UCL Mental Health Strategy:
Unified Impactful Progressive

Mental Health matters

Mental Health is one of the biggest challenges of the 21st Century with significant human, social and economic impact across the globe.

In an era of increasing stress and an ageing population, mental illness is becoming more prevalent in many societies. 615 million people worldwide suffer with anxiety and depression and the World Health Organisation predicts that depression will be the leading global cause of morbidity by 2030.

Much has been done to break the taboo of problems in mental health but we have seen relatively few developments of new treatments in the last 30 years. There is still so much we don't know or understand about the brain - the organ of the mind – and how its development is shaped by biological, psychological and social risk factors.

At UCL, we want to 'bend the curve' in mental health research, education and support. We are inspired by the progress made in other areas of medicine which has seen increasing life expectancy and many diseases retreating in front of science.

Through integrating scholarship, research excellence and our work with partners we have an outstanding opportunity to deliver long-term benefits to our diverse local community across London and beyond, our UCL students and staff, the NHS, charity and education services in the UK, and scholars and health professionals across the globe.

We should be in a position where mental illness is prevented or cured, or where we can reduce the suffering of those affected. UCL wants to get there…

Why UCL?

We are recognised for our radical, critical thinking and widespread influence. UCL was ranked first for Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience by U.K.'s Research Excellence Framework. The RAND Analysis of Highly Cited publications (biomedical and health research in England) had UCL ranked first in mental health. We explore every opportunity to consider how our work can deliver positive, real-world social change.

There's something different about UCL. Our world-renowned multi-disciplinary academic community is grounded in excellence and engenders an inquisitive, collaborative and forward-thinking culture which is committed to rejecting internal competition, breaking down silos, and toppling ivory towers. UCL cherishes curiosity and imagination and believes that the expansion of knowledge and scholarship is fundamental to the development and improvement of society.

We believe that our excellence - founded in audacious and disruptive thinking and crossing boundaries - should deliver benefit on a global scale. We don't work simply in response to policy and funding trends or to increase our global footprint. We look to generate practical impact.

The UCL ethos of interdisciplinary thinking and collaborative working creates a seamless timeline from basic and blue-sky research to applied patient and population health impact. We take a 'lifespan approach', addressing social and health inequalities from the cradle to the grave. Our academics have forged lasting and embedded partnerships with the NHS, national Government and the third sector to ensure 100% coverage across diverse primary and social care communities in the UK. With most of our leading experts undertaking dual appointments as UCL researchers and NHS clinicians, we are working on the front-line, ensuring our research and education has patient outcomes at its heart.

UCL is committed to actively engaging participants with lived experience of mental illness in our research processes and we have a strong heritage of primary and social care patient participation to ensure a contemporary, 'co-production' approach. We also have unrivalled access to huge NHS clinical databases and population health research cohorts to give a public health depth and context to our work.

Longitudinal **population health** expertise is a unique selling point for UCL. We host all four of Britain's national birth cohort studies of rich, cross-generation lifetime health data from communities of participants born in 1946, 1958, 1970 or 2000. This unique resource allows us to examine biological, social and neurological factors that help us understand the impact of mental health on social, economic and health outcomes across huge, longitudinal data sets – rather than looking at clinical data in isolation.

Staff across *all eleven* of UCL's academic faculty areas are actively engaged in this 'super-field' of mental health research and education, working beyond the traditional boundaries of other universities to adopt a holistic approach - from molecular studies to reviewing national policy or shaping global treatments. UCL has a unique and rich combination of knowledge and ambition, blending a wealth and quality of *pre-clinical* capability with diverse complementary expertise to understand lifelong mental health.

neuroscience
computer science
psychology
pharmacy
psychiatry
Mental Health
education
population health
statistics & information
genetics
imaging

UCL has long been at the forefront of developing evidenced-based **psychological therapies** to complement biological interventions, with our division of psychiatry boasting wide impact in both policy and novel treatments. The field of **psychiatry** and understanding psychiatric disorder is complex, leaning on many branches of science. UCL's approach to looking at psychiatry through **cognitive neuroscience**, particularly the new field of **computational psychiatry**, is unique.

Our expertise in broad cognitive science confers significant strength and depth which we apply to both mental disorders and mental health. UCL is undoubtedly a neuroscience powerhouse - ranked 2nd in the World for neuroscience publications according to Clarivate Incites - and when combined with mathematical rigour is helping us to understand the functioning of the brain and mind in radically new ways.

Complementing our strengths in neuroscience, psychiatry and psychology – and our unique population health (epidemiology) and data science – is a diverse range of other academic fields where UCL's international expertise adds new perspective, depth and inspiration to our work in mental health.

