Chair's Monthly Activity Log

December 2018

Faculty and Committee Business:

3 December: Intellectual Disability Faculty held a morning event which Dr Patrick Renshaw details below:

"Following on from the success of September’s Intellectual Disability Conference, a further event was held today at Clifton House. This half-day conference focussed on epilepsy and brought together a range of engaging and interesting speakers.

We would like to thank Professor Roy McClelland for so ably deputising at short notice for Dr Stephen Haffey to provide a talk on electroencephalography (EEG). The EEG examples and interpretations of results perfectly illustrated the continuing significance of this investigation which was first used by Hans Berger nearly a century ago. These examples also highlighted varying differential diagnoses, including drug intoxication and dementia, and reinforced the importance of detailed information on EEG request forms.

Dr Sandya Tirupathi, Paediatric Neurologist, provided a helpful recap of the revised classification of seizures, the three new subtypes being: focal, generalised and of unknown onset. The level of awareness and possible presence of motor features represented important distinguishing criteria. Dr Tirupathi also discussed treatment options to include pharmacological, surgical interventions and a ketogenic diet.

We were privileged to welcome Dr Monica Mohan to Belfast. Dr Mohan is a Consultant Neuropsychiatrist, currently working in the North Bristol NHS Trust. Her interactive talk showed a number of video recordings of patients from her ward who were under investigation for epilepsy. These videos gave the audience the opportunity to describe and identify seizure types according to the new classification system, which solidified what we had learnt from Dr Tirupathi.

Dr Bernadette Salisbury, Consultant Neuropsychologist, added to the holistic theme of the session and provided a useful insight into the neuropsychological consequences of epilepsy. The main factors affecting cognition (seizure type, duration, frequency and age of onset), adverse syndromes (West syndrome, Lennox-Gestaut) and the cognitive and behavioural effects of antiepileptic drugs, were all discussed.

Following that, Faculty Chair Dr Arun Subramanian showed his creative side when describing the mechanisms of action of AEDs with his computer drawings of synapses and voltage gated channels being particularly impressive!

Dr Simon Patterson finished off a great morning by recapping the NICE guidelines on epilepsy, with a special focus on treatment within ID Psychiatry. The importance of risk assessments for bathing, eating and using potentially hazardous equipment was reinforced. Dr Patterson also shared his work following the completion of a regional epilepsy survey which identified the stretched resources in investigation and treatment of epilepsy within Northern Ireland and the desire for further training on the topic among Psychiatrists in the region.

Overall, the morning offered a fantastic opportunity to learn more about a challenging condition with such a high prevalence among our patients. The six talks illustrated how we can help improve the quality of life of patients and their families with prompt identification and appropriate management.
Finally, we would like to thank all of the speakers and the customary professionalism of the team at Clifton House for putting on such an entertaining and informative session.

A Faculty Business Meeting concluded the morning.”

4 December: Forensic Faculty met in Clifton House, chaired by Dr Adrian East. Matters discussed included the Mental Capacity Act (NI) 2016, Training/Workforce/CPD, the DoH initiative recently commenced by way of ‘Strategic Insight Lab’ and College Report 219 entitled ‘Prison Mental Health in Northern Ireland’.

5 December: Addictions Faculty met in Clifton House, chaired by Dr Billy Gregg. Matters discussed included the importance of including substance use in pregnancy within the NI Regional Perinatal Pathway and Baclofen for alcohol dependence.

5 December: Academic Faculty met in Clifton House, chaired by Dr Tony O’Nei

7 December: CAMHS Faculty met in Clifton House, chaired by Dr Richard Wilson. Apart from their Agenda business, they heard from Guest Speaker Amanda Jones, Operations Manager Resilience and Wellbeing from Action Mental Health. Afterwards Amanda said: “It was a great opportunity to share our work with young people across Northern Ireland and I found it really useful in terms of shaping our future direction. I look forward to exploring the potential for co design of new sessions for delivery in special schools.”

7 December: PIPSIG met in Clifton House, chaired by Dr John Sharkey. Items discussed included reflection on the recent PIPSIG National Conference held in Belfast – in terms of both the feedback and issues arising from the presentations – as well as future plans for educational events in 2019 and beyond.

12 December: Dr Michael Doherty, on behalf of General Adult Faculty, and Dr Richard Wilson, as Chair of our Child and Adolescent Faculty, attended a Joint Cross Faculty Working Group in Central College which is working towards a Position Statement on Youth Mental Health.

