



**Science Media Centre**

*where science meets the headlines*

# **Review of the first three years of the mental health research function at the Science Media Centre**

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**Dr Claire Bithell  
Head of Mental Health  
Science Media Centre**

## Contents

Three years in numbers .....	1
Awards .....	2
Introduction .....	3
Funding .....	3
Focus on proactive media work on mental health research with the UK national media .....	4
Press briefings on mental health research .....	4
Networks and contacts .....	6
Giving journalists the resources to cover mental health research .....	7
Enabling mental health researchers to speak in the media .....	9
Helping researchers to use breaking news stories about mental health to get their messages across .....	11
Seizing the agenda .....	12
Conclusions .....	13
Appendix 1: List of press briefings on mental health issues since May 2010.....	14
Appendix 2: List of Roundup press releases on mental health issues since May 2010.....	22
Appendix 3: Funding .....	37

### Three years in numbers

- **3** awards
  
- **42** press briefings
  
- **99** Roundup press releases

more than **130** new experts in mental health research added to the SMC database ready and willing to speak to the media

## Awards

The SMC's work on mental health research has produced more awards than any other area of our work.

The SMC ourselves won the European College of Neuropsychopharmacology's inaugural Media Award for science in the media for our championing of evidence-based science in the face of received wisdom, public prejudice and special interests, and our efforts to ensure that the most critical issues currently affecting science and public health are debated on the basis of accurate and objective scientific information.

Tom Feilden, science correspondent for BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme, won the UK Press Gazette's first ever specialist science writing award for breaking the story the SMC gave him about the harassment and intimidation of researchers working on CFS/ME. The SMC had nominated him for the award.

Tom Feilden was shortlisted for a Mind Media Award for his package that came directly from an SMC briefing on the role of mental health experts in Broadmoor Hospital.

The SMC jointly nominated Simon Wessely for the inaugural Sense About Science John Maddox Prize for Standing up for Science for his courage and bravery in speaking out on CFS in the face on intimidation, which Simon won.

## Introduction

In May 2010 the Science Media Centre (SMC) appointed a press officer dedicated to mental health research. Although the Science Media Centre had previously covered mental health research, it has a very broad remit covering topical health, science, environment and engineering research stories. These areas – that include topics such as climate change, vaccines, stem cells, food science and superbugs – tend to attract more media attention than stories about mental health problems such as schizophrenia or depression. It was hoped that having a dedicated press officer in this area would ensure that the SMC had more opportunity to focus continually on mental health research regardless of the other topics in the news at the time.

To set objectives for the post a Consultation (<http://www.sciencemediacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Science-Media-Centre-mental-health-consultation-report.pdf>) was carried out. This involved reviewing key literature in the area and more than 60 meetings with key journalists, press officers, researchers and clinicians.

As this post is now almost three years old, it seems an appropriate time to review whether we have achieved the recommendations set out in the consultation.

## Funding

The post of a dedicated press officer for mental health research at the SMC has been generously funded by the following organisations over the past three years. We are very grateful to all the funders, without whom this work would not have been possible.

- Cardiff University
- Charlie Waller Memorial Trust
- European College of Neuropsychopharmacology
- Institute of Mental Health, Nottingham
- Maudsley Charity, previously South London and Maudsley NHS Trust Charitable Funds
- Medical Research Council
- Mental Health Foundation
- Mental Health Research Network (England)
- Mental Health Research Network Wales
- Rethink
- Scottish Mental Health Research Network
- Wellcome Trust

Please see Appendix 3 for more details.

## **Focus on proactive media work on mental health research with the UK national media**

*[With reference to recommendations from the original consultation]*

**Recommendation 1: the SMC will mainly focus its efforts working with news journalists**

**Recommendation 2: the SMC should concentrate on proactive media work of mental health research**

The SMC has focussed almost exclusively on helping UK national news journalists cover mental health research. We have covered a wide breadth of topics such as depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, ADHD, addictions and research into treatments for mental health problems. We have worked with journalists in different ways, for example we have run press briefings, issued reactive press releases and supported journalists working on more in-depth or investigative pieces. We have also put a great deal of emphasis on supporting the mental health research community to work with the news media, from running workshops or giving talks to supporting researchers when they come under fire from pressure groups.

Although we have almost exclusively worked with news journalists, there have been times when we have fed our knowledge into features programmes such as advising on mental health topics for BBC Radio 4's *All in the Mind* and BBC's *Horizon*.

In recognition of our work the Science Media Centre was awarded the inaugural European College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ECNP) Media Award in May 2012

<http://www.ecnp.eu/awards.aspx>.