UCL's best-in-class **imaging** technologies and multidisciplinary investigative expertise in The Wellcome Trust Centre for Neuroimaging helps us to understand how thought and behaviour arise from brain activity, and how such processes break down in neurological and psychiatric disorders. Our research groups – with over 100 clinicians, researchers and support staff (and a wider network of more than 200 collaborators across UCL and around the globe) - study all aspects of higher cognitive function including vision, hearing, memory, language, reasoning, emotion, decision-making and social interactions.

Our School of **Pharmacy** is an engine room for developing and evaluating new psychotropic medications and better ways of administering those treatments, while our Bartlett School of Architecture is examining the impact of the **built environment** on conditions including depression and anxiety. There are many other research projects, national networks and partnership collaborations across **education**, **law**, **economics**, **computer science**, **engineering** and **arts** & culture where UCL plays a leading role in understanding and supporting mental health in the 21st Century.

UCL addresses the full spectrum of lifelong mental health, from developmental disorders to dementia.

The work of our **UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health** and the **Anna Freud Centre**, explores how developmental neuroscience links physical and mental health in children - working with the NHS, government and school partners. The Duchess of Cambridge, HRH Princess Catherine, is the patron of the Anna Freud Centre and visited our UCL neuroscientist's team to discover how environment and biology interact to shape the way children develop both socially and emotionally.

The **UCL Dementia Research Centre**, which is the anchor for the UK Dementia Institute, is a hub for patient-centred research and clinical trials in Alzheimer's disease and other common causes of dementia but also examines young-onset, inherited and unusual dementias. Our work focuses on identifying and understanding the disease, ways to improve diagnosis and treatments and how best to support people with dementia and their families.

Finally, UCL's Professor of Evidence Based Practice and Research (and NHS England advisor) Miranda Wolpert MBE is to lead an ambitious Wellcome Trust programme overseeing a £200million national fund to develop a 'super-discipline' of mental health science. The programme has a particular focus on anxiety and depression treatments, including in young people with 75% of people with a mental health problem developing their illness before the age of 24.

Cost and impact
of mental health problems
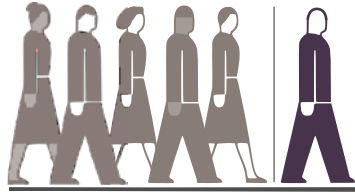
1 in 6 people experience
mental illness each year

funding for child and adolescent
mental health service equates
to just 0.7% of total NHS
budget and just 7% of mental
health expenditure

almost half of adults
in England have reported
that they have had a
diagnosable mental health
problem at some point
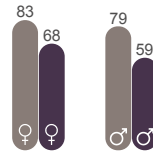in their lives

UK research spend
per adult (2014)

cancer   £1,571

**mental
health**   **£9.75**

economic and social
cost in England
of approximately
£105 billion

only 5.5% of the
UK research
budget is dedicated
to mental health

83   68   79   59

around one in 10
people between
5 and 16 have
a mental
health problem

people with severe
mental health problems
have a reduced
life expectancy

6,000 deaths
from suicide in
the UK in 2015

suicide

accidental poisoning

land transport accidents

suicide is now the leading
cause of death for young men

Research & Innovation

With leading and cutting-edge research across the full spectrum of mental health, from understanding the science at a molecular level through to work which translates discoveries into action and connects practice and policy, our research at UCL is connected and embedded in real-world settings.

We are passionate about understanding the 'mechanics' and pathways of the development of mental illness – looking at biological including genetic, psychological and social factors. We apply cutting edge computational modelling and epidemiological approaches to provide a broad, longitudinal approach to mental health. We are world leaders in excellence in clinical practice, with a particular reputation for our strength in developing primary clinical trials with patients.

The establishment of our flagship Institute of Mental Health in 2019 will ensure direct and rapid access to UCL's diverse expertise across myriad fields.

The ground breaking department of Computational Psychiatry led by renown neuro-psychiatrist and Brain Prize winner Professor Ray Dolan, has harnessed computational techniques and mathematical models of psychiatric behaviours to develop a unique programme of tasks to assess a participant's appetite for risk and predict changes in mood through recognising risk and measuring sensitivity to rewards. The programme has been developed as a smartphone app in partnership with a global telecomms company

Bridging between clinical and research worlds, Functional Cognitive Disorder (FCD) is a condition in patients who are not diagnosed with clinical dementia but continue to seek reassurance about memory loss. Professor Rob Howard and colleagues at UCL have developed a new meta-cognition training video to enhance confidence in cognitive performance which aims to reduce mental health deterioration, particularly in the elderly.

