



Evolutionary Psychiatry Special Interest Group (EPSIG)



7th International Symposium of the Evolutionary Psychiatry Special Interest Group

21 NOV **1 day**

Timings 9.30am-4.45pm

Location Virtual event, Online

Contacts

EDITOR: Dr Paul St John-Smith
(Consultant Psychiatrist)
paulstjohnsmith@hotmail.com

ASSISTANT EDITORS:
Dr Costa Savva, Core Trainee
Dr Siroos Golchinheydari, Core Trainee

EPSIG CHAIR: Dr Riadh Abed
(Consultant Psychiatrist)
abedrt@btinternet.com

FINANCE OFFICER: Dr Annie Swanepoel
(Consultant CAMHS Psychiatrist)
annie.panzer@gmail.com

EPSIG Website: www.epsig.org

EPSIG Youtube Channel:
www.youtube.com/@EPSIGUK/videos

Notes from the Editor

Welcome fellow evolutionists. It has been a busy year on the EPSIG front. We are now approaching our annual conference (November 21st) which is to be online this year. We appreciate face to face events for the networking, but that format probably limits numbers of people that are able to attend, which is not such a problem for an online event. We therefore aim to have a mixture of events in future. Hybrid events are technically difficult but potentially too expensive to run so alternating formats seems the best compromise at present.

The Charles Darwin essay prize is now complete for this year, and we are awaiting the final outcomes. The results are due out soon. Presentations will be made at the annual conference online and winning essays will be put in the newsletter by mutual agreement with the author(s).

Since the last newsletter we had a double debate held in Cambridge. The debates were set up to encourage exploration of the ideas albeit in an adversarial way. See Adam Hunt's report on the day below. I must confess to feeling that I had to play "Devil's advocate" and to have to hold a position that was not a real oppositional stance for me.

Continued on page 2

Notes from editor (cont.)

(cont. from front page)

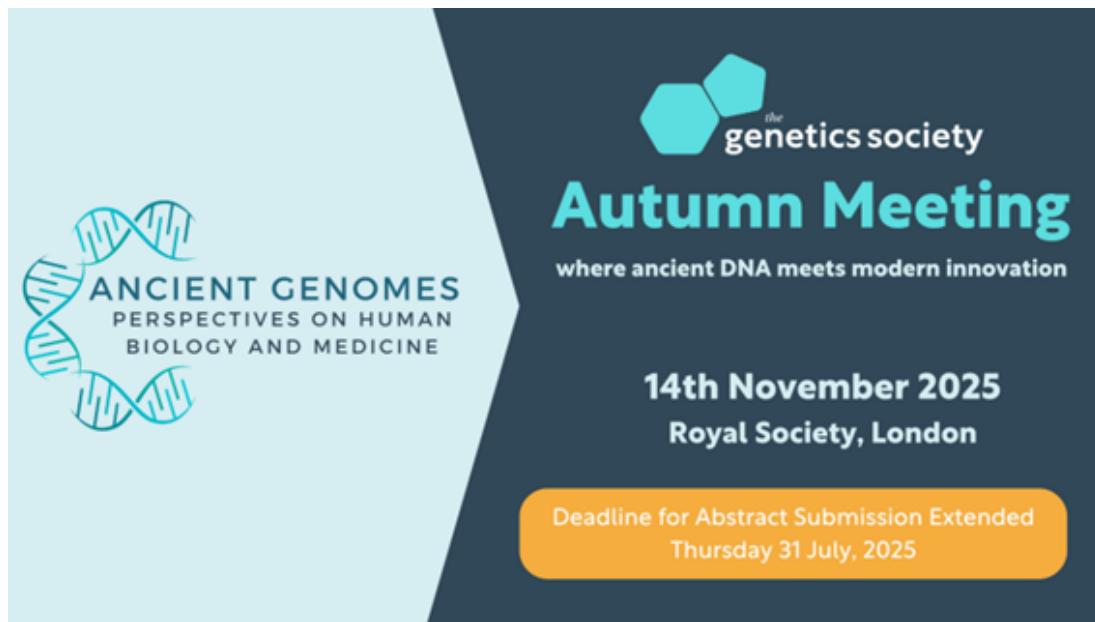
However, opponents of the use Evolutionary Psychiatry in the clinic were unlikely to want to attend the meeting, so someone had to take this stance. Consequently, the use of evolutionary explanations (particularly) in the clinic, had the day. Maybe one day that will be true of psychiatrists in general.