19 December: The Physical Health Group, which is chaired by Dr Michael Doherty and is a working group of the General Adult Faculty, met in Clifton House. Michael said: "We are recommencing the Physical Health Group now that the funding has come through for both eating disorders (last year) and severe mental illness (this year), in terms of the physical health monitoring of these two cohorts of Patients. The benefits of the Group are to share experiences on how each Trust is approaching this important issue and encourage a more regional approach.”

Mental Capacity Act (NI) 2016:

3 December: Dr Gerry Lynch and Policy Officer Thomas McKeever attended a Seminar organised by the Law Society of NI’s Elder Law Group at Law Society House, Victoria Street, Belfast on the topic of “Capacity and Undue Influence – Lessons (not) learned under the Mental Capacity Act 2005” and delivered by Alex Ruck Keene. The session considered the assessment of mental capacity in and out of the Court room and also how the mental capacity jurisdiction in England and Wales has interacted with the inherent jurisdiction to protect those who are capacitous but vulnerable to undue influence, duress or coercion. Alex gave evidence to the NI Assembly Joint Committee which scrutinised our Mental Capacity Act (NI) 2016 before it passed on to the statute book. He has created a helpful website:

www.mentalcapacitylawandpolicy.org.uk
6 December: Drs Gerry Lynch, Catherine Taggart and Phil Anderson wrote a comment piece for the Lancet which was published online today - and subsequently appeared in the 15 December 2018 print edition. The Independent Review of the Mental Health Act, chaired by former College President Sir Simon Wessely, with Vice Chairs Steve Gilbert, Mark Hedley and Julia Neuberger, was commissioned in response to concerns about the increasing numbers of detentions, disproportionately affecting people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. ‘Modernising the Mental Health Act. Increasing Choice, Reducing Compulsion: Final Report of the Independent Review of the Mental Health Act 1983’ was published today as the culmination of their work and our Chair and local Members were asked by the Lancet to review and comment on it in advance for simultaneous publication, given their unique perspective, experience and knowledge of fully fused legislation in the form of our Mental Capacity Act (NI) 2016. Sir Simon and his colleagues, while sympathetic to the idea, did not recommend the fusion of mental health and mental capacity legislation – whereas, Drs Lynch, Taggart and Campbell took the overall view that: "Nonetheless, if fusion is seen as the right thing to do, then it should be the aim of any future legislative changes." Sir Simon subsequently tweeted a comment on the Lancet article: "A very thorough and thoughtful review, even more so given that the authors must have done it at breakneck speed!"

External Affairs:

6 December: The Institute of Public Health in Ireland and The Bamford Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing (Ulster University) held an international symposium entitled ‘Loneliness in Later Life: Interventions – what works?’ in the Clayton Hotel, Ormeau Avenue, Belfast, which Dr Joe Kane attended on behalf of the College. Speakers included Professor Roger O’Sullivan (Institute of Public Health in Ireland), Eddie Lynch (Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland), Professor Vanessa Burholt (Swansea University), Sean Moynihan (ALONE), Barry Sheridan (Men’s Sheds), Sarah Reid (Public Health Agency), Professor Carla Perissinotto (University of California), Fiona Murphy (Campaign to end Loneliness), Professor Linda Fried (Columbia University) and Professor Gerry Leavey (Ulster University). Afterwards, Joe reflected: "Queen’s University’s Northern Ireland Cohort for the Longitudinal Study of Ageing (NICOLA) recently highlighted the prevalence of loneliness in older populations and its detrimental impact on physical and mental health. Public Health in Ireland (IPH) and Ulster University are to be commended for hosting this symposium drawing together academics, researchers, organisations and charities to share and consider the research, policy and practice relating to loneliness. The international panel facilitated discussions around the different types and determinants of loneliness, pathways in and out of loneliness, the connections between loneliness and isolation, the role of volunteering and social programmes - as well as the negative impacts on health and wellbeing. Although the Conference underlined that loneliness is nuanced and multifactorial, it represents a measurable and modifiable risk factor too powerful for Clinicians and Policy makers to ignore.”

