Child Mental Health Group

Research Portfolio
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The Child Mental Health Research Group provides evidence to optimise interventions and service organisation to protect and improve the mental health and well-being of children and young people.

The themes covered by the group are inherently translational and multi-disciplinary, and involve strong links with education, psychology, pediatrics, epidemiology, trial specialists, statisticians and health economics both within and external to the University of Exeter.

The following are current projects being undertaken by the group.

See also our website http://medicine.exeter.ac.uk/research/healthserv/childhealth/child-mental-health/
STARS: Supporting Teachers And childRen in Schools

The STARS research team

Prof. Tamsin Ford - Principal Investigator
Rachel Hayes - Trial Manager
Shelley Norman - Associate Research Fellow
Matt Allwood - Associate Research Fellow
Kate Allen - Associate Research Fellow
Bryony Longdon - Trial Co-ordinator

http://medicine.exeter.ac.uk/stars/

A large, 5 year project funded by NIHR PHR: Currently in year 3. The STARS study tests whether a teacher attending a Teacher Classroom Management (TCM) course will improve: Children's socio-emotional well-being; academic attainment; teachers' emotional well-being and the teacher's belief that they are able to manage the behaviour in the classroom more effectively and feel less stressed.

80 primary schools across the South West of England have been recruited. One teacher from each school will take part in the study. Teachers are randomly allocated to the intervention group and attend the TCM course or the control group and teach as usual.

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is used to measure socio-emotional well-being. The SDQ will be completed by teachers and the parents of all their pupils before and after the TCM course, and at one and two years after that. Academic progress will be measured using the National Curriculum standard levels used routinely in all state schools and we will check these scores against detailed literacy/numeracy assessments in some children.
STEER: Supporting Teaching staff to Enable children to build Emotional and behavioural Resilience

The STEER research team

Tamsin Ford - Principal Investigator
Rachel Hayes - Trial Manager
Shelley Norman - Associate Research Fellow
Matt Allwood - Associate Research Fellow
Kate Allen - Associate Research Fellow
Bryony Longdon - Trial Co-ordinator

A one year feasibility study funded by ESRC IAA fund

The study is exploring the possibility of training Teaching Assistants (TAs), possibly alongside teachers, in TCM to investigate any potential benefits for children who have been identified as having special education needs or disabilities (SEND) that include social, emotional or behavioural difficulties.

This is a small initial study to see if it’s feasible to (i) adapt the TCM course for delivery to TAs, (ii) recruit schools who can release TAs, possibly with class teachers as well, and (iii) explore how acceptable the questionnaires we use are to teaching staff, parents and children.

We are working with 24 teaching staff in total across two TCM groups.

The information we obtain from the teaching staff, parents and children will be used to decide if it is feasible to run a much larger study that could assess whether the TCM programme is effective in improving children with additional needs’ wellbeing.
CATCh-uS: Young people with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in transition from children’s services to adult services

The Catch-uS Research Team

Tamsin Ford – Principal Investigator
Astrid Janssens – Project Manager
Helen Eke – Associate Research Fellow
Anna Price – Associate Research Fellow
Anna Stimson – Research Administrator
Abigail Woodley – Placement Student
Tamsin Newlove-Delgado
Stuart Logan

http://medicine.exeter.ac.uk/catchus/

A 3 year NIHR funded project. Start November 1 2015 Exeter team.

CATCh-uS will explore the current options for young people with ADHD when they are too old to stay with children’s services. We do not know how many young people need or want to carry on attending health services. Existing work suggests that young people with developmental disorders like ADHD are particularly unlikely to transfer to adult mental health services. This will be the first national study to examine how many young people are in need of services for ADHD as adults.

Methods will be a surveillance study of young people with ADHD on medication who are within six months of the age-boundary for discharge from their children’s service with a nine month-follow-up; in depth interviews with key stakeholders to explore their views and experiences; and a mapping study that will combine information about the location of services for young adults with ADHD. An aim is to provide recommendations to improve service delivery and provision for young people with ADHD and thus improve their health at a key life stage and beyond.
Exploring Diagnosis: Autism and the Neurodiversity Movement

5 year Wellcome Trust investigator award (currently in year 2).

We examine the role that diagnosis plays in society and in medicine, using diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder as a case study, using mixed methods. While some patients seek diagnosis, others resist the use of diagnostic labels. The investigation explores how a diagnosis is experienced by adults. What are the benefits of, and objections to the diagnostic label? What are the consequences of diagnosis? How is diagnostic categorisation achieved by clinicians? What impact does a diagnostic label have on people's preconceptions?

Our small team documents and analyses the experiences of adults in the neurodiversity movement (autistic adults who have mobilised on the internet) together with those who have sought a clinical diagnosis of autism, and those who are self-identified but have decided against a formal label.
Associations between socioeconomic disadvantage and ADHD

3 year UEMS funded doctoral project (currently in year 3).

