling on the Government to make dementia training mandatory for the social care workforce in England, among whom nearly 2/3 carers have not received any dementia training.



NHS DigiTrials launches search for participants for WIPH-led cancer trials 15 November (Peter Sasieni, Ranjit Manchanda. Centre for Cancer Screening, Prevention and Early Diagnosis)

NHS DigiTrials has launched a search for nearly 150,000 volunteers to take part in 4 research trials, 2 of which are led or co-led by WIPH researchers, that could transform cancer treatment. BEST4 Heartburn Health, co-led by Peter Sasieni, is

the biggest trial being supported and needs 120,000 volunteers to help test a new screening technique for oesophageal cancer. Jointly funded by CRUK and NIHR, the [trial](#) will explore if a test, which involves swallowing a compressed sponge on a string to extract oesophageal cells and reduces the need for invasive endoscopy, can prevent deaths from oesophageal cancer when offered as routine screening. The [PROTECT-C](#) trial, funded by Yorkshire Cancer Research and co-led by Ranjit Manchanda, will recruit 5000 women to take part in saliva-based tests to check their genetic risk of developing ovarian, breast, endometrial and colorectal cancer.



NHS DigiTrials
supports search for
150,000 clinical trials
volunteers



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Celebrating publication of *Global Health Governance* (2nd edition)

5 December, 18:00-20:00

All are welcome to join this event celebrating the publication of the second edition of *Global Health Governance*, by Andreas Papamichail (WIPH) and Sophie Harman (School of Politics and International Relations). The authors will be discussing key themes from their book in the Old Library, Garrod Building – with refreshments to follow. Click [here](#) to book your place.

Book launch:
Global Health Governance (2nd Ed.)
by Sophie Harman & Andreas Papamichail

6-8pm Thursday 5th of December 2024
Old Library, Garrod Building, Turner Street, E1 2AD

Join us for a roundtable discussion of the key themes of the book, followed by refreshments!

Register here

This event will be **hybrid** (in-person and online). To join us virtually, please also register using the QR code.

BISA British International Studies Association
Queen Mary University of London Global Policy Institute

GLOBAL HEALTH GOVERNANCE
SECOND EDITION
SOPHIE HARMAN AND ANDREAS PAMICHAIL

AWaRe Festive Showcase

18 December, 5-8pm

The CPMH Aging Well Research Group (AWaRe) invite you to attend a festive showcase of their work, with short films and presentations to highlight their research studies we have conducted in 2024. Mulled wine and nibbles will be provided, and all are welcome to attend the event in The Griff, Garrod Building, Turner Street. Please email [Grace Shepherd](mailto:Grace.Shepherd@qmul.ac.uk) to let her know you will be attending.



Many thanks to all who so enthusiastically contribute. Please send any news items for the next newsletter to j.a.mackie@qmul.ac.uk