**Julien Mendlewicz, ECNP Award Committee chairman, said:**

*“By ensuring that the media is supplied with accurate and unbiased data about disorders of the brain, their social consequences, and the science that underlies them, the Centre has made significant contributions to destigmatising disorders of the brain.”*

## **Press briefings on mental health research**

**Recommendation 3: the SMC finds opportunities to run press briefings on mental health research for the national news media**

The Science Media Centre runs popular and successful press briefings where journalists get access to leading experts on topical issues. Since the mental health press officer started work at the SMC we have run **42 press briefings** on mental health research topics, 14 in 2010-2011, 16 in 2011-2012 and 12 in 2012-2013 (this final year only gives figures for nine months). It is worth comparing this to the year before the mental health specialist started (2009-2010) where two press briefings were on mental health research. A list of the press briefings we ran from May 2010, when the mental health specialist started in post, to present are listed in Appendix 1.

Before the mental health press officer began in post the SMC's press briefings on mental health tended to be focussed on topics already popular in the media such as Alzheimer's disease, dementia and illegal drugs. Given that journalists often have good contacts in these areas, for example in dementia research, the mental health press officer worked to widen the topics that the SMC covers. A large proportion of the press briefings the mental health press officer has run have covered common mental health problems such as depression or highlighted the cost and burden of mental health problems.

Press briefings on mental health research were well attended by journalists. Regularly attendees included the BBC Radio 4 *Today* programme, Guardian, Times, Mirror, Daily Telegraph and Independent. Informal feedback from journalists after the briefings suggest that they have been impressed by the calibre of experts speaking at press briefings and that they are interesting and useful. They have also reported that the briefings frequently cover topics that they are not so well versed in.

### **News briefings**

The news briefings we run frequently generate widespread media coverage. 23 of the 42 press briefings on mental health have generated five or more pieces in the UK national news media. For example, there have been 20 news stories in the Daily Telegraph, 12 on the *Today* programme, 16 in the Guardian and 21 on Reuters. A new piece of research on childhood maltreatment and depression was covered by the *Today* programme, Channel 4 News, Daily Mail, BBC News website, Guardian, Reuters, Times and Scotsman. Here the researchers not only eloquently described this new research, but also discussed background information about depression and what the evidence tells us about the impact of childhood maltreatment on future mental health. Researchers also use these briefings to inform journalists about mental health more generally, for example.

### **Background briefings**

The SMC does not just focus on news briefings, it also runs press briefings with the sole aim of giving journalists background information about an area of mental health research. Often these briefings do not generate coverage immediately, but journalists tell us that they are very useful to help them understand the importance of the area. For example, after a press briefing we ran with Thomas Insel, Director of the US National Institute for Mental Health, both BBC *Newsnight* and Reuters journalists gave us feedback that the briefing had helped them realise how interesting this area is and that they would talk to their editors about covering more mental health research stories. BBC *Newsnight* went on to do a special feature over three nights about how we are 'At the brink of a mental health revolution' (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/9631964.stm>).

Another example of the impact of press briefings comes from one we ran with West London Mental Health Trust on secure hospitals. Experts on secure care spoke to journalists candidly about their roles and what research tells us about the impact of secure care. The feedback from journalists who attended was very positive, they told us they had found it difficult to get access to such experts in the past and that the briefing had changed their perception of secure hospitals. The briefing was held at the beginning of November 2010 and whilst there was no immediate coverage the *Today* programme ran a series of special features on Broadmoor Hospital in May 2011 ([http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid\\_9475000/9475065.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_9475000/9475065.stm)) and then in November 2011

the Guardian ran an in depth feature about women in secure care

(<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/nov/06/uk-unit-disturbed-female-prisoners>).

Suggestions for topics for press briefings are forthcoming from both press officers and researchers in the area. We are in the fortunate position of being able to pick and choose the areas we work on because we have so many suggestions. However, we know that we only hear about a fraction of the research going on and still struggle to cover certain areas. For example, we have not run a press briefing on a new piece of schizophrenia research because we have not heard about any suitable research until after publication. More could be done to build up contacts in these areas so we hear about research that could be suitable for a press briefing in a timely way.

***Action point: build up contacts in specific research areas so we hear about research papers pre-publication***

## **Networks and contacts**

***Recommendation 4: the SMC sets up a mental health research network to help share information and maximise opportunities***

The Science Media Centre is uniquely positioned in the science media landscape to set up networks of contacts to bring together information.

There are a large number of press officers who work on mental health research including for research institutes and charities. We brought key press officers from institutions such as the Institute of Psychiatry, West London Mental Health Trust, Medical Research Council, the Wellcome Trust, British Psychological Society, University of Oxford, South London and Maudsley NHS Trust and the Royal College of Psychiatrists together on 27 September 2010 for a horizon scanning meeting. These press officers form the basis of a network that we use to keep in touch with the community.

Press officers have given us feedback that we should repeat this event as it is a useful networking opportunity that allows people to horizon scan and share resources and information. It is also an opportunity for press officers to influence the SMC and feed into our work.