It has been reported that children living in conditions of socioeconomic disadvantage may be more likely to have attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). ADHD is a condition often diagnosed in childhood when a child displays levels of inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity that are not appropriate for their age.

So far this work has reviewed existing studies on this, and demonstrated that in the ALSPAC birth cohort children born to families in financial difficulty are around twice as likely to have a diagnosis of ADHD at age seven as other children not born into financial difficulty.

The research will go on to explore these associations over time, investigating whether the amount of time a child is exposed to disadvantage is associated with their symptoms of ADHD. The aim of this is to establish how closely the two factors are linked over time, which has implications for cause and progression of ADHD.

For more information, contact A.E.Russell@exeter.ac.uk
Mindfulness based interventions for adolescents

The Research Team:

**Tamsin Ford** (Principal Investigator)

**Daniel Racey** (Academic Clinical Researcher)

**Jerry Fox** - Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy Instructor/Teacher - Workplace, Sport & Young People (Devon) |CAMHS

My primary area of research is Mindfulness based interventions for adolescents who are recovering from anxiety and/or depression.

In the last two years, with my colleague, Jerry Fox, we have piloted an adaptation of Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy to a clinical population in a local CAMHS setting. At the outset, we decided to include parents in a parallel intervention group as research and clinical experience suggests that mood disorders have a systemic, transgenerational basis. We are currently cooperating with the Mindfulness in Schools Project* which has trialled a school-based universal intervention.

Our aim is to have a single, scalable programme that can be adapted to primary (preventative), secondary (targeted), and tertiary (rehabilitative) interventions and include teachers, carers and parents.

For more information contact Daniel.Racey@exeter.ac.uk

*For further information about the Mindfulness in Schools Project mentioned in this summary please go to [http://www.exeter.ac.uk/news/research/title_298056_en.html](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/news/research/title_298056_en.html)
NIHR funded Academic Clinical Lectureship

I have recently completed my PhD research which investigated aspects of unmet mental health need amongst children and young people.

Two of the three studies focussed on young people with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in transition from child to adult services. These studies aimed to examine what happens to prescribing for ADHD over the transition period using a large primary care dataset and to explore young peoples’ experiences of transition using qualitative interviews.

Findings indicated that the majority of those on ADHD medication at age 16 stopped medication by the age of 18, although follow up studies suggest that symptoms may persist into the mid-twenties in many cases. In particular, young people voiced uncertainty about what would happen to their medication after transition and the impact on their education and training.

The findings also highlighted the role of the GP in transition and this has led to a new study of GPs’ knowledge and views regarding managing young people with ADHD. During my Lectureship I will be leading this study which forms part of the CATCh-uS project on Young people with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in transition from children’s services to adult services.

It is hoped that the findings will inform ongoing efforts to improve services and outcomes.

For more information contact:  T.Newlove-Delgado@exeter.ac.uk
Systematic review of mindfulness-based interventions for teachers (M-BIT)

Researchers at Exeter: Darren Moore, Daniel Racey, Tamsin Ford

There is widespread recognition that work-related stress among teachers is a serious concern. The application of Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) has become increasingly popular, both in research and practice. Previous research has noted that trials of MBIs for teachers appear to show beneficial outcomes, yet this has not been systematically reviewed to date.

We are conducting a systematic review of mindfulness-based interventions for educational practitioners, including randomised controlled trials. We anticipate using a random-effects meta-analysis to determine the effectiveness of MBIs to improve mental health and work performance outcomes in educators. A narrative approach will be used to summarise any information about costs, feasibility, acceptability and any qualitative data collected alongside trials.

The team involves colleagues at the University of Surrey and University of Oxford.

For further information see http://www.crd.york.ac.uk/PROSPERO/display_record.asp?ID=CRD42015025807

For more information contact D.Moore@exeter.ac.uk
Assessing the glycaemic and CNS response to sulphonylurea therapy in patients with \textit{KCNJ11} mutations

Researcher: Pam Bowman

3 year UEMS funded doctoral project (currently in year 1)

The \textit{KCNJ11} gene encodes subunits of the ATP-sensitive potassium (K-ATP) channel, which is present in the pancreas and brain. I will assess the glycaemic and CNS response to sulphonylurea (SU) therapy in patients with neonatal diabetes due to mutations in \textit{KCNJ11}.

Study 1 is a physiological study testing the impact of meal composition on glucose, insulin and GLP-1 response and subsequent hypoglycaemia risk.

Study 2 is a preliminary observational study of the impact of high dose SU on cognitive, psychiatric and glycaemic outcomes. This study will help inform a future crossover trial comparing outcomes on low and high dose SU.

Study 3 will investigate the impact of timing of initiation of SU on neurodevelopmental outcomes. Study 4 is a retrospective study of the safety and efficacy of long-term SU treatment (8-10 years).

These studies will inform clinical treatment guidelines in \textit{KCNJ11} neonatal diabetes, and advance our understanding of the regulation of the pancreatic K-ATP channel and the role of the brain K-ATP channel in neurodevelopment.

