



## **Evolutionary SIG Annual Conference 2021**

**Friday 29 October 2021**

@rcpsych #EPSIG21

# Useful Information

## Registration

Please join the conference at 08:55 ready for a prompt start at 09:00

## Conference materials and resources

- View the [Evolutionary SIG webpage](#)
- View the [conference programme \(PDF\)](#)
- View the [contents page of Evolutionary Psychiatry: Evolutionary perspectives on Mental Health \(PDF\)](#)

## Twitter

If you wish to tweet about the conference use [#EPSIG21](#) and mention [@rcpsych](#)

## Accreditation

This conference is eligible for up to 6 CPD points, subject to peer group approval.

## Certificates of attendance

Certificates of attendance will be emailed to delegates w/c 1 November 2021.

## Speaker presentations

Presentations will be available via the conference resources page within one week of the conference, for up to two months. All delegates will be sent details of this after the conference.

Please be aware that these presentations are kindly provided by the speakers but on some occasions, it is not possible to make these publicly available.

## Watch on Demand

Recordings and conference materials will be made available to all delegates for 2 months after the conference.

Recordings will be sent w/c 1 November and will be available to watch until

**Wednesday 29 December 2021.**

## Feedback

We would appreciate your feedback. All comments received remain confidential and are viewed in an effort to improve future meetings. [Complete the feedback form.](#)

## Speaker biographies and abstracts

[Read speaker information](#)

# Conference Programme

**Friday 29 October 2021**

Time	Session
09:00	<b>Welcome: EPSIG Chair</b> Dr Paul St John-Smith
09:05	<b>Chair: Dr Derek Tracy</b>
	<b>Keynote: Maternal negativity and child maltreatment: Evolutionary perspectives expand understanding and foster compassion</b> Dr Daniela Sieff (UK)
09:45	<b>Questions</b>
10:00	<b>Break</b>
10:30	<b>Chair: Dr Reem Abed</b>
	<b>Keynote: Preventive Evolutionary Psychiatry: Cross-Cultural Studies</b> Dr Gul Deniz Salali (UK)
11:10	<b>Questions</b>
11:25	<b>Break</b>
11:55	<b>Chair: Prof George Ikkos</b>
	<b>Keynote: Inflammation and Depression</b> Prof Edward Bullmore
12:35	<b>Questions</b>
12:50	<b>Lunch</b>

<b>13:35</b>	<b>Chair: Dr Annie Swanepoel</b>
	<b>Presentation by Tom Carpenter, winner of the 2021 Charles Darwin Essay Prize for core trainees: Why should I care about evolution? A thought exercise for mental health professionals</b>
<b>13:45</b>	<b>Keynote: Sex-Differences in Child and Adolescent Psychopathology: A Test of Evolutionary Hypotheses</b> Prof Jonathan Hill (UK)
<b>14:25</b>	<b>Questions</b>
<b>14:40</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>15:10</b>	<b>Chair: Dr Agnes Ayton</b>
	<b>Keynote: An Evolutionary Approach to Compassion: Understanding, Misunderstanding and Therapeutic Uses</b> Prof Paul Gilbert (UK)
<b>15:50</b>	<b>Questions</b>
<b>16:05</b>	<b>Chair: Dr Riadh Abed</b>
	<b>Keynote: Why anxiety is usually normal but useless: Clinically crucial knowledge</b> Prof Randolph Nesse (USA)
<b>16:40</b>	<b>Questions</b>
<b>16:55</b>	<b>Presentation by Matt Butler winner of the 2021 Charles Darwin Essay Prize for speciality trainees: Resignation Syndrome: An Evolutionary Perspective</b>
<b>17:05</b>	<b>Closing comments</b>
<b>17:15</b>	<b>Close</b>

*At the time of printing all information is accurate. We cannot be held responsible for any subsequent changes in the final programme*

# Speaker biographies and abstracts

**09:00 – 09:05**

## **SESSION 1**

Welcome: Dr Paul St John-Smith

### **Biography:**

Paul St John-Smith is a consultant psychiatrist retiring from the NHS in November 2020. He is currently chair of the Evolutionary Psychiatry Special interest group. Paul qualified as a doctor in Oxford. He then worked as a GP trainee and then in the pharmaceutical industry for 5 years until 1987. He then trained in psychiatry and became a consultant in Barnet 1994. He has worked as an in-patient and community consultant as well as in dual diagnosis. He has had interests in adult general psychiatry, psychopharmacology, evidence-based medicine, substance abuse and application of evolutionary theory to the understanding of mental disorder. He has published papers on these subjects as well as peer-reviewed research, review articles and editorials on evolutionary psychiatry.

