



Department of Psychiatry

Annual Report 2024

- Conducting world-class research
- Teaching psychiatry
- Developing future researchers
- Supporting doctors in training
- Promoting excellence in clinical practice
- Developing and providing innovative clinical services
- Translating scientific discovery into benefits for patients

From the Head of Department



Professor Belinda Lennox

The past year has once again seen ground-breaking and impactful research activity across Psychiatry, with many of our staff recognised for their world-leading work.

We have seen major studies conclude and their findings published, from [the HOME study](#) into the value of consultant-liaison psychiatry on hospital wards, to the research into the [‘Shingrix’ shingles vaccine, which our team found was associated with a reduced risk of dementia](#). Meanwhile other research programmes are getting up and running, as we welcome [the first participants of the READ-OUT](#) blood tests for dementia project and the start of major clinical trials in psychosis testing the effects of cannabidiol (STEP trials) and KarXT (FOCUS).

I continue to be incredibly impressed and inspired by the quality and diversity of the research that we carry out, and also by the display of Department values that I see: of teamwork and collaboration, of kindness and generosity, of professionalism and integrity, and of respecting diversity, inclusivity and wellbeing.

We believe looking after the people and culture of this Department is critical to its success, so we were delighted when in April [our Athena Swan Silver Award was renewed](#). We are now focused on delivering our future action plan to make the Department an even more inclusive and positive environment for all, as we

aim to go for gold next time.

We have seen the retirement of several giants in our field – [Michael Sharpe](#), [Alan Stein](#), [John Geddes](#) and [Paul Harrison](#) have stepped down from statutory posts in the Department this year. We have made some key appointments as well, welcoming [Ole Jensen](#) as Chair of Translational Cognitive Neuroscience and [Rachel Uptegrove](#) as Director of the [National Institute of Health and Care Research \(NIHR\) Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre \(BRC\)](#). [Mina Fazel](#) became the first female clinical statutory professor in the whole of the Medical Sciences Division. It is also nearly a year since [David Hyland](#) joined us as our new Head of Administration and Finance.

This year also saw the very sad loss of our dear colleague [Valeria Frighi](#), who was a compassionate and dedicated researcher into intellectual disabilities. She and her work made a big impact on so many. I am delighted that we have [launched a funding award in her memory](#), to enable others to continue in this important field of research.

The year 2025 will also see further developments on [the Warneford Park project](#) with the application for planning permission due to be submitted. A collaboration between the University of Oxford, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and a partner, the proposals include a new state-of-the-art mental health hospital, a global brain and mental health research facility, housing both University researchers from our Department and others, and commercial scientific research companies and biotech start-ups, as well as a new postgraduate college for the University of Oxford focused on medical sciences, bioengineering and related disciplines.

Looking ahead, I am excited about the new projects that are getting off the ground and starting to recruit, and even more excited by projects that will be finishing, and where results have the potential to make a real difference to patients and clinical care.

Professor Belinda Lennox



Key Appointments and Staff Changes

There have been 79 people who have joined the Department, while an additional 16 people have transferred to a new role within Psychiatry. Meanwhile, 45 people have left, including seven who transferred to another department in the university.



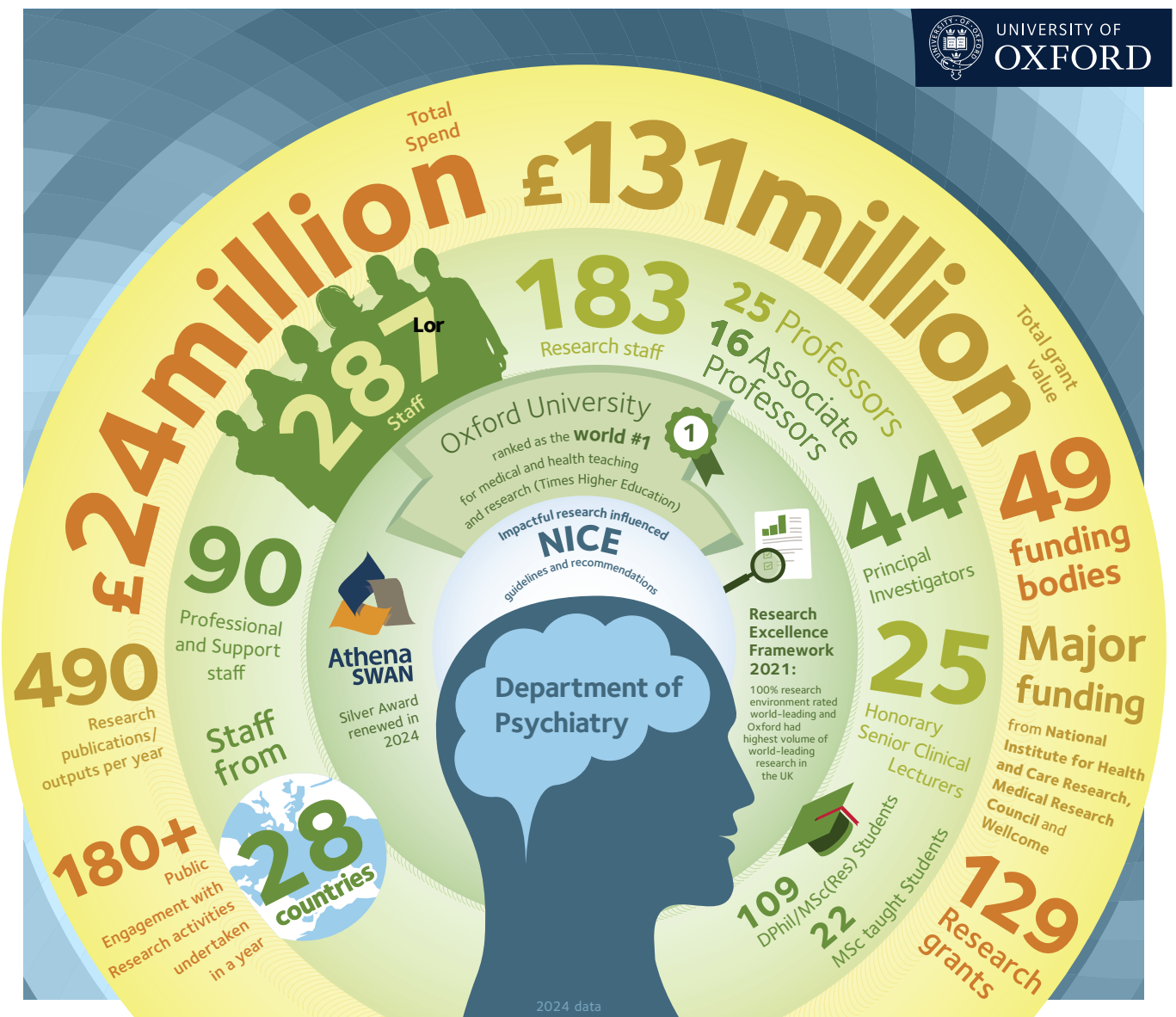
Mina Fazel (pictured left) was appointed Chair of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, replacing Alan Stein. **Rachel Uptegrove** has joined as Director of the [Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre](#) and Senior Clinical Researcher, while **Ole Jensen** was appointed as Chair of Translational Cognitive Neuroscience.

Phil Burnet was made Professor of Neuroscience in the University's 2024 Recognition of Distinction Exercise. Professor Burnet stepped down as Director of Graduate Studies in the Department but remains Course Director for the taught MSc in Clinical and Therapeutic Neuroscience. **Susannah Murphy** has taken over as Director of Graduate Studies.

Three new Associate Professors were appointed **Andrea Reinecke**, **Vanessa Raymont** and **Rob McCutcheon** (pictured right).



Facts and Figures 2024



From the Associate Head of Department for Research



The past year has been a highly successful one for our research, with no less than 490 papers published and 111 preprints. A number of these received widespread media coverage, showcasing

both the impact and the breadth of our research. These included studies on the [shingles vaccine](#), [COVID-19](#), [online therapies](#), [medication for migraines](#), and [blood biomarkers for dementia](#).

Reflecting the prominence of our research, the latest [Clarivate Highly Cited Researchers list](#), which recognises those whose work is cited in the top 1% of their field globally, shows that the Department of Psychiatry punches well above its weight - seven of our academics are on the list.

We supported 275 grant applications, and 67 new awards commenced. The Mood Disorders workstream of the Office for Life Sciences/NIHR-funded Mental Health Mission secured an additional £18 million to

support the development of mood disorder research clinics in the UK (Oxford, IoPPN, Newcastle, Nottingham, Birmingham, Liverpool, Exeter, Southampton) as well as setting up new clinics (UCL, Cambridge, Bristol, Cardiff, Sheffield, Edinburgh, Glasgow). Lahiru Handunnetthi was awarded significant funding from NC3Rs to upscale human stem cell assays to detect autoantibodies in central nervous system disease. A new type of MEG scanner, using OPMs (Optically Pumped Magnetometers), has been installed in OHBA. It was funded by Innovate UK Quantum Catalyst Phase 2, in collaboration with [Cerca Magnetics](#). OPM MEG has many practical advantages and adds to the range of brain imaging techniques available in the Department.

[The Broadening Horizons](#) travel grant scheme has continued to be a great success, with 24 early career researchers benefitting. Finally, we pay tribute to [John Geddes](#), a past Head of Department, who has now stood down from being Director of the BRC and who will be retiring from the WA Handley Chair. John will not be leaving us entirely, but this does mark the end of an era, and we thank him for his many outstanding contributions over the past 30 years.

Professor Paul Harrison

Clarivate Highly Cited Researchers list: Andrea Cipriani, Seena Fazel, John Geddes, Paul Harrison, Willem Kuyken, Rob McCutcheon, Philip McGuire.

From the Associate Head of Department for People and Culture



This year, one of the big People and Culture highlights has been the [renewing of our Athena Swan Silver Award](#), in recognition of our success and progress in promoting gender equality and inclusion.

The report highlights our achievements with communications across the Department, flexible working, and the promotion of new senior females to both chair and professorship levels.

We're now working on delivering our Future Action Plan, where we'll be focusing on improving the inclusion as well as career development of different groups in the department, including new or emerging Principal Investigators, students, parents, minoritised groups and people outside researcher roles. We will also be looking at systemic gender inequalities such as pay gaps.

Another of our major initiatives this year is the launch of applications for open-ended contracts. We know

that fixed term contracts have long been a challenge for many staff, both professionally and personally, and we are glad to be able to offer a scheme whereby open-ended contracts can now be applied for in many circumstances.

Our PI lunches, aiming to give Principal Investigators a space to discuss key issues, learn from each other and network more effectively, have been well attended. Over the past year we have focused on topics including good research culture in groups, Personal Development Reviews and career conversations and inclusive staff recruitment as well as how to be successful in grant applications and tackling scientific bureaucracy. We have received positive feedback on these meetings.

In the past term we have moved from monthly to termly People and Culture themes to be more strategic and focused on key areas whilst ensuring we give attention to important ongoing areas of interest and causes, such as Black History Month and disability awareness. Our first theme has been connections and there has been some fantastic work to help develop and improve connections across the Department.

Professor Catherine Harmer

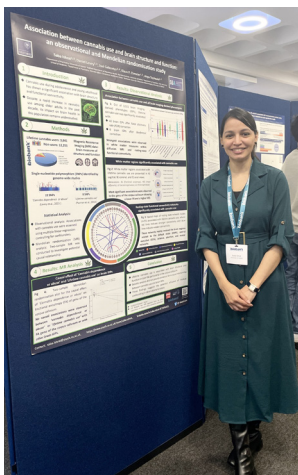
News and Impact



Keith Hawton (pictured above, centre) co-[led a series of six papers](#) for the Lancet Public Health for World Suicide Prevention Day on 10 September, which argued the impact of social factors, such as poverty and abuse, need to be recognised and action taken to address them.

A study led by **Riccardo De Giorgi** showed that [semaglutide, widely known as Ozempic/Wegovy, does not negatively impact brain health](#) and has possible benefits for cognition and nicotine dependence.

Research led by **Saba Ishrat** (pictured below) found [lifetime cannabis use is associated with several aspects of brain structure and function in later life](#). It is the



largest observational study of relationships between cannabis use and brain structure and function to date.

Research led by **Edoardo Ostinelli** [identified the most effective treatments for ADHD](#), highlighting that stimulants and atomoxetine are the only treatments with proven

efficacy in reducing symptoms of ADHD in adults.

The [HOME study](#), led by **Michael Sharpe** (pictured below), found a collaborative model of consultant-liaison psychiatry for hospitalised older adults appeared to be cost-effective in the short-term and was well-received by patients and medical staff.



Andrea Cipriani led a team that found [triptans were the most effective medicine for adults who experienced acute migraines](#).



The UK's [first conference on Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviours](#) took place in September (pictured above), co-organised by **Clare Mackay**. There was a research symposium at the Oxford Museum of Natural History, followed by a community day in the Department of Psychiatry. In the lead up to the event, [Clare was featured on BBC South television news](#) raising awareness of hair pulling disorder, otherwise known as trichotillomania, alongside 12-year-old Bea and her mum Josie.

An online tool recommended by the [National Institute of Health and Care Excellence \(NICE\)](#) for use in the NHS, has now been licensed. Online Support and Intervention for Child Anxiety (OSI) internet-based therapy developed by **Cathy Creswell** and her team was shown to be clinically and cost-effective in a randomised clinical trial and [is now being commercially licensed](#) as part of a partnership between Oxford University Innovation and [Koa Health](#) at scale, with sustainable roll out to NHS trusts across the country.

Lesson plans to build resilience in young people and help them deal with everyday challenges have been developed by a team led by **Jacinta O'Shea** as part of the [BReal \(Building stress resilience in early adolescents' lives\)](#) public engagement project. They have now been accredited by the Personal, Social, Health and Economic Association and are available for use.



ATTUNE is an innovative and pioneering UK Research and Innovation funded project aiming to investigate the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on young people's mental health in England. In partnership with Falmouth University, the project team hosted its second [Impact and Dissemination Conference](#) at Oxford, where they showcased novel resources and tools, co-designed by young people and professionals (pictured left), for use by public health experts and clinicians to help embed trauma-informed practice.



[Poorer cardiovascular health in childhood and adolescence may be linked to early differences in brain structure](#), particularly in areas of the brain known to be affected in dementia in later life, according to a new scientific study led by [Holly Haines](#) (pictured above) and [Sana Suri](#) (pictured below). They say the early adolescent years merit greater consideration in the context of dementia prevention.



A study led by [Max Taquet](#) and [Paul Harrison](#) found that the [new recombinant shingles vaccine 'Shingrix' is associated with a reduced risk of dementia](#) compared to an earlier shingles vaccine, which was also reported to reduce dementia rates.

Dementias Platform UK's new project READ-OUT (REAL-world Dementia OUTcomes), is a nationwide study to understand the usefulness of different blood biomarkers for dementia and to test the effectiveness and benefits of blood testing in the real world. There will be 3,000 participants attending 28 sites across all four nations contributing to the study. A mobile unit will access hard-to-reach communities. READ-OUT will assess tests and look at a range of types of dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, frontotemporal dementia, and dementia with Lewy bodies. The researchers will also look at whether the blood tests can help detect these diseases at various stages of their development. Funded by the [Alzheimer's Society](#), [Alzheimer's Research UK](#), [National Institute for](#)

[Health and Care Research](#), Gates Ventures and players of [People's Postcode Lottery](#) as part of the Blood Biomarker Challenge, the ambition is to generate evidence to enable blood tests for dementia to be rolled out in the NHS in the next few years.

DPUK's executive team, including director [John Gallacher](#) (not pictured) and [Vanessa Raymont](#) (pictured below with James Rowe from the University of Cambridge), visited Downing Street to join a meeting focused on speeding up dementia research as part of the [Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Mission](#). Launched in August 2022, the government committed to double dementia research funding to £160 million by 2025.



NIHR Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre

With Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, the Department of Psychiatry hosts the [NIHR Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre \(OH BRC\)](#), dedicated to translating innovative research into better treatments for mental and brain health disorders, receiving in excess of £50m of funding from the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR).

OH BRC hosts the NIHR Mental Health Translational Research Collaboration (MH TRC) – a network currently comprising of 20 UK centres of excellence with strong industry collaborations. Funded by the [Department of Health & Social Care](#) (DHSC) and the [Office for Life Sciences](#) (OLS), The Mental Health Mission (MHM) is being led by the [NIHR MH-TRC](#), to increase capacity in mental health research through providing relevant training and creating better systems to support industry- and academic-led research and investment across the UK.