***Action point: the SMC runs an annual event for mental health research press officers***

We also have a network of key experts within the mental health research community. These experts tend to be more senior academics, and we alert them to topics we are working on, ask them for reaction to big stories that relate to mental health research and seek their advice and opinion on issues that we are working on. They also influence the topics that the SMC works on and the way we work with journalists.

After three years in post, it may be useful to combine the knowledge of these experts and press officers with the thoughts of our journalist contacts to help determine the future direction of SMC



work on mental health research. The SMC mental health press officer is a resource for the research community to draw on, and will be most effective if it is driven by both the needs of mental health researchers, their press officer and also by the requirements of news journalists. The consultation provided a robust framework for the first couple of year and a meeting of this type could provide a strategic direction for coming years.

**Action point: the SMC organises a stakeholder meeting to consider priorities for the future**

## Giving journalists the resources to cover mental health research

**Recommendation 5: the SMC helps journalists/editors appreciate the relevance of mental health research to their audience by providing information on prevalence and impacts of disorders**

**Recommendation 10: the SMC works to give journalists access to interviews with service-users through other organisations**

The SMC has worked to set out the relevance of mental health problems to a wide audience for journalists and their editors. The most effective and powerful way we have done this has been by running **press briefings that set the agenda** in this area. This has included having eminent experts speaking in a media friendly way about the burden of mental illness and its impact on society. Some examples include:

- A briefing on the '**Grand Challenges in Mental Health**', published in Nature and covered by the Daily Mail, Times, Telegraph, Guardian and Mirror
- An '**expert encounter**' with **Thomas Insel**, Director of National Institute of Mental Health in the US. This led to two prominent features on *Newsnight* and comments from journalists that this briefing really helped show that mental health is an area they should focus on more in future
- A report with the European College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ECNP) into the **size and burden of mental disorders in Europe** illustrating the size of the problem and the treatment gap for many disorders. This report was widely covered by UK media including Daily Telegraph, Independent, Daily Mail, Metro, Scotsman, Times, Reuters and Press Association
- A report into the **cost of mental disorders throughout Europe**, which illustrated the burden of 19 mental disorders including psychotic disorders, depression, insomnia and epilepsy. Coverage included the Daily Telegraph, Daily Mail and the Press Association.
- A briefing on the **implications of withdrawal of major pharmaceutical companies** from research into mental disorders. The briefing was reported on the BBC *Today* programme, Guardian, BBC, Reuters and Daily Mail.

Journalists gave us feedback after these briefings and said that they were often not fully aware of the prevalence of mental health problems and their burden. They also fed back that they were sometimes not aware just how much innovative and interesting research is going on in this field.

## **Roundups**

We have also made expert comment available to journalists on topical mental health issues through our Roundup press releases. Often the aim of these Roundups has been to alert journalists to an interesting story and give them background that will help them cover the story. We have issued **99 Roundups** since having a mental health specialist in post; 22 in 2010-2011, 46 in 2011-2012 and 31 in 2012-2013. This is compared to 8 releases on mental health issues the year before the specialist started (2009-2010). A list of the Roundups we have issued since the mental health specialist started in post, in May 2010, to present are listed in Appendix 2.

The comments we issued have been used in news coverage to put stories into context. For example, 23 of these Roundups were used by four or more media outlets. The Roundups were often used to add context in stories that risk being exaggerated in media stories or that may be of concern to patients or their families. For example, we have issued Roundups on research linking air pollution to autism, the discovery of anti-psychotic medicines being sold in packets of Neurofen, research linking fizzy drink consumption with violence and the impact of internet addiction on the brain.

The comments in these Roundup press releases are not always used by journalists. This may be because they don't write up topical research on mental illness as frequently as they cover other health areas such as cancer. It could be that by sending these releases we are still having an impact as we know journalists open and read emails from the Science Media Centre. It is not improbable that by sending these releases we are making it more likely that they will cover similar stories in future. However, we have not had specific feedback on this from journalists and it is worth considering whether the SMC is reacting to the right stories and whether releases that are not being used directly by journalists are still useful.

***Action point: the SMC gets feedback from journalists on the usefulness of mental health research Roundups***

When the SMC issues Roundups or runs press briefings we often provide short factsheets tailored to the needs of busy news journalists whose schedules mean they do not have much time to absorb information. There has not been sufficient time to make significant progress in this area, but having a series of short factsheets on key mental health problems, for example schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder and depression, may help journalists cover these issues. Factsheets could contain a few key facts on prevalence, cost and burden of disorders and could point journalists in the direction of more detailed sources of information, for example the excellent factsheets produced by the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

***Action point: the SMC considers creating short factsheets on mental health problems tailored to busy news journalists***

Journalists tell us that in order to cover mental health research, they often need to feature comments from people who have experienced, or who are experiencing, mental health problems. The SMC has made efforts to help journalists access case studies. We have frequently found case studies through the relevant research institution involved in the press briefing. We have also sought

case studies via the government funded Shift Speakers Bureau. Government funding for the Shift Speakers Bureau ceased, so charities have taken over. The SMC has not had time to find out if case studies are still accessible through this source, but should find out more. This is something the SMC needs to continue to focus on in order to help journalists cover mental health research stories.

