



Spectrum Connect

From the Spectrum Centre for Mental Health Research

Summer 2016



A warm welcome to Spectrum Connect from Professor Fiona Lobban, Co-Director of The Spectrum Centre.

Welcome to the Summer Issue of the Spectrum Newsletter to old friends and new readers. We have exciting news with our trial of the REACT Toolkit for relatives and carers now well underway (please see feature article on this trial below).

For those of you who haven't yet met me - here's a little bit of information about my background....

I originally trained as a Clinical Psychologist and completed my PhD at Manchester University, before working for several years in NHS settings. During this time I developed a special interest in working with families of people with recent onset psychosis and in 2008 I moved to Lancaster University to establish the Spectrum Centre for Mental Health Research along with Professor Steve Jones.

In 2014 I was awarded a Chair in Clinical Psychology; and now, amongst many other work commitments I work as the Chief Investigator on REACT (Relatives Education And Coping Toolkit) study, which aims to provide relatives across the UK with high quality information, strategies they can use to manage the challenges they face, and emotional support. I hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter which explains a bit more about this exciting project, and also explores the many varied facets of working life within Spectrum.

The REACT Study – Sue Flowers, REACT Supporter, explains the study

REACT – the Relatives Education And Coping Toolkit Study went online in April and is leading the way in improving the lives of relatives and friends who support people with bipolar disorder and psychosis (including schizophrenia). The study makes a huge range of new resources available on line; from information about different treatment options, de-mystifying the complexity of mental health service provision and how best to manage very difficult and challenging situations, which for many relatives, may be the first time they have ever experienced complex mental health illnesses.



The toolkit has a REACT Group, which is an online forum that encourages relatives to support each other, and a direct messaging service through which trained relatives can support users.

Professor Fiona Lobban explains why she thinks it's important...

“I have spent many years working in the NHS and was struck by the high levels of distress and frustration experienced by relatives. Although national clinical guidelines recommend relatives are given lots of support, in reality they often don't get what they need.”

For further information and to register for the study go to

www.reacttoolkit.co.uk

Twitter [@REACTTOOLKIT](https://twitter.com/REACTTOOLKIT) Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/REACTtoolkit/>

We are also inviting relatives, friends and service users to submit their artwork and poetry as a creative way of sharing their experiences of bipolar and psychosis: if you would like to submit your work please email reactsupporter@lancaster.ac.uk



React Supporters Lizzi and Sue

Rita goes to the House of Commons to receive her Winston Churchill Fellowship

Congratulations to Rita Long, our Service User Researcher, on receiving her Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship Award. In June this year Rita was invited to the House of Commons to share her findings with other fellows and charities working in similar fields.

For more information on Rita's Fellowship see <http://www.wcmt.org.uk/fellows/stories>



(Rita Long at the House of Commons)

Study results – coming soon Rita writes; It's exciting times at Spectrum at the moment as some study results are beginning to emerge. ERP, IBPI and PARADES results are almost ready for us to share with participants and other venues that can make a difference to the service on offer. Our advisory panel will be working on a strategy to best share these results but please get in touch if you have any ideas about where or how we can share results with individuals, groups or services. Watch this space - Rita 😊

Meet the team ... Zoë talks to Guillermo Perez-Algorta, Lecturer at the Spectrum Centre

What are your main areas of interest in Mental Health Research?

Child Mental Health Issues! In particular, my research focus is on early onset of bipolar disorders. I am working in the development of evidence based strategies to identify early signs of the condition. Also, I am exploring new treatment interventions for mood disorders targeting important aspects such as sleep and circadian rhythms (ie social and biological cycles).

What do you think are the most exciting developments in mental health care / research at the moment?

We are making outstanding progress in our understanding of mental health processes. The amount of research information that is generated every day around the world is astonishing. Through the correct integration of this information, we will soon be able to answer difficult clinical questions to continue improving the quality of life of people and families experiencing conditions such as bipolar disorders.

How long have you worked in the Spectrum Centre?

I arrived at the Spectrum Centre in August 2014.

What drew you to work here?

Spectrum Centre is one of the leading centres in the world generating knowledge about bipolar disorders.

Where have you worked before?

I worked as a clinical psychologist for 11 years in Montevideo, Uruguay. I did my PhD in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Then, I moved to the US to do my post-doc at the Ohio State University. And then, finally, I arrived here.

What are were the differences / similarities between the UK and other places you have worked?

The major positive difference is the involvement of service users in research! They play a very important role in all stages of developing new research projects in the UK. This is something unusual in the US for example. In terms of similarities, it is very nice to see that a huge number of people from around the world -irrespective of their race, religion, etc, share a genuine collaborative spirit with a single aim: alleviate the suffering of people and families experiencing conditions such as bipolar disorders.

What do you like to do when you're not working?

I am from Uruguay! I play football as much as I can. Also, after football, I spend a lot of time with my family watching football.



Studies Looking for Research Participants

The REACT Study

(See details on page 1)

Exploring users' experiences with technology-based mental health treatments

Technology is increasingly being used to support the delivery of treatments for mental health problems. We are interested in speaking to people that have used a technology-based treatment for their mental health in the past six months. This means a mental health treatment that has been provided via a computer, the internet, or perhaps a mobile phone. This research aims to find out more about people's experiences of using this type of treatment.

To do this, we would like to interview people about their experiences of using technology-based treatment. We are offering a £10 voucher for taking part, as a way of thanking participants for their time. Involvement in this study is entirely voluntary, and participants can withdraw at any time.

This project is part of a PhD project by researchers at the Spectrum Centre for Mental Health Research, at Lancaster University. The Chief Investigator of the project is Laura Hillier, a PhD student. The project is being supervised by Professor Fiona Lobban and Professor Steven Jones.

If you are interested in this study, please contact us using the details below. We can discuss the study and whether you are eligible to take part in more detail. Alternatively, if you know someone that might be interested, please pass this information on to them. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

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The research team is based at the Spectrum Centre for Mental Health Research, contact details as below.

Spectrum Connect Database: If you haven't already done so, you can register to be added to our database so that you can receive information about what is going on in Spectrum and find out if you'd like to get more involved. To join the Spectrum Connect database just go to our website, click on 'Get involved', and then on 'Register now' or contact us (see below for our contact details).

Contact details:

Website www.spectrumcentre.org

email spectrumcentre@lancaster.ac.uk **phone** (01524) 593756

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Or follow us on twitter @spectrumcentre 

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