We held our AGM on September 12th. Minutes are available at EPSIG for those interested. Prof Yıldırım, chair of the Turkish Evolutionary Psychiatry Group and past President of the Turkish Psychiatric joined the EPSIG AGM on Friday 12 September. He gave a brief historical account of the Turkish EP group which was founded in 2009. Prof Yıldırım welcomed the prospect of future cooperation with EPSIG starting with a virtual planning meeting of the officers of both groups and possibly progressing to a virtual joint half-day scientific webinar and hopefully, subsequently to a joint F2F conference at a future date.

Upcoming Events

1. Genetics Society Autumn Meeting 2025

[Genetics Society Autumn Meeting 2025](#)



2. Evolutionary psychiatry half-day conference

An evolutionary psychiatry half-day conference is organised by the University of Lausanne, Switzerland on Friday afternoon, 7 November, 2025. This is a hybrid event with both in-person and virtual registration available.

Speakers are: Riadh Abed, Martin Brune, Emiliano Bruner and Alfonso Troisi.

Further information regarding registration can be obtained from Professor Armin Von Gunten on: Armin.Von-Gunten@chuv.ch , OR, COPY AND PASTE THE FOLLOWING LINK INTO WEB BROWSER

<https://infomaniak.events/en-ch/conferences/symposium-on-evolutionary-psychiatry/6a3d8a3d-b886-401d-8fa6-91760cc31aa4/event/1496126>

November 2025–Online Annual Conference

Our annual conference which will ONLINE, on Friday November 21st, 2025, Details below.

[https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/events/conferences/detail/2025/11/21/default-calendar/evolutionary-special-interest-group-\(sig\)-annual-conference-2025](https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/events/conferences/detail/2025/11/21/default-calendar/evolutionary-special-interest-group-(sig)-annual-conference-2025)

Time	Session
9.30am	Welcome Dr Riadh Abed, Chair, Evolutionary Psychiatry Special Interest Group
	Plenary 1 Chair: Dr Riadh Abed
9.30am	Why evolutionary science is helpful for psychiatry trainees Dr Gurjot Brar, Trinity College Dublin
10.15am	Philosophical aspects of evolutionary psychiatry Professor Dan Stein, University of Cape Town
11.00am	Break
	Plenary 2 Chair: Dr Annie Swanepoel
11.30am	Evolutionary perspective on self-harm Dr Vaisha Sornarajah, West London Mental Health NHS Trust Dr Anna Rae Eaton, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust
12.15pm	Lunch
	Plenary 3 Chair: Dr Riadh Abed
1.15pm	Clinical applications of evolutionary psychiatry and the GOAL model Professor Alfonso Troisi, University of Rome Tor Vergata
2.00pm	Title TBC Dr Gul Deniz Salali, University College London
2.45pm	Break
	Plenary 4 Chair: Dr Annie Swanepoel
3.15pm	Title TBC Professor Jerome Wakefield, New York University Silver School of Social Work
4.00pm	Q&A
4.45pm	Close of conference

The EPSIG Debate Day in Cambridge—August 2025



On the 31st August the Foundation for Evolution and Mental Health (www.femh.uk) held its first event, a debate in Cambridge. Two motions were up for debate. Attendees were asked to raise their hands to present their prior belief and then polled again after the speakers had had a chair-mediated, back and forth debate for an hour.

Firstly, on the motion of 'Most Depression is a Functional Signal', Professor Leif Kennair argued against the motion and Dr. James Turner argued for. The room started strongly in favour, but following a lively discussion, Kennair's arguments that 'most' cases of depression were not acting functionally meant that several hands were turned against the motion. The room ended up more evenly distributed between for and against much seemed to hinge on whether the depression is acting as functional signal today - the originally evolutionarily functional system could be over-activating and providing useless signals in modernity.

The second motion was 'The Future of Evolutionary Psychiatry is in Theory and Explanation, Not Clinical Application'. Dr. Riadh

Abed and Dr. Paul St-John Smith took the 'for' side, whilst Dr. Annie Swanepoel and Dr. Adam Hunt took the 'against'. The room started fairly evenly distributed. Abed and St -John Smith highlighted the importance of strong theory to any scientific enterprise. Swanepoel and Hunt took the position that practise and support is the main aim of psychiatry, and not enough has been done to push in this direction. The room was strongly swayed to 'against' - although this was perhaps partly due to Abed and St-John Smith's willingness to capitulate and tell the audience they didn't particularly disagree with their opponents! Both sessions were followed by lively whole-group discussion rounds, with vigorous discussion and many novel points coming up - it was a great success. Thanks to the Foundation for Evolution and Mental Health and the University of Cambridge for hosting.