**Action point: the SMC investigates whether it can source case studies via the Shift Speakers Bureau. If not, it should consider finding alternative sources.**

**Tom Feilden, science correspondent, BBC Radio 4 Today programme said:**

*“Despite being such an important part of the health care agenda, mental health is often overlooked by the mainstream media. Claire Bithell's tireless efforts behind the scenes at the SMC have helped us address that problem on the Today programme. Recent examples include features on self harm, schizophrenia, and exposing the abuse and intimidation suffered by researchers working on chronic fatigue syndrome. We certainly wouldn't be up for a Mind Media Award [for our series "Inside Broadmoor"] without her.”*

## **Enabling mental health researchers to speak in the media**

**Recommendation 6: the SMC gives support and advice to mental health researchers to help them communicate complex issues to the media**

**Recommendation 7: the SMC helps put the case for psychiatrists using the media as a way to improve understanding of their work**

**Recommendation 8: the SMC encourages more mental health researchers, psychiatrists and psychologists to become media spokespeople. It strengthens its database to include more experts in key areas**

So far a large part of this role has been to support researchers and encourage them to do media work. We have given a large number of **talks** to encourage experts to work with journalists, giving them some tips on how to engage. Some examples of talks include ones at the Institute of Psychiatry, Cardiff University, Lancaster University, Scottish Mental Health Research Network and University of Oxford.

We have also run **workshops** to help equip mental health researchers with a better understanding of how the media works and to give them the skills to engage. These workshops include those run at the Mental Health Research Network Cymru, Mental Health Research Network annual meeting (with Tom Feilden from the *Today* programme and Genevieve Maul from the University of Cambridge as speakers) and at the Scottish Mental Health Research Network (with Robin McKie from the Observer, Katrina Nevin Ridley from the Wellcome Trust and journalists based in Scotland speaking).

All these events have been very popular. As a result experts have joined the SMC database, expressed their interest in doing media work and got in touch with their institutional press officer.

### **Supporting experts targeted by extremists**

We have also been involved in **supporting experts** who have found themselves being targeted by individuals or groups who do not like their research. This has been particularly important in the case of psychiatrists and psychologists working on chronic fatigue syndrome/ME. These researchers have found themselves in the firing line from a small group of extremists who are opposed to psychiatrists or psychologists doing research on chronic fatigue syndrome/ME.

The SMC ran a press briefing on the first findings from the PACE trial, and supported the researchers involved throughout this process, for example, by organising media training in collaboration with the MRC. When we became aware of the level of intimidation researchers were experiencing we brought together key parties for a brainstorm to discuss what could be done to aid researchers. At this event it was agreed that these harassed experts should speak out publically about the harassment they were experiencing. As a result the BBC Radio 4 *Today* programme ran an exposé on the piece (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-14326514>) and a number of outlets followed the story including the Observer (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/aug/21/chronic-fatigue-syndrome-myalgic-encephalomyelitis>) and the Daily Mail (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2020241/Scientists-investigating-ME-death-threats-investigating-psychological-causes.html>).

For some researchers this media work has dramatically reduced the harassment they are experiencing. For others, however, things have not improved. So the SMC ran a second brainstorm in early 2013 to discuss what can be done. It was agreed that more must be invested in putting the case for research of chronic fatigue syndrome/ME explaining the burden and seriousness of the disease both to the media and the public. The SMC will look for opportunities to do media work in this area.

We have supported the community more generally by writing **articles** encouraging mental health researchers to engage with the media, for example an editorial for the journal *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* on why psychiatrists should engage with the media (<http://apt.rcpsych.org/content/17/2/82>), or to highlight the challenges facing researchers wanting to cover this area, for example in an interview for the Pacific Health Summit ([http://pacifichalthsummit.org/downloads/2012\\_Summit/PHS12\\_MentalHealth.pdf](http://pacifichalthsummit.org/downloads/2012_Summit/PHS12_MentalHealth.pdf)).

The outcome of much of this work is that the SMC has added more than **130 new experts** in mental health research to its database. This means we have a bigger team of experts to call on to respond to news stories or new research and who will feed into our work by both suggesting topics we should be working on and bringing us research papers for press briefings.

One of the consultation findings was that psychiatry is particularly badly portrayed in the news media so the SMC has concentrated a lot of effort on getting to know academic psychiatrists. This has been a great success, however we do not have as many academic psychologists on our database and do not have as good contact with the research community in this area. We could do more to engage with this subject area.