6 December: On behalf of the College, Dr Ross Irvine attended a Roundtable at the Lanyon Building, Queen’s University, Belfast on “The Future of Digital Mental Health in Northern Ireland” jointly organised by the Mental Health Foundation and Queen’s University. In advance, the organisers had flagged that: "It is well recognised that to alleviate the growing pressure on mental health services we need to deliver greater capacity, improve care pathways and reduce demand by delivering earlier interventions, taking preventative measures and tackling the stigma surrounding mental health. Among key stakeholders, it is increasingly acknowledged that the implementation of digitally enabled services, including digital tools and digital applications, might address some of these issues and assist in supporting, treating and preventing mental health problems. The general theme of this roundtable discussion is increasing the use of digital mental health technologies in Northern Ireland, identifying barriers
and facilitators to unlocking its potential over the next five years. This includes the use of digital technologies for primary and secondary mental health care as well as more general use of digital tools within communities.” Afterwards, Ross reflected: “This roundtable event explored the role for digital technologies in the treatment and prevention of mental health problems in Northern Ireland over the next five years and beyond, in the context of similar events being held across the UK as part of the wider eMEN project. We discussed the results of a yet to be published Delphi study which was conducted across the UK, exploring the future role for digital mental health technologies across the UK and how they could be used to augment and enhance services and treatment. There was also the opportunity to see a practical demonstration of the use of a virtual reality headset and its potential uses in CBT and exposure-based therapies. It was agreed that findings from this event and the events across the rest of the UK, would be formally collated by the Mental Health Foundation in an effort to aid policy development in this area of emerging and increasing importance.
(Background Note: The eMEN project has adopted the following definition of digital mental health (also called e-mental health): "E-mental health can be understood as a generic term to describe the use of information and communication technology (ICT) – in particular the many technologies related to the Internet – when these technologies are used to support and improve mental health conditions and mental health care, including care for people with substance use and comorbid disorders. E-mental health encompasses the use of digital technologies and new media for the delivery of screening, health promotion, prevention, early intervention, treatment, or relapse prevention as well as for improvement of health care delivery (e.g., electronic patient files), professional education (e-learning), and online research in the field of mental health." (Riper et al., 2010), although the project does not focus on the final two elements of this definition. The eMEN Project is a collaborative e-mental health research project funded by the Interreg North West Europe Innovation Programme and has been set up to examine the development, quality and availability of digital mental health (e-mental health) across six countries within the European Union (Netherlands [lead partner], the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, and Belgium). This EU-wide platform for e-mental health innovation and implementation runs until 2019 and aims to expand the use of digital technologies in mental health care across Europe. It is the first platform of its kind and consists of private and public partners in North West Europe. The partners from the other countries involved in the project are key stakeholders in the field of e-mental health and have a broad EU network. The roundtables are being organised by the Mental Health Foundation as the UK partner in the eMEN project to explore critical issues related to policy development, addressing the challenges, benefits and ethics of developing and implementing digital mental health technologies. We are organising roundtables with key stakeholders in each country of the UK to identify challenges and implementation solutions related to digital mental health. The overall aim of these discussions is to use key findings from each of the four countries to inform the eMEN project’s Transnational Policy Solution document, with recommendations specific to the UK context. In this way, we aim to influence implementation processes so that they are relevant and practicable in the UK, and thus a future wherein digital technology can both supplement and support existing mental health services. The aim is to develop a first draft of a policy paper, which will contain a) an analysis of the different levels of digital mental health development in the UK; b) challenges that are specific to the four countries of the UK; c) suggestions regarding how to approach and tackle the challenges identified.)

11 December: Drs Gerry Lynch, Damien Hughes and Joe Kane met with Professor Cherie Armour at Ulster University Jordanstown in relation to the University’s Institute of Mental Health Sciences. Gerry afterwards commented that “it was a productive meeting exploring the potential for collaboration.”

11 December: Thomas McKeever attended the retirement of Alison McCullough who is retiring after many years as Head of Northern Ireland Office, Royal
12 December: Dr Gerry Lynch represented the College at an Evidence Session of the NI Affairs Committee, House of Commons, London sitting at Portcullis House, Westminster. The Chair was Dr Andrew Murrison MP and the Committee included Lady Sylvia Hermon MP, Ian Paisley MP and Gregory Campbell MP. The wide-ranging session also heard evidence from Professor Peter McBride Chief Executive of Inspire Wellbeing, Professor Nichola Rooney Branch Chair NI British Psychological Society and David Babington Chief Executive Action Mental Health. The topic was Funding Priorities for the 2018-2019 Budget – Health – and Mental Health was the particular focus.
13 December: Dr Bronagh Sproule (pictured below) spoke in the Guildhall, Derry/Londonderry at a joint event organised by Aware with Foyle Women’s Aid and the Domestic and Sexual Violence Helpline. The discussion was around domestic violence/abuse and associated mental health issues including anxiety and depression. Afterwards, Bronagh reflected: “It has been a real privilege to hear the stories of women who are recovering from the trauma of domestic abuse and violence - and provided a striking reminder that, in order to help, we as professionals must connect with the awful reality of life for some of our service users. This event provided a great message of hope for those who find themselves experiencing mental ill-health as a result of domestic trauma and I commend Foyle Women’s Aid for their excellent work with this vulnerable group in society. I hope that further collaboration with Aware and similar organisations will continue to improve outcomes for these women.”
Department of Health:

7 December: Dr Gerry Lynch, Dr Michael Doherty and Thomas McKeever met at Clifton House with Drs David Ross, Joe Dugan and Martin McCloskey (the latter by phone in) to discuss the inclusion of Mental Health Workers in Multi-Disciplinary Teams in Primary Care. Drs Ross, Dugan and McCloskey are the GPs who are leading on this initiative in the pilot areas so far announced by DoH. The meeting provided an opportunity for learning on both sides as to the exact way in which the pilots would run and also potential pitfalls to be avoided – and reassurance was gained by all present.

Sharing Best Practice and Quality Improvement:

13 December: Dr Gerry Lynch took part in a tele-conference with Central College in relation to the GMC Consultation on Draft Guidance on Decision making and consent. Central College Policy and Standards Manager, Tommy Denning in advance said: "We recognise that there are a large number of areas of the College interested in this topic, so are seeking to pull together a single response that has been informed by views from a range of individuals......(Those who have done) work on the Mental Health and Capacity Acts......are well placed to advise on this. Trying to secure a single response on this electronically is likely to be extremely difficult, if possible at all, so am suggesting we convene a
meeting to go through the questions to see if we can agree a consolidated set of answers.”

14 December: We submitted our response to the NI Ambulance Service Health and Social Care Trust Consultation on the Proposed Introduction of a New Clinical Response Model. Same can be accessed on our website.

17 December: Staff took part in the year’s final Lunch and Learn by Skype with Central College, which was addressed by Chief Executive Paul Rees, Director of Finance and Operations Callum Mercer, Interim Director of Information Services Phil Burke and Senior Associate Director of NCCMH Tom Ayers.

19 December: Dr Gerry Lynch took part in a tele conference with College Director of Strategic Communications Kim Catcheside in relation to a new tool the College is launching to keep track of the data available in England under their Five Year Forward View for Mental Health. The hope is that an important part of the tool will be a new College Research Panel to reflect the experiences of members across the UK. The meeting was seeking input on how the College can ensure that it is relevant to the other 3 countries and how it can be used to augment local College media and influencing work. The Research Panel is open to all Members to join and the more who join it from the local College, the better will be its output for the local College.

19 December: Dr Gerry Lynch and Interim Manager Barry Flynn took part in a tele conference with Staff at the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland in relation to planning for the 2019 Joint Conference which will hopefully take place in Titanic Belfast on 14-15 November 2019. It was agreed that there would be a focus on Trauma, the opportunity for Faculties to conduct joint sessions on issues of mutual concern and key speakers were identified for follow up.

Membership and Trainees:
14 December: Dr Julie Anderson hosted the monthly meeting of Higher Trainees in Clifton House. Afterwards, Julie reflected: "In the spirit of developing and testing knowledge, and given the Season, this meeting included a Christmas Quiz. Dr Darran Carson had the honour and responsibility of organising this...In addition, we had some crisps/chocolate/Christmas nibbles/soft drinks. Christmas jumpers were compulsory and the prize for the best one went to Dr Darran Carson. The Winning Team for the Quiz was the Quizmas Queens, who are pictured below with the newly inaugurated Pavlov the Dog perpetual trophy!"
20 December: Chair, Vice Chair and Policy Lead respectively Drs Gerry Lynch, Michael Doherty and Peter Trimble - and Manager, Policy Officer and Interim Manager respectively Nora McNairney, Thomas McKeever and Barry Flynn enjoyed a Christmas Meal together at the Barge to round off another busy year and also to mark Nora’s penultimate day as Manager. Many, many messages of thanks tinged with sadness have poured in over recent days from Members and others since Nora announced her resignation from the College. Gerry said: “I will really miss Nora’s professionalism, support and wise counsel.”

21 December: College closed for the Christmas and New Year break.

NI Assembly:

There is nothing to report this month.
Media:

19 December: Dr Gerry Lynch gave an interview by phone to Garrett Hargan of the Derry News in relation to Mental Health Services across Northern Ireland, the challenges, waiting times, effects of same on mental health etc. This will be published in early 2019.