Professor Gill Livingston's Lancet commission looks at non-genetic interventions which address dementia risk factors. These diverse interventions include education for children and young people, monitoring blood pressure and hearing in middle-aged participants and supporting cognitive health and treating diseases like diabetes in the elderly.

UCL scientists, including Professor Essi Viding, Professor Pasco Fearon, Professor Eamon McCrory and Dr Jean-Baptiste Pingault, conduct world-leading research in developmental psychopathology. Their work addresses the genetic origins, as well as neural correlates of mental health problems in childhood and adolescence. This genetic and neuroscience perspective is complemented by research on the environment, testing the impact of parenting and trauma on child development. Drawing on this scientific work and on experience in clinical practice, UCL experts have led large-scale treatment trials and radical new programmes such as the Anna Freud Family School. They are also at the forefront of science-based policy impact, working with government and third sector organisations to improve the mental health of children and young people.

Our work on the mental-physical health interface, led by Prof David Osborn and Dr Joe Hayes, aims to understand and close the 20 year gap between life expectancy in people with serious mental illness and the rest of the population. We unpick the mechanisms which create this inequality and we evaluate pharmacological and behavioural interventions to improve health outcomes. This work capitalises on UCL's cross-disciplinary strengths in primary care, health psychology and trials.

Education & Dissemination

At UCL our research and partnership-working enriches global scholarship and delivers opportunities for a transformative education with a reputation for innovation, reach and legacy. Our multi-modal education and training encourages independent thinking from students in neuroscientific, clinical, anthropological and social terms and is led by world experts, government advisers, and NHS clinicians to ensure we continue to build capacity for mental health research and treatment in the future.

The recruitment and development of high-quality research students is critical to the university's long-term success. Every year, we equip over 70 doctoral students to become future scientists, clinicians, policy creators and influencers with the right mix of interdisciplinary skills needed to pose and answer challenging questions around mental health and inspire the next generation of mental health scientists. Our postdoctoral positions and early career training fellowships, including prestigious awards from the **Wellcome Trust**, **Medical Research Council**, **Economic and Social Research Council**, and **National Institute for Health Research**, further highlight our reputation and reach. These awards allow the brightest early career mental health scientists to develop independent research careers, to maximise its influence on policy and practice and accelerate their progress into academic or non-academic leadership to make a global impact in the area of mental health.

We also offer an unrivalled breadth of Master's programmes relevant for Mental Health based in London – one of the world's greatest cities – with high demand from the brightest students in the UK and internationally. These include MSc in Clinical Mental Health Sciences, which provides students with both clinical and research experience, and MRes in Developmental Neuroscience and Psychopathology, run jointly with Yale University, with a year of mental health research experience at Yale University. Students from these programmes typically continue to a PhD or clinical training, with current cohorts having secured positions in top universities including Oxford, Cornell, and King's College.

UCL's START (strategy for relatives) project supports the family carers of relatives with dementia and trains voluntary sector support workers to deliver the programme at a community level. Carers on the programme were assessed to be 5 times less likely to suffer from depression than those who did not, shaping **NICE** guidelines for a national and global roll-out of the project, including making alternative cultural and language variations to engage different communities.

Professor Sonia Johnson is the Director of the **National Mental Health Policy Research Unit** and led an independent review of the UK's **Mental Health Act** requested by the Prime Minister. Her findings have resulted in new measures introduced to reduce involuntary admission and treatment of mental health patients under the Act.

Professor Peter Fonagy OBE, Chief Executive of the Anna Freud Centre for children's mental health and UCL psychoanalyst and clinical psychologist, is leading radical policy change in children and young people's mental health through greater integration of the UK Government's **Department for Education** (DfE) and **Department of Health and Social Care** (DHSC) which will result in new standards of evidence-based mental health treatments offered across all UK schools from 2020.

UCL's success in training the next generation of Mental Health Scientists is measured by the achievements of those who take their training out of UCL. Dr Suzi Gage completed her **BSc Psychology and MSc in Cognitive Neuropsychology at UCL** and is now a lecturer in Psychology and Epidemiology at the University of Liverpool. Her research focuses on understanding associations between lifestyle behaviours and mental health. She produces and presents the award winning podcast Say Why to Drugs, where she explores what we know, and what we don't, about recreational drugs. She writes widely for the general public, including for the Guardian website, and her first book is being published in January 2020. Suzi is a Wellcome Trust Public Engagement Fellow, and is Social Media Editor for the journal Addiction.