**Action point: the SMC makes contact with more academic psychologists and ensures they are well represented on the SMC database.**

## **Helping researchers to use breaking news stories about mental health to get their messages across**

***Recommendation 9: the SMC supports and advises experts to help them engage with breaking news stories about mental health in a timely way and to use headline stories as an opportunity to get their messages across***

When an area is in the headlines, the SMC sees this as an opportunity for researchers to have their voices heard. Mental health problems often hit the headlines for the wrong reasons and coverage can be very negative.

The SMC has encouraged mental health researchers to engage with the media when their area hits the headlines. For example, when the spotlight was on the actions of Anders Breivik in Norway, the SMC brought together experts from the University of Oxford and West London Mental Health Trust to brief journalists on the role of forensic psychiatry. They explained why psychiatrists need multiple sources of information and lots of time to diagnose, why it is almost impossible to fake a mental illness to avoid prison and gave background to re-offending rates after someone has been in hospital versus prison. The briefing contributed to feature pieces in the Daily Mail (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2020250/Norway-shootings-To-extent-Anders-Behring-Breivik-held-responsible-actions.html>) and Reuters (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/08/01/us-breivik-insanity-idUSTRE7703VO20110801>). Feedback from journalists suggested that they were surprised by much they heard in the briefing and had not had the opportunity to question forensic psychiatrists on these issues before.

We have also placed comments and features in response to breaking news stories. For example, we placed a comment by Paul Keedwell from Cardiff University when Charlie Sheen's mental state was the subject of media speculation (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-12701154>) and a comment by Nigel Eastman, Professor of Law in Psychiatry on multiple shootings in Cumbria (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/7798589/Cumbria-shooting-offers-no-lessons-for-the-future.html>). Often these comments aim to give nuance and context to issues which can be polarised or sensationalised in the media.

There is more that the SMC can do in reacting to breaking news stories. Though experts are often rightly wary of engaging with journalists on these matters, they do not have to comment on the cases specifically and can decide what areas they want to talk about, and which areas they are not willing to comment on. The SMC has a wealth of experience in supporting researchers to do this type of interview, and this should be used more often. For example, news reports about child abuse towards the end of 2012 and into 2013 may have benefited from context from forensic psychiatrists or researchers who know about the impact of child abuse. We emailed a number of experts about potential opportunities but did not hear back from most of them. It is possible that experts felt they

had nothing to contribute and were happy with the tone of coverage, but it is also possible that they did not want to engage with such a difficult and high profile news story. Our experience in this area suggests that experts can give useful context when they work with the media in a considered way and more could be done to persuade experts of the benefits of engaging.

***Action point: the SMC uses its expertise more often to help support and encourage researchers to engage with high profile, negative stories about mental health problems***

Breaking news stories often focus on risk and mental health problems – particularly after a violent incident carried out by someone with psychosis. As well as responding directly to negative stories running in the media, the SMC has also worked behind the scenes giving journalists access to information about risk of those with mental health problems. We have done this most successfully in press briefings on research looking at risk, for example we have run two press briefings on research by Dr Seena Fazel from the University of Oxford. The first was about how much of the increased risk of violence of those with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder is due to substance abuse. The second looked at the way treating adult ADHD can reduce violent crime. Both briefings were well attended by journalists and got good media coverage. Feedback from journalists was that the research challenged their perceptions of the area. We should continue to look for opportunities to highlight research that challenges perceptions about risk and mental health. In addition, there may be opportunities to feed into training schemes for new journalists to give them context about this area to improve reporting.

***Action point: the SMC looks for opportunities to challenge perceptions about risk and mental health problems.***

## Seizing the agenda

As well as breaking stories of new research and responding to mental health in the news, the SMC has also helped to set the agenda and frame the narrative of reporting on a number of big issues.

Previous to our background press briefing on DSM 5 few of the UK based science journalists knew about the unease amongst UK scientists. The background press briefing generated vast media coverage and informed the UK's most important health and science reporters of the issues of concern. The SMC followed this up with several Roundups including comments from large numbers of the UK's top mental health researchers, all generating continued media coverage.

This kind of agenda setting was also on display in our work around the harassment and intimidation of researchers working on chronic fatigue syndrome/ME. The meeting organised by the SMC on this was the first of its kind and brought the beleaguered researchers together with representatives of funding agencies, the police, the GMC etc. One of the results of that meeting was the decision of a number of academics to go public on their situation with the support of the SMC and their respective press officers. The SMC engineered the coverage through working with the *Today* programme on an exclusive – a story that was planned over many weeks. The result was huge with

*Today* making the very best of their exclusive with several different packages on the morning of release. As expected the follow up was huge with almost every newspaper, Sunday paper and influential magazine covering the subject in some way. The results of that coverage have been mixed but include the following:

- Many in the scientific community became aware of the situation having previously been unaware
- For some researchers the media coverage marked the end of their harassment. For others it has continued
- Across the board the researchers who were interviewed received a huge amount of supportive emails from fellow scientists and from chronic fatigue syndrome/ME patients and their families

## Conclusions

A mental health research function has been established at the SMC and has tackled a wide range of issues. We work with a robust network of experts, press officers and journalists that all influence our work. Our proactive press work has been popular with journalists and experts have benefited from our support to help them speak in the media.

