

# Scholars' Day 2021



This year the Scholars' Day was virtual for the first time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a nice experience as many more people managed to attend, including my own supervisors.

I was amazed at how well the event was organised especially since it was our very first virtual event. We had a practice talk on Monday 19th of April to make sure our virtual presentations ran smoothly. We also received feedback about how understandable our presentations were for the lay audience. It was a very nice experience as we also gave each other feedback and learnt a lot from each other. It also helped us to be more confident for the actual Scholars' Day event on Thursday that week.

On Thursday 22nd of April, the day was divided into morning and afternoon talks. It was much shorter than before, since we had two parallel Zoom rooms for people interested in different topics. However, it also made us miss some of the talks that took place in the other room. An advantage of a Zoom event, was that we now have recordings of all the talks, which was not the case the previous years. Although we did not meet in person, I felt this year the meeting was a bit more personal as we also showed a different side of ourselves, as we were presenting from our homes.

I was really inspired and proud to hear about projects other students are working on, such as using mindfulness to reduce paranoia by Heather McDonald, using Virtual Reality as a new form of more accessible treatment for paranoia by Poppy Brown, exploring the impact of illness belief in recovery of functional neurological disorders by Cate Bailey and developing a new compassion scale to predict the treatment response to psilocybin in treatment resistant depression patients by Camilla Day. There were also shorter presentations from new students who unfortunately, due to the pandemic, were not able to start their projects yet but I very much look forward to hearing more about their interesting projects and progress next year. Among them were the projects by Egle Padaigaite, studying and promoting the factors relevant for mental health of children of depressed parents and the PhD project of Samuel Knight, exploring the neural mechanisms of positive symptoms using different neuroimaging methods.

We also heard for the first time from MHRUK supporter Victoria Morris, who has done an amazing job doing different types of challenges in order to raise funding for MHRUK. I am very inspired by her and also very grateful to her. We also listened to a very interesting Q&A session with Professor Peter Jones, hearing about what made him interested in mental health in the first place and also his thoughts about the future of mental health research.

I believe what most of us have missed this year though, is the informal and casual conversations with people during the refreshment breaks. I think this was the biggest advantage of in-person meetings, which I missed very much. I was, however, amazed at how well everything was organised despite having a virtual meeting of this size for the very first time. I would like to thank Clair Chilvers, David Riggs, Mike Owen and everyone else at MHRUK for making another beautiful memory for us, despite the pandemic.

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This link will take you to Mental Health Research UK Youtube channel, to view all the videos recorded on the day.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGaeiCiruMOvyBzNJiCzCRA/videos>