

Psychotherapy research: evidence and its discontents

Date: Monday 13 July 2026

Location: in-person | RCPsych, London

Time	Session
09.00am	Registration and refreshments
09.30am	Welcome and introduction to the day Dr Vikram Luthra and Dr Giles Story
09.40am	Opening Keynote: Statistical Spin, Linguistic Obfuscation – The Corruptions of Science Farhad Dalal, psychotherapist and group analyst The ‘Psi’ professions – psychiatry, psychology, as well as some schools of psychotherapy –claim to be scientific disciplines grounded in empirical evidence. In this talk I will argue that much of the evidence is problematic, and on some occasions downright corrupt. I will suggest that the issue is not one of ‘bad apples’, but is systemic. In particular, I will interrogate the evidential claims for the efficacy of the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, and find them wanting.
10.25am	Grasping the Nettle: The Case for Psychotherapy Research Liz Allison, Director of the Psychoanalysis Unit, University College London. and Dr Emma Hotopf, consultant psychiatrist Dr Liz Allison and Dr Emma Hotopf will explore the challenges and benefits of engaging with research in psychotherapy for clinicians and for the field, drawing on examples from their own work with colleagues.
11.00am	Morning break Poster viewing
11.30am	Measuring Mentalising across Clinical Contexts: Some Lessons Learned - Implications for Practice and Research Dr Tobias Nolte, University College London

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	<p>In this talk I will outline some of the lessons learned from assessing mentalizing in clinical practice and research. I will draw on findings from a number of studies (RCT and others) to facilitate discussion around the utility of measuring certain capacities of people undergoing NHS mental health secondary care. I will try and outline some aspects of how measurement-based approaches have informed the development of MBT and conclude with an agenda of how this can be taken forward in the future - primarily with a focus of co-created approaches.</p>
<p>12.00pm</p>	<p>Panel Q&A and discussion</p>
<p>12.45pm</p>	<p>Lunch break Poster viewing</p>
<p>1.45pm</p>	<p>Service user involvement in an RCT of MBT for offenders with antisocial personality disorder Dr Jessica Yakeley, consultant psychiatrist</p> <p>Service user involvement in psychotherapy research is in its infancy. In this talk, I describe 2 qualitative studies exploring the experiences of peer researchers, and of Experts by Experience (individuals with lived experience of offending and mental health difficulties) involved in implementing a randomised controlled trial of mentalization-based treatment for antisocial personality disorder within the criminal justice system. Findings highlighted the unique contribution of shared lived experience in fostering epistemic trust, engagement and mentalizing, alongside significant challenges related to role ambiguity, power dynamics, boundary management and emotional toll. The studies underscore the need for robust training, supervision and organisational support when embedding peer roles in forensic interventions.</p>
<p>2.15pm</p>	<p>Mindfulness for difficult-to-treat acute depression: the implications of the respond trial for psychiatry Dr Florian Ruths, consultant psychiatrist</p> <p>Non-remission after psychological therapy for major depressive disorder is common, and there is no standard next-step treatment.</p> <p>This randomised trial evaluated mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) for adults who did not achieve remission after NHS Talking Therapies. MBCT was</p>

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	<p>delivered online and compared with treatment as usual. MBCT led to significantly lower depressive symptoms, was likely cost-effective, and no serious harms were reported. MBCT appears to be an effective, scalable, and cost-justified further-line treatment for depression, supporting its use within NHS Talking Therapies and similar clinical settings.</p>
<p>2.45pm</p>	<p>Physician, know thyself (and study it)' Conducting research on personal therapy in psychiatry as a trainee</p> <p>Dr Jennifer Dunn, Resident doctor in core training</p> <p>Dr Jennifer Dunn, a core trainee from Scotland, will outline the process of setting up a national study examining how psychiatrists (of all grades and subspecialties) use personal therapy. From study idea to research data collection via a national survey to analysis, she will hope to illuminate the processes involved and show that this is an undertaking trainees can engage in! Provisional findings from the study will be shared.</p>
<p>3.10pm</p>	<p>Panel discussion and Q&A</p>
<p>3.30pm</p>	<p>Afternoon refreshments Poster viewing</p>
<p>4.00pm</p>	<p>Large Group Experience</p> <p>Dr Maria Papanastassiou and All Delegates</p> <p>The large group will be a co creation from all delegates participating in the conference. It will provide an opportunity for delegates to express their thoughts and feelings about the conference and to find one's voice in a large group. The aim is for a creative discourse to take place where the experience of the day can be reflected upon and understood a little more. The large group conductor will introduce the group and time boundaries and facilitate the discussion and, via the lens of the large group, will aim to deepen the experience of the day.</p>
<p>5.00pm</p>	<p>Closing remarks</p> <p>Dr Vikram Luthra and Dr Giles Story</p>
<p>5.15pm</p>	<p>Close of conference</p>

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