However, demands for our time in this area now exceed the time available. As a result the SMC will run a stakeholder event to plan a strategy for the future which will mean this work can be focussed on the areas that most need support from the mental health press officer.

***Action point: the SMC will run a stakeholder event to plan strategy for future work***

## Appendix 1: List of press briefings on mental health issues since May 2010

**12 May 2010**

### [Mental health in the armed forces](#)

This briefing, run in collaboration with The Lancet, launched a major new study of the mental health of the UK armed forces, covering issues such as the prevalence of mental health conditions like post traumatic stress disorder, patterns of alcohol misuse and the effect of multiple deployments on mental health.

*BBC News Online, Guardian, Independent, Times Online, Daily Mail, Reuters, Daily Mirror, Telegraph*  
e.g. <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/alcohol-a-problem-for-war-veterans-study-finds-1972190.html>

**27 July 2010**

### [Is anyone normal? Mental health and diagnosis](#)

A new edition of the diagnostic 'bible' for mental health medicine is a highly anticipated event, but with the latest draft guidelines expanded to now include temper tantrums among toddlers and heartache over a lost spouse, some experts are asking whether anyone can now be classified as normal. The authors of a special issue of the Journal of Mental Health came to the SMC to discuss these concerns.

*BBC Today Programme, BBC News, The Guardian, Telegraph, Daily Mirror, Daily Mail, Press Association, Reuters, Times*  
e.g. <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/columnists/article2665800.ece>

**24 August 2010**

### [Prevention of drug and alcohol use in teenagers](#)

Researchers from the Institute of Psychiatry at King's College London pioneered a new approach to reduce problematic drinking and drug abuse in secondary school children. Their research showed that teaching teenagers coping skills based on personality traits such as anxiety, negative thinking and impulsivity, reduced the amount of alcohol consumed and binge drinking, and that a similar approach also reduced cocaine use.

*Press Association, BBC News*  
e.g. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-11090155>

**06 September 2010**

### [Expert Encounter: Violent crime and mental illness](#)

High profile cases of violence by people with a mental illness regularly hit the headlines and 36% of the public think that someone with a mental health problem is prone to violence. In this briefing Dr Seena Fazel, a leading expert on the epidemiology of violence and mental illness and the associated risk factors, answered questions on how closely related mental illness and violence really are, and the role played by illegal drugs and alcohol.

*The Guardian, BBC News, The Independent, Financial Times, Press Association*  
e.g. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2010/sep/06/substance-abuse-mental-illness-crimes>

**08 September 2010**

### [Vitamin B and cognitive decline](#)



New research published in PLoS ONE investigated the impact of vitamin B supplements on the rate of brain atrophy in people with mild cognitive decline, an early indicator of potential Alzheimer's disease onset in later life.

*Daily Mirror, Daily Telegraph, Financial Times, The Sun, The Independent, Daily Express, Reuters, The Times, Sky News, BBC Radio 4, BBC One, BBC Radio 2, BBC News Channel, BBC World News, Five News, ITV1 News, Channel 4 News*

e.g. <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/health/news/article2719589.ece>

### **29 September 2010**

#### [What causes ADHD – genes or environment?](#)

The authors of new research published in the Lancet came to the Science Media Centre to brief journalists about their latest research into genetics and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

*Channel 4 News, BBC Today programme, ITV, BBC News, Daily Express, The Times, Bloomberg, Daily Mail, Press Association, Daily Mirror, Reuters, Associated Press, New Scientist, The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian, New Scientist, BBC News, Nature, Independent*

e.g. <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/health/child-health/article2746339.ece>

### **09 November 2010**

#### [High security mental health hospitals](#)

Specialists from secure mental health facilities such as Broadmoor Hospital briefed journalists on aspects of their work, including how they admit people, what treatments they offer, how long is the average stay, and what happens when someone leaves.

*Press Association*

[http://www.google.com/hostednews/ukpress/article/ALeqM5g29Lnu8WE\\_i0uft14bet6dQ1RwgQ?docid=B2922101289315977A000](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ukpress/article/ALeqM5g29Lnu8WE_i0uft14bet6dQ1RwgQ?docid=B2922101289315977A000)

### **08 February 2011**

#### [Personality disorders – hidden conditions?](#)

Leading experts answered journalists' questions about personality disorders which affect 4.4% of the UK population, 4 times more than schizophrenia.