Photo: Jim Moray

Partnerships

Student & Staff Mental Health at UCL

But UCL cannot deliver global change alone…

Our strategic partnerships bring together complementary strengths and deepen the impact of our cross-disciplinary education and research. UCL is committed to forming partnerships with industry, healthcare providers, governments and with other centres of academic excellence across the world. Partnership working is the sustaining foundation on which our success in research and education is built and collaborative approaches to responding to mental health challenges remain at the forefront of the national and global agenda in discovery science and population health.

The UCLH National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) has a vibrant and growing mental health theme which is linked to similar BRC themes across England to foster translational research. Our internal riches across mental health research and education are complemented by deep and important partnerships with the NHS across London, especially Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust, delivering excellence in both research and education. We disseminate research across the service nationwide, with mental health charities including MIND, the National Centre for Mental Health, National Children's Bureau and Action for Children, and with a number of UK Government departments. Our work at the Anna Freud Centre is supported by The Royal Foundation, in what is a unique and prestigious partnership.

We also work collaboratively with media and technology partners and other universities including Harvard and Yale in the US, Karolinska Insitute in Sweden, Max Plank in Germany, Neuroscience Center Zürich in Switzerland, and Cambridge University and King's College London here in the UK.

We are a founding partner in one of the first academic health science partnerships, UCL Partners, working alongside 23 NHS hospital trusts, 20 clinical commissioning groups and 9 other universities to co-create healthcare solutions and access a highly diverse patient population of over six million people registered at the partner hospitals.

The UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health (ICH), together with its clinical partner **Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children,** forms the largest concentration of children's health research in Europe.

The inspirational mission of the UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health is to: "improve the health and well-being of children, and the adults they will become, through world-class research, education and public engagement". One of the five scientific programmes of the ICH academic strategy focuses on molecular, cognitive and clinical neurosciences to improve diagnosis and treatment and to optimise cognitive function in children.

Students arriving at UCL for the first time need to adapt to significant changes brought about by new independence and separation from family and old friends. For many, these changes are exciting and challenging and an intrinsic part of the attraction of going to university. However, for some they can also give rise to ongoing anxiety and stress.

Staff at UCL also manage a variety of challenges around their different roles, time pressures, and work-life balance. Changes in personal circumstances or at work can affect staff members in ways that pose a risk to mental well-being.

Student and staff mental health are rightly receiving attention and **UCL is actively applying its research expertise to strengthen the support we can offer students and staff. We want to see everyone realise their academic or career potential and promote positive mental health and well-being.**

Ambitions

We have developed well-being strategies for students and staff that focus on:

Promoting and supporting a culture in which mental health problems are accepted, not stigmatised

Meeting the support and study needs of students and staff with mental health difficulties and ensuring that support is accurately and widely publicised establishing consistent procedures across the University

Making optimal use of current resources available for prevention and treatment

Working to achieve a full integration of mental health services at UCL and within the local NHS to provide a seamless local service

Deploying, wherever possible, trainee mental health professionals to deliver support as part of their training programme

Providing guidance and awareness training to those UCL academic staff involved in the support and care of others

Establishing a flagship **UCL Institute of Mental Health** as the vehicle to bring together UCL's expertise is a key aim of UCL's Mental Health Strategy. Sitting with the Faculty of Brain Sciences, the Institute will be virtual, initially at least, and hence flexible and boundless, so will facilitate and consolidate effective academic collaborations across UCL Faculties to ensure that we realise the full potential of the interdisciplinary opportunities. It will also extend engagement to new partners, including industry, policy-makers, service-users and carers.

Led by Director, Professor Anthony David, this is an entity that will attract and embrace the brightest and best talent in mental health research, to increase positive treatment outcomes for patients not just in London, but across the UK and beyond. As well as pump-priming interdisciplinary research and early career development, the new Institute seeks to increase those paradigm-shifting moments of true collaborative and integrated working to drive translation of mental health research into clinical care and patient impact.

Investment in the facility will be matched to funding from research and capital development grants from a range of partners, including the NHS. This investment will enable the Institute to take advantage of current and emerging best practice in mental health research facilities and digital education, with leading-edge technologies in neurophysiology, molecular genetics and multimodal imaging to push the boundaries of mental health research and deliver breakthrough treatments to the front line.

Our community of mental health experts are dispersed across UCL's Bloomsbury estate in the city, but congregate around a square mile in King's Cross, Bloomsbury and Euston which is rich with higher education institutions, partner hospitals and research centres - alongside the Francis Crick and Wellcome Institutes – and technology and innovation collaborators, including Google.

Our new UCL Institute of Mental Health will be driven by leading mental health professionals and researchers but working in partnership with patients and carers. It will be outward-looking, developing pioneering approaches to the diagnosis, consultation and treatment of mental illness, embracing new technologies to disseminate knowledge and care around the world.