

## **Why do people with long-term conditions get depression: unpicking the neurocognitive mechanisms**

**Professor Chris Dickens**

Depression is common among people with chronic physical illnesses (so-called, long term conditions) and is associated with a range of adverse health outcomes, including increased mortality, increased morbidity, worse health-related quality of life and increased healthcare utilisation and costs. Exactly why people with long term conditions develop depression and how this depression is linked to adverse outcomes has not been clearly established, however. Recently, observational studies have indicated that inflammation and depression have a bidirectional association in population cohorts, raising the possibility that inflammation might cause depression among people with long term conditions. Furthermore, studies in healthy controls have demonstrated that experimentally induced acute inflammation causes negative biases in the way individuals process emotional information. Such biases are thought to have central importance in the development and maintenance of depression, though these biases in information processing have not been investigated in chronic inflammatory states, such as those seen among people with long term conditions. In this talk, Professor Dickens will present findings from a preliminary study of emotional processing among people with Inflammatory Bowel Disease. He will report how negative bias in the way individuals perceive emotions in others is linked to disease activity. This bias in emotional recognition could be used to further investigate mechanisms underpinning depression in future studies and in the development and evaluation of novel interventions for depression.