Welcome to the Spring edition of the Spectrum Centre Newsletter. In this edition, as well as our usual information about current research studies, we have also aimed to include some general interest information about Mental Health Research. This includes a ‘Glossary’ of terms often used in Mental Health Research, which will become a regular mini-feature. Also look out for Barbara Mezes’ review of some interesting new research findings (see back page).

On a more personal note, we have also included updates and info - dare we say, GOSSIP - on Spectrum people, past and present. Many thanks to Rita Long, for being the first to ‘spill the beans’ in our ‘Meet the team’ section, on the back page. We have much to celebrate and many to congratulate as you will see from our staff updates to the right.

And finally... we are looking for a new name for our new look newsletter... See the below for details. Thanks for reading,

The Newsletter Team

Spectrum News: 2014 so far

Spectrum projects: We are delighted that the new NICE guideline for Psychosis recommends greater access to information and support for carers and cites our work on the REACT toolkit as part of the evidence to support this.

Spectrum people: We welcomed 2 new staff members in the New Year; Martie Griffiths, Research Assistant on the ERP Online study (see page 3) and Zoë Cockshott, Centre Coordinator. We were sad to say goodbye to Cath Malone who has moved on to work in the NHS in Cumbria.

Many congratulations to Heather Robinson on her PhD success. Congratulations also to Rita Long our Service User Researcher who has been awarded a prestigious Travelling Fellowship from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, to visit the USA and Canada. She will research imaginative ways to engage service users in research and services, disseminate findings and address stigma associated with mental health.

SPECTRUM EVENTS

Campus in the Community: Spectrum Open Days in Lancaster City Centre 26th & 27th March, 10am –5pm, Aston Walk, St Nicholas Arcade. Come for information, and activities, to meet staff and find out about our work. This is all part of Lancaster University’s ‘Campus in the City’ initiative which brings the University’s Research Centres into the heart of the community. Hope to see you there.

Fi’s Fundraising Run: Spectrum Centre’s Co-Director, Fiona Lobban has committed to a gruelling fundraising run to raise money for Service User involvement in Mental Health Research. Fiona will be running along Hadrian’s Wall, from Cumbria to Newcastle, 69 miles over 3 days in May.

At Spectrum we believe it is vitally important to include Mental Health Service Users at every stage of planning and implementing research. Please sponsor Fiona to help with funding this vital part of our work. Please go to http://www.justgiving.com/firunshadrianswall Or see our website www.spectrumcentre.org.

WANT TO NAME OUR NEWSLETTER? This is an exciting opportunity for one of our readers to win the chance to name the Spectrum Centre Newsletter. If you are interested in taking part then please email your ideas for a new title to spectrumcentre@lancaster.ac.uk with the subject title ‘Newsletter Competition’, or write to us at the address on the back.

SPECTRUM CONNECT: For regular editions of our Newsletter, updates on our activities and research please sign up to Spectrum Connect. Just go to our Website and click on ‘GET INVOLVED’.

(See back page for full Spectrum contact details)
An Exploration of Experiences of Bipolar Disorder within Couples

This study is looking to recruit couples in which one partner has a diagnosis of bipolar 1 disorder to talk about how they experience bipolar disorder together as a couple. **To be eligible to take part couples must have been together through at least one major mood episode and for at least 6 months.**

We would like to interview couples together in order to obtain a shared view of the ways in which partners are able to support one another as well as the areas which may be more challenging.

**We aim to build on previous research investigating the potential sources of satisfaction or stress within the relationship. It is hoped that the results may help clinicians to support both clients and their partners more successfully.**

*If you would like to find out more about the study and what participation would involve please contact Anna Clancy on 07508 375664 or a.clancy@lancaster.ac.uk*

Thank you

Managing Bipolar Experiences Without Medication

Although many people with Bipolar Disorder choose not to use medication at some point, no research addresses the challenges they face when doing this and what helps people overcome them. This research addresses this by interviewing people with Bipolar Disorder who do not use medication about their experiences.