*BBC online*

### **10 February 2011**

#### [Neuroscience fights back](#)

Leading neuroscientists came to the SMC to sound the alarm over research spending cuts and their effect on neuroscience research in the UK.

*PA, Guardian, Mirror, Independent, Nature News, Telegraph, Reuters, BBC Today*

### **17 February 2011**

#### [CFS/ME trial](#)

Researchers came to the SMC to launch a new study on Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/ME.

*Telegraph, Independent, BBC online, Reuters, Sky News*

### **08 March 2011**

#### [Prisons and mental health](#)

Review of the first three years of the mental health research function at the Science Media Centre

Experts in mental health answered questions on the types of mental health disorder found in prisons, who they affect, and whether we should be screening for them.

[BMJ](#)

### **31 March 2011**

[New research on conduct disorder in teenagers](#)

Experts discussed their research on conduct disorder, a psychiatric condition characterised by increased aggressive and antisocial behaviour which can develop in childhood or adolescence.

*BBC Today, PA, Reuters, Telegraph, [Mail](#)*

### **01 April 2011**

[Genes and Alzheimer's disease](#)

New research published in Nature Genetics identified new genetic variants associated with Alzheimer's disease, giving clues as to why people get the disease and how it progresses, and potentially leading to new treatments in the future.

*Reuters, Guardian, Press Association, Telegraph, [Independent](#), Mirror, BBC Website, Express, Mail, BBC Today, [BBC Wales](#)*

### **14 April 2011**

[Expert reaction to bipolar disorder in the news](#)

Bipolar disorder in the headlines after Catherine Zeta Jones revealed that she had the disorder

*[Metro](#), Wales Online, Telegraph*

### **13 May 2011**

[New research on depression and genetics](#)

New research produced a significant finding in the genetics of depression, an area which has lagged behind other diseases known to have a genetic component such as Alzheimer's disease and schizophrenia.

*BMJ, BBC Today Programme, Daily Mail, The Independent, Financial Times, Mirror, [Reuters](#)*

### **13 June 2011**

[Crisis in new treatments for mental illness and brain disorders](#)

A new report by the European College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ECNP) explored the implications of the withdrawal by major pharmaceutical companies from research into mental disorders and diseases of the brain.

*Today programme, Guardian, [Reuters](#), BBC, Nature News, Mail Online*

### **27 June 2011**

[Language impairment - a hidden childhood disorder?](#)

Awareness of language impairment, where children have specific difficulties in learning to talk, is much lower than that of dyslexia. Top UK language disorder researchers came to the SMC to discuss the issue and answer journalists' questions.

### **06 July 2011**

[Grand challenges in global mental health](#)

Review of the first three years of the mental health research function at the Science Media Centre

In the face of the global prevalence of mental health problems, and the frequent lack of cures or effective treatments, 400 experts from more than 60 countries came together to identify research that could, within the next decade, address some of these issues. Their findings were published in *Nature*.

*Daily Express, [Daily Mail](#), Telegraph, Times, Guardian, Daily Mirror*

### **29 July 2011**

#### [Forensic Psychiatry: Assessing the minds of murderers](#)

With the spotlight on the actions of Anders Behring Breivik in Norway, the SMC invited experts in forensic psychiatry to brief journalists on how psychiatrists assess the mental health of those who have committed murder and other violent crime.

*Reuters, [Daily Mail](#)*

### **12 August 2011**

#### [Childhood maltreatment and depression](#)

A meta-analysis carried out by experts from the Institute of Psychiatry revealed new evidence about the association between maltreatment during childhood and the onset of recurrent depression later in life. The research was published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*.

*[BBC Today programme](#), Daily Mail, BBC online, [Guardian](#), Reuters, Channel 4, Times, Scotsman*

### **30 August 2011**

#### [Size and burden of mental illness](#)

Experts briefed the media in advance of a significant review of the prevalence and impact of mental health and other disorders of the brain across Europe, updating a similar study from 2005. The article was published on Sep 5<sup>th</sup> in *European Neuropsychopharmacology*.

*Telegraph, [Reuters](#), PA, Guardian, Nature, Daily Mail, Times, Independent, Sun*

### **31 August 2011**

#### [Expert Encounter: Dr Thomas Insel](#)

The Director of the US National Institute of Mental Health, the world's largest specialist mental health research organisation, offered reporters an overview of the field and his views on the latest in research and treatment of mental illness.

*[Independent](#)*

### **14 September 2011**

#### [Economic costs of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/ME: New research](#)

New research from the University of Bristol, presented at the British Science Festival in Bradford, investigated the costs of CFS/ME to the UK economy.