For more information contact P.Bowman@exeter.ac.uk
Qualitative exploration of care experiences of young people with eating disorders and their parents (CarED)

Researcher: Oana Mitrofan
NIHR Academic Clinical Lecturer

Qualitative study run in partnership with the eating disorders (ED) charity Beat, in parallel to the 'Cost-effectiveness of models of care for young people with eating disorders (CostED)' project.

Aim: to understand people’s experiences of using different kinds of health care services for young people with ED. We hope that our qualitative data on service users’ perspectives, together with the cost-effectiveness data on existing community-based models of service provision provided by CostED, will contribute towards a better understanding of what would be an optimum service provision for young people with ED. Participants are young people aged 16-25 years who have an ED or have recovered from an ED and have had contact with health care services in relation to their ED, and parents of young people in the same situation.

Data collection method: online focus groups with young people and parents. Current stage: recruitment and data collection.

For more information contact O.Mitrofan@exeter.ac.uk
Evaluation of the Incredible Years Infant and Toddler Programme

Researcher: Vashti Berry

Vashti Berry

The home environment, particularly parent practices and mental health of both mothers and fathers, can impact significantly on a child’s social and emotional wellbeing and behaviour. Early experiences affect outcomes in later life such as educational attainment and the ability to form secure relationships.

This research project – known as the E-SEE trial (Enhancing Social and Emotional health and wellbeing in the Early years) – will evaluate two programmes that aim to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of children under two years and their parents. The four-year project is backed by a £1.85 million grant from the NIHR (National Institute for Health Research). The study includes investigators from the universities of York, Plymouth, Central Lancashire, Sheffield, and Maynooth. Initial delivery partners include Action for Children, Virgin Care, Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust, and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.

The research team aim to evaluate the effectiveness and acceptability of Incredible Years (IY) Parent Programmes for 0-2 year olds*. The study will feature an 18-month randomised pilot in Devon and Lancashire followed by a 30-month main randomised trial in four local authority areas. It will involve a total of 900 families and will seek to assess the impact of IY particularly on those parents and carers at risk of developing depression.

A group of 650 primary carers will receive IY interventions while a comparison group of 250 will be able to access services typically offered in their locality for this age range. Intervention group parents, and other significant carers, will receive varying levels of IY proportionate to their needs. The researchers will assess the primary outcomes when children are around 20 months old. These will focus on the child’s social and emotional wellbeing, and wellbeing among primary carers and other significant carers. The study will also assess parenting skills; parent-child attachment and interaction; parent and child access to health and social services; child behaviour; child language; quality of IY programme delivery; and health-related quality of life and cost.

For more information contact V.Berry@exeter.ac.uk
The study has a dedicated project website that will be updated during the study

*The Incredible Years series was first developed in the USA in the 1970s by Professor Carolyn Webster-Stratton and now comprises programmes for parents of 0-12 year-olds, with complementary programmes for children and teachers. Evidence from research around the world suggests that the BASIC IY programme – for parents of children aged 3+ years – enhances child and parent wellbeing. The more recently developed IY parent programmes for infants and toddlers have shown promising results in two small trials in Wales and Boston, USA, but have not yet been rigorously evaluated in England.
Health and educational outcomes in childhood Autism Spectrum Disorder: the impact of psychiatric comorbidity and treatment

Researcher – Johnny Downs
Honorary Associate Research Fellow

This investigation has involved the set-up of a ‘first of its kind’ anonymised UK dataset of school age children to analyse individual level NHS mental and physical health data linked to educational outcome data held by the Department of Education (DfE).

This study examines how psychiatric comorbidity and its respective psychopharmacological treatment may affect the risk of adverse physical health and education outcomes in school age children with ASD. The study explores the association between specific psychiatric comorbidities and psychotropic medication use in ASD children and the association between ASD-related psychiatric and physical comorbidity, and how these associations may be affected by psychopharmacological treatment.

The third part of the study investigates how psychiatric comorbidity effects the risk of poor educational outcomes, and how these risks may be modified by CAMHS prescribed treatments.

For more information contact J.Downs@exeter.ac.uk
Associations between childhood emotional disorder, school absenteeism and attendance at paediatric clinics

Katie Finning

3 year Wellcome Strategic funded doctoral project (beginning October 2016)

Childhood emotional disorders are common and associated with a range of adverse outcomes. Effective interventions are available, yet these children are particularly unlikely to be in contact with mental health services. Emotional disorders commonly lead to physical symptoms, which may merge into medically unexplained symptoms, resulting in regular absences from school and attendance at paediatric clinics.

This project aims to understand the relationship between emotional disorder, absenteeism from school and attendance at paediatrics. The work will include a review of previous research, examination of data from the Millennium Cohort Study and the British Child and Adolescent Mental Health Survey, and a prospective study of children presenting at paediatric clinics with medically unexplained symptoms.

It is hoped that the findings will help in the development of strategies to improve the identification of children with emotional disorder.

For more information contact: K.Finning@exeter.ac.uk