**09:05 – 10:00**

## **KEYNOTE SESSION 1**

Chair: Dr Derek Tracey

### **Biography:**

**09:05 – 10:00**

## **KN1 – Maternal negativity and child maltreatment: Evolutionary perspectives expand understanding and foster compassion**

Dr Daniela Sieff (UK)

### **Biography:**

Daniela F. Sieff is an author and scholar. She has a doctorate in biological anthropology from the University of Oxford, and an active interest in the dynamics of emotional trauma and its healing. Daniela's doctoral research explored how evolutionary processes contribute to shaping human behaviour. Her research took her to a wilderness region of Tanzania to work with a traditional cattle-herding people. For the last couple of decades Daniela has been exploring emotional trauma and its healing through bringing together her own personal experience with knowledge that comes from depth psychology, neurobiology, anthropology and evolution. She is author of *Understanding and Healing Emotional Trauma: Conversations with Pioneering Clinicians and Researchers* (Routledge 2015), and currently working on a new book

### **Abstract:**

In Western culture, both the lay public and mental health professionals tend to believe that mothers evolved to love all their children instinctually and unconditionally. In

contrast, any mother who feels ambivalence or hostility towards her child is typically seen as unnatural, and a mother who maltreats her child is seen as behaving pathologically. This talk draws on evolutionary research to challenge this widespread view of motherhood. In particular, it describes how raising children has required mothers to negotiate a series of complex, precarious and layered trade-offs, and argues that maternal negativity and child maltreatment can arise from this. The goal of this talk will be to foster a more evolutionarily valid, nuanced and compassionate understanding of motherhood. Such an understanding has the potential to contribute to clinical work with faltering mothers, and also to programs focused on the preventing maternal maltreatment of children.

**10:30 – 11:25**

**KEYNOTE SESSION 2**

Chair: Dr Reem Abed

**Biography:**

**10:30 – 11:25**

**KN2 - Preventive Evolutionary Psychiatry: Cross-Cultural Studies**

Dr Gul Deniz Salali

**Biography:** Gul Deniz Salali is a British Academy Research Fellow and Lecturer in Evolutionary Anthropology/Medicine at University College London. She uses tools and concepts from evolutionary biology to answer questions on human behaviour and health. She has been conducting fieldwork in the Congo rainforest since 2013, living with the Mbendjele BaYaka hunter-gatherers. Deniz did her PhD in evolutionary anthropology at UCL studying cultural evolution in hunter-gatherers. She holds a double master's degree in evolutionary biology from the University of Groningen, the Netherlands and the University of Montpellier, France; and a bachelor's degree in molecular biology and genetics from Istanbul Technical University, Turkey. Her research has been published in journals including Science, Current Biology, and Nature Human Behaviour.

**Abstract:**

**11:55 – 12:50**

**KEYNOTE SESSION 3**

Chair: Prof George Ikkos

**Biography:** Prof George Ikkos, Consultant Liaison Psychiatrist and Chair RCPsych History of Psychiatry Special Interest Group. Former President RSM Pain Medicine and Psychiatry Section, Hon Visiting Res Professor London South Bank University, Joint Editor of Open Access Book "Mind State and Society: Social History of Psychiatry and Mental Health in Britain 1960-2010 (RCPsych/CUP 2021)

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/mind-state-and-society/113978B19265EDAD8CCA7567001475D1#fndtn-information>

**11:55 – 12:50**

**KN3 – Inflammation and Depression**

Prof Edward Bullmore

**Biography:** Ed Bullmore MB PhD FRCP FRCPsych FMedSci trained in medicine at the University of Oxford and St Bartholomew's Hospital, London; then in psychiatry at the Bethlem Royal & Maudsley Hospital, London. He moved to Cambridge as Professor of Psychiatry in 1999 and is currently Director of the Wolfson Brain Imaging Centre, and Head of the Department of Psychiatry, in the University. He is also an honorary Consultant Psychiatrist and Director of R&D in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Foundation NHS Trust. From 2005 to 2019, he worked half-time for GlaxoSmithKline, latterly focusing on immuno-psychiatry, as described in his recent book "The Inflamed Mind". He has published more than 500 scientific papers and his work on brain network science and brain imaging has been highly cited. He has been elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, the Royal College of Psychiatrists, and the Academy of Medical Sciences.

**Abstract:**

**13:35 – 14:40**

**KEYNOTE SESSION 4**

Chair: Dr Annie Swanepoel

**Biography:** Dr Annie Swanepoel is a Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist who works in a team for children with severe learning disability in NELFT. She previously worked in general outpatient CAMHS and also in a low-secure inpatient unit. She holds a PhD in Human Physiology and her special interests include neurodevelopmental disorders, developmental trauma and evolutionary psychiatry. She is the Newsletter Editor for the RCPsych EPSIG.

**13:35 – 13:45**

**Presentation by Tom Carpenter, winner of the 2021 Charles Darwin Essay Prize for core trainees: Why should I care about evolution? A thought exercise for mental health professionals**

**Biography:** Tom Carpenter is a core trainee in Psychiatry based in Glasgow. He read Human Sciences at St Catherine's College, Oxford, after which he spent two years working in marketing. He then completed an MRes in Animal Behaviour at Newcastle University, where his thesis examined links between socioeconomic inequality and behavioural disinhibition. After this he went into medical training at the University of Edinburgh, where he had an extracurricular research interest in sex differences in the early-life programming of the stress response. He spent the first

parts of his postgraduate medical training in Cornwall, including a one-year clinical fellowship in Neurology and Psychiatry, before moving to Glasgow in 2020 for Psychiatry training.