*For information please contact Reed Cappleman on 07852523954 or r.cappleman@lancaster.ac.uk*
**Glossary of research terms**

**Research Assistant, Adam Sawczuk clarifies a few of the terms you might come across when reading about or taking part in Mental Health Research**

**Randomised control trial (RCT):** An experiment in which participants are randomly allocated to one of two or more treatments. Random means that participants all have the same chance of being in any one of the treatments. Most randomised control trials have a ‘control group’ as well as an ‘experimental group’. This is so that researchers can compare which treatment works best with as much accuracy as possible.

**Experimental group:** Participants who are in the experimental group, also known as the ‘intervention arm’, normally receive a new treatment (or intervention) that is being trialed by a research team such as a new talking therapy or a new medication.

**Control group:** Participants who are allocated to a control group (or ‘arm’) normally receive a placebo, no treatment, or the current standard treatment (also known as ‘treatment as usual’, TAU). Research projects have a control group so they can compare it to the ‘Experimental group’ to see which works the best.
Traditional medical treatment for schizophrenia has mainly relied on antipsychotics. In addition to these, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), a type of talking therapy, has been officially recommended as an additional treatment for schizophrenia by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE). CBT works by developing techniques to deal with a problem by understanding and changing underlying thoughts and behaviours. Studies examining CBT in addition to antipsychotics found it effective in schizophrenia treatment. Despite this, only the minority of service users can access the therapy and waiting lists are often several months long. The benefits of antipsychotics vary widely across individuals with schizophrenia. Although some people find antipsychotics effective, some do not find them useful and about half end up not taking medication at all. A persistent dilemma is how to treat people with schizophrenia who refuse to take antipsychotic drugs.

A recent study carried out in Manchester by Prof Anthony Morrison and team examined the effectiveness of CBT in people with schizophrenia who did not take antipsychotics. In a small Randomised Control Trial (RCT) they showed that CBT is a safe and acceptable intervention. There was also evidence that CBT reduced the severity of symptoms and improved social and personal functioning although these findings require confirmation in a larger definitive trial.

A current challenge in mental health treatment is giving people choices and providing access not only to medication but also to talking therapies. Whilst medication is available to nearly everyone with a mental health diagnosis, talking therapies are only accessible to a minority, despite the demand. The Spectrum Centre’s focus is on studying psychological and social aspects of bipolar disorder and related conditions in order to develop new psychological treatments and to make these treatments more accessible in mental health services. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that everyone can access face-to-face therapies; so we are also developing alternative approaches, such as web-based interventions. In line with this Spectrum Centre is currently evaluating the effectiveness of online resources to look into how online help can prevent relapses and provide parental support for parents with bipolar disorder. This among others is an important step towards developing mental health services that can adequately respond to the needs of service users.


Meet the team

Laura Wainwright asks Rita some probing questions...

- **When were you little what did you want to be when you grew up?**
  Rita: A mounted police woman.

- **What did you do before you came to work at Spectrum?**
  Rita: So many jobs it’s hard to remember.

- **What are you working on at the moment?**
  Rita: The ERP online and IBPI studies I’m also organising two open days in March. I’m attending and speaking at the MHRN conference in March as well as our ongoing service user involvement work e.g. advisory panel.

- **What are your hobbies?**
  Rita: Running and cycling are my healthy hobbies!!!

- **What are your pet hates?**
  Rita: Would you like a list??!! Probably people who say, ‘you don’t look like one’ -meaning they couldn’t’ tell I had bipolar. GRRRRRRRR

- **What is on your bucket list of things to do in your lifetime?**
  Rita: I’d love to get something published. And I’d like to be healthy and able to travel to far-off places; for example I’d love to do the Inca Trail.

- **What’s your proudest achievement?**
  Rita: Sounds cheesy but honestly getting the ‘service user facilitator’ job for the PARADES project. When you’ve a period of being unwell landing a job you really want is soooo amazing. Second is running the London marathon under 4 hours and third being awarded the Winston Churchill Fellowship.

- **Who/what was your inspiration?**
  Rita: Tom from ‘Mood swings’ was a real breath of fresh air when I started on the road to recovery. A really clever positive guy.