*ITV West, BBC Drive Time, [BMJ](#), Asian Age*

### **26 September 2011**

#### [Club drugs – treating problem use](#)

Patterns of drug use in the UK have changed; over the last two or three years there has been an increase in the use of 'club drugs'. However, existing drug services in the UK primarily focus on problematic alcohol, heroin and crack cocaine use and those experiencing problems with club drugs

often don't seek help. Experts from Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust have launched a new approach to help treat problematic club drug use.

*BBC, Independent, GP Online, [Guardian](#), Independent, Reuters*

### **27 September 2011**

#### [Cost of mental disorders](#)

A new study by leading epidemiologists and health economists covering 30 countries has investigated the cost of mental disorders throughout Europe. The study looks at costs of 19 mental disorders including depression, strokes, psychotic disorders, insomnia, dementia, epilepsy and multiple sclerosis.

*Telegraph, [Mirror](#), Nature, PA, BMJ*

### **08 November 2011**

#### [What is addiction?](#)

For this background briefing the Science Media Centre invited three experts, all involved in a €10 million European project analysing current evidence on addiction and strengthening the scientific evidence base, to brief journalists on the latest research.

### **16 November 2011**

#### [Self-harm in teenagers and young adults](#)

The SMC invited the authors of the first population-based study charting in detail the course of self-harm from adolescence to young adulthood. The paper was published in the *Lancet*.

*BBC Today programme, Sky, [Guardian](#), Telegraph, BBC online, Reuters,*

### **23 January 2012**

#### [Psilocybin and the brain](#)

Two leading experts came to the SMC to discuss research into the effects on the brain of the active component in magic mushrooms. A paper in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* disclosed the effects of psilocybin on the brain through fMRI scans, while the authors of a paper in the *British Journal of Psychiatry* suggest that psilocybin could be a useful tool in psychotherapy.

*Independent, Times, Telegraph, Guardian, Sun, Daily Mirror, Metro, Press Association, BBC News, [Bloomberg](#), Reuters, Daily Mail*

### **9 February 2012**

#### [Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders \(DSM5\)](#)

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) is the world's most widely used psychiatric bible. The development of the new, fifth version of the DSM has proved highly controversial among the mental health research community, with fears that too many people could become defined as mentally ill. The SMC invited two leading psychiatrists to discuss the implications of DSM5.

*[Guardian](#), Independent, Daily Mail, Telegraph, Reuters, Financial Times, Telegraph, New Scientist, BBC Radio 4 Today Programme*

### **6 March 2012**

#### [Alzheimer's drugs and NICE guidelines](#)

The SMC was asked to host a briefing on the publication of the DOMINO study, which looked at the efficacy of two of the most commonly used Alzheimer's drugs, Donepezil and Memantine, for patients in later stages of the disease - stages at which they would not be provided with Donepezil under NICE guidelines.

*Daily Express, BBC News, Daily Mail, Daily Mirror, Guardian, Independent, Telegraph, [Times](#), Sky News, Press Association, Reuters, New Scientist, Associated Press, BBC Radio 4 Today Programme, ITV News, BBC World Service*

### **31 May 2012**

#### **[Premature birth and mental health](#)**

Around one in 13 babies in England and Wales is born preterm, but does being born prematurely predispose children to develop mental illnesses later in life? Dr Chiara Nosarti, Dr Abraham Reichenberg and their colleagues at King's College London's Institute of Psychiatry have been tackling these questions and came to the Science Media Centre to present the results of their research.

*Telegraph, Independent, Daily Mail, ITV News, BBC News, Herald Scotland, Huffington Post, Reuters, New Scientist, BMJ, Press Association, [Scotsman](#), Daily Express*

### **11 July 2012**

#### **[Legal highs](#)**

So called 'legal highs' have caught lawmakers on the hop because they are often created by altering illegal psychoactive molecules just enough to fall outside the law. Four experts came to the SMC to discuss which chemicals are found in legal highs, what these substances are doing to users' heads, the fallout from these drugs on the frontline, how we keep track of emerging legal highs and how we monitor which novel substances are popular among the British public.

*[Independent](#)*

### **19 July 2012**

#### **[Well-being](#)**

'Well-being' is a term that's been much used by Government over the last few years. But is well-being a meaningful term in the sphere of mental health? Speakers came to discuss what well-being means from a mental health standpoint, the measures of well-being currently being gathered by the ONS and practical steps we can take to improve our personal well-being.

*No coverage*

### **25 July 2012**

#### **[Treating mental illness via the internet and mobile phones](#)**

Authors behind studies in a special edition of the *Journal of Mental Health* came to the SMC to discuss the ground-breaking projects that aim to provide access to mental health services through the internet, both on computers and mobile phones.

*No coverage*

### **01 August 2012**

#### **[Do the best treatments for CFS cost more?](#)**

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome is a condition characterised by debilitating, long lasting fatigue that is not attributable to another underlying condition. The PACE group in 2011 demonstrated that Cognitive

Behavioural Therapy and