**Abstract:**

**13:45 – 14:40**

**KN4 – Sex-Differences in Child and Adolescent Psychopathology: A Test of Evolutionary Hypotheses**

Prof Jonathan Hill

**Biography:** Jonathan Hill is Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, University of Reading, and Honorary Consultant in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust. He has increasingly focused on the question of whether there can be unifying general theories for the origins of mental disorders, and in particular for development and psychopathology, addressing it both conceptually (Bolton and Hill, *Mind Meaning and Mental Disorder*, OUP) and empirically in the Wirral Child Health and Development Study (WCHADS). Prenatal measurement of indices of maternal stress has allowed us to examine predictions from evolutionary hypotheses for sex differences (Trivers-Willard (T-R) hypothesis) and for foetal anticipation of postnatal environments (Predictive Adaptive Response (PAR) hypothesis). These are potentially of importance to the broader questions of why sex differences in child and adolescent psychopathology are so marked, and how do adaptations as well as deficits contribute to mental disorders?

**Abstract:** According to the 'Predictive Adaptive Response' (PAR) hypothesis, foetal adaptations predict the later postnatal environment so that matched prenatal and postnatal environments will be associated with positive offspring outcomes, whereas a mismatch between the prenatal and postnatal environment confers risk for poor outcomes. According to the Trivers-Willard hypothesis male and female foetuses adapt differently to prenatal adversities. Putting these two evolutionary hypotheses together leads to predictions regarding pre- and postnatal influences on gender differences in psychopathology. I will describe our recent work based on these ideas.

**15:10 – 16:05**

**KEYNOTE SESSION 5**

Chair: Dr Agnes Ayton

**Biography:**

**15:10 – 16:05**

**KN5 - An Evolutionary Approach to Compassion: Understanding, Misunderstanding and Therapeutic Uses**

Prof Paul Gilbert

**Biography:** Paul Gilbert has been a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist for over 40 years. He has been a professor of clinical psychology since 1992 and has published over 300 articles and books chapters and 22 books covering evolutionary approaches to mental health difficulties and interventions including social rank theory, processes of shame and self-criticism. For the last 25 years, he has been studying the evolved functions and physiology of care and compassion motivational systems and how they can be used therapeutically. He established the Compassionate Mind Foundation as an international compassion education and promotion charity in 2006, was a member of the NICE Committee for depression (2004); President of the British Association for Cognitive Behaviour Psychotherapy (2003) and was awarded an OBE for services to mental health in 2011. Now retired from the NHS, he is engaged in extensive research on how to stimulate and cultivate compassion motivation in mental health settings, schools and businesses.

**Abstract:** This talk will touch on the evolution of caring behaviour in very species and then focus in on mammals and the attachment dynamic. It will highlight that motives are run by algorithms of 'if A then do B. The algorithm for caring motives it is rooted in if signal of distress or need then behave to relieve distress and address need. There is increasing evidence that we can identify the evolved physiological the mechanisms of that algorithm linked to for example to oxytocin and the vagal nerve plus various neuro circuits in the frontal cortex. Caring behaviour introduced an new threat regulation system. There is also increasing evidence that caring behaviour has impacts on epigenetics and health through its evolved physiological processes. In addition the presence or absence of affectionate caring in early life can impact subsequent life strategies.

**16:05 – 17:10**

**KEYNOTE SESSION 6**

Chair: Dr Riadh Abed

**Biography:** Retired NHS psychiatrist and medical director. Currently a medical member of the Mental Health Tribunals in England. Former (founding) chair of EPSIG and current Finance Officer.

**16:05 – 16:55**

**KN6 - Why anxiety is usually normal but useless: Clinically crucial knowledge**

Prof Randolph Nesse

**Biography:** Randolph M. Nesse joined Arizona State University in 2014 as Professor of Life Sciences and Founding Director of the Center for Evolution Medicine. He was previously a Professor of Psychiatry and Professor of Psychology at the University of Michigan. His research on evolution and ageing led to a collaboration with the evolutionary biologist George Williams that initiated much new work in evolutionary medicine. His current mission is to show how the principles of evolutionary medicine

can solve psychiatry's problems and advance research and treatment of mental disorders. He is a Fellow of the AAAS, a Distinguished Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, and Founding President of the International Society for Evolution, Medicine & Public Health. His recent book, *Good Reasons for Bad Feelings: Insights from the Frontier of Evolutionary Psychiatry* is recognized as seminal for evolutionary psychiatry.

**Abstract:**

**16:55 – 17:05**

**Presentation by Matt Butler winner of the 2021 Charles Darwin Essay Prize for speciality trainees: Resignation Syndrome: An Evolutionary Perspective**

**Biography:** Matt is a registrar in psychiatry and a clinical academic. He graduated with undergraduate medical and postgraduate research degrees from the University of Manchester before moving to work at South London and Maudsley (SLaM) mental health trust. He is a member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and is currently based at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience (IoPPN) at King's College London researching neuropsychiatric disorders and psychopharmacology.

**Abstract:** This presentation explores an evolutionary perspective on resignation syndrome and suggests potential hypothesis for future research into the condition and its treatment.