Professor [Rachel Upthegrove](#) replaced Professor [John Geddes](#) (pictured above right) as Director of the BRC in November 2024. Research highlights which involve members of the Department of Psychiatry include:



- [A £3.65m grant](#) over three years from new charity BD2 to study calcium channels and in particular channels in bipolar disorder, involving [Paul Harrison](#), [Nicola Hall](#) and project managed by [Arne Mould](#).
- A new study published in Lancet Psychiatry, lead author [Max Taquet](#), has revealed that [many people who were hospitalised with COVID-19 continue to have cognitive and psychiatric problems](#), even two to three years post-infection.
- PAX-D, a major trial of a new intervention for depression led by Professor [Michael Browning](#), completed recruitment.

Awards and Prizes



Director of the [Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre \(BRC\)](#), [Rachel Upthegrove](#) - Member of the Order of the British Empire (pictured above).

[Catherine Harmer](#) - Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences.

[Kam Bhui](#) and [Cathy Creswell](#) - NIHR Senior Investigators.

[Lucy Foulkes](#), [Ludovica Griffanti](#) and [Jiedi Lei](#) - NIHR Oxford Senior Research Fellows.

[Emma Soneson](#) - NIHR Development and Skills Enhancement Award.

[Verena Hinze](#) - Catalyst Fellowship, Medical Research Foundation and Versus Arthritis.

[Miriam Klein-Flugge](#) - Philip Leverhulme Prize for Psychology.

[Andrea Luppi](#) - Universal Scientific Education and Research Network Prize in Formal Sciences. Italy Made Me prize for Life Sciences, awarded by the Italian Embassy in the UK.

[Fabi Corsi-Zuelli](#) - Universal Scientific Education and Research Network Prize in Medical Sciences.

[Andrea Cipriani](#) - Freedom of the City of London, Lord Mayor of London (pictured below).



[Philip McGuire](#) and [Dominic Oliver](#) - Neuropsychopharmacology Editors' Award for a Transformative Original Report (NEATOR).

[Amedeo Minichino](#) - Wellcome Early Career Fellowship.

[Anya Topiwala](#) - Wellcome Career Development Award.

[Laura Winchester](#) - Alzheimer's Research UK Senior Fellowship.



The [CREDO \(Centre for Research on Eating Disorders at Oxford\) team](#) (pictured above) were 'highly commended' at the Vice Chancellor's Awards for Commercialisation and Innovation. [Louise Dalton](#), [Elizabeth Rapa](#), [Nimra Khan](#) and [Kam Bhui](#), were shortlisted for Research Engagement.

Student Recognition

[Boluwatife Cole](#) - Pump Priming Award, Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre.

[Brennan Delattre](#) - Selma Jeanne Cohen Lecture Award, Fulbright Association.

[Saba Ishrat](#) - Runner-Up, Early-Career Researcher of the Year award, UK Biobank.

The Immune Mind by [Monty Lyman](#) - British Psychological Society Book Award, 2024.

[Tanya Manchanda](#) - Donald J Cohen Fellowship, International Association for Child & Adolescent Psychiatry.

[Helen Manley](#) - Editor's Choice Award 2023, Review of Education.

[Amy McCall](#) - Max Perutz Award, Medical Research Council.

[Fareez Ramli](#) - Distinction Award, National University of Malaysia.

[Thomas Reilly](#) - Public Communications Junior Prize, British Association for Psychopharmacology.

[Shu Wei](#) - Rabin Ezra Scholarship.

Podcast Award

The University of Oxford Futuremakers podcast, hosted by [Belinda Lennox](#), won the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Advance Circle of Excellence Bronze Award.

Obituaries



Senior Clinical Researcher [Dr Valeria Frighi](#) (pictured left), who died in March aged 67, was a dedicated and passionate researcher, working to improve health outcomes for people with severe mental illness and intellectual disabilities. She collaborated widely, and loved teaching, supervising and supporting students. Valeria was a kind, thoughtful and compassionate person and a much-loved colleague and friend. [An award has been launched](#) in her memory.

[Professor Tim Crow OBE](#) (pictured right), who died in November aged 86, was a hugely influential figure in the Department of Psychiatry and the field of psychiatric research more generally over many years. He was the first Scientific Director of the Prince of Wales International Centre (POWIC) for SANE Research and his research into schizophrenia raised a huge amount of awareness of the illness.





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