

Detailed Programme

Keynote talks



Dr Rachel Carey ([Zinc](#))

Start- ups as experiments: a behavioural science approach

New startups can provide a range of opportunities for behavioural science. This talk will explore how new ventures can adopt a more systematic approach to behavioural science, and how we can maximise their potential to improve health and advance knowledge



Professor Wendy Wood ([University of Southern California](#))

Why don't we stick with behaviour change?

People are pretty good at changing their behavior in the short term. After deciding to eat more healthfully, most of us can forgo dessert tonight. The challenge comes over time, as few of us stick with that decision. In this talk, I will argue that habits are a central reason for this failure. Although people naturally persist by forming habits, it's not easy to understand how habits work. In fact, we may know least about the actions that we do most often. I explain the basic features of habit formation and change and then present research on how people understand their own habits.



Professor Heleen Riper ([VU University](#))

The COVID-19 pandemic: the ‘black swan’ for digital mental health care

In this presentation, Riper discussed digital mental health care developments before, during and after Covid-19. Over the last two decades the digital landscape of mental health care research and service innovation has gained momentum. This period is characterized by many successes’ stories but brilliant failures as well. Today, e-mental health is like a two-headed Janus. The question addressed in this presentation will be ‘what does the future hold’?

Invited Panel Discussion
The role of technology in contributing to behaviour change in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Speaker	Title	Summary
Professor Peter Pirolli Senior Research Scientist Institute for Human and Machine Cognition	<i>Psychologically Valid Agent-Based modeling of Behavior Change for COVID</i>	Forecasts of how the COVID-19 epidemic will progress, in terms of regional rate of infections and deaths, are made by epidemiological models. In the absence of a vaccine, it is crucial that epidemiological models accurately predict how the rate of transmission changes in response to non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) such as advisories about social distancing, wearing masks, washing hands, etc. This requires accurate and precise modeling of how people respond psychologically and behaviorally to the NPIs. I will discuss a project developing Psychologically Valid Agents (PVAs), each representing a simulated individual, and populations of PVAs simulating the human population of a given region (e.g., a county or state). The PVAs will be part of a new kind of epidemiological model for forecasting Covid-19 cases. Psychological Valid Agents will expand upon prior ACT-R models of decision-making and behavior-change and will be embedded within epidemiological prediction models.
Professor John Torous	<i>The role of technology in enhancing the quality of healthcare during COVID- 19</i>	Dr Torous will discuss the evolving role of traditional synchronous telehealth as well as new roles of asynchronous telehealth offered via smartphones
Dr Ben Ainsworth Lecturer in Health Psychology Bath Centre for Mindfulness and Compassion, University of Bath	<i>Germ Defence: the COVID health protection behaviour study</i>	Ben Ainsworth is Lecturer in Health Psychology at the University of Bath and leading the 'Germ Defence' website infection control behaviour study. Germ Defence provides simple advice using behaviour change techniques to help users improve protective behaviours to reduce household transmission of COVID-19. It was developed and trialled in 20,000 people during the swine flu pandemic and was updated using a novel rapid co-participatory 'person-based' approach for COVID-19. Available in 20+ languages and used by 100,000 people (and counting), it is continually optimised using the person-based approach, in order to respond to changing public perceptions during the pandemic.

<p>Dr Rob Mooney Deputy Head of Communications, Department of Health in Ireland & Lead of the Behavioural Change Subgroup to the (Irish) National Public Health Emergency Team</p>	<p><i>The central role of social and behavioural research in the communications strategy and design of the COVID Tracker App in Ireland.</i></p>	<p>The virus has affected our friends and our families, and our communities. Until we have a vaccine, or an effective treatment, testing and contact tracing along with the adoption of appropriate health public behaviours like social distancing and hand washing are the defenses that we have against COVID-19.</p> <p>In April 2020 Ireland established a cross governmental App Development Team working with Apple and Google and Irish industry to develop the COVID Tracker App with three specific purposes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. digital and anonymous contact tracing of close contacts of confirmed cases of Covid-19, b. allowing users to record if they have symptoms, and c. providing daily information about Covid-19. <p>The development of the app was not simply an exercise in advancing the technology, but a journey that required support from the government, stakeholders, and most importantly engendering trust among the public we were asking to download and use the app. Conscious of the context in which we were developing the app, we designed and implemented a social and behavioural research programme to inform the design and communications strategy.</p> <p>At nearly 1.8 million people, or nearly 48% of those aged 16 and over in Ireland, this strategy has delivered one of the most downloaded COVID tracker apps in the world. Further, we are quickly beginning to see results with hundreds of close contacts already being identified through the app alone. The approach and code are being replicated in different countries and states across the globe.</p>
<p>Dr Melissa Oldham Research Fellow Behavioural Science and Health, University College London</p>	<p><i>Alcohol and COVID</i></p>	<p>COVID-19 has had a polarising impact on alcohol consumption, these trends and the implications for digital support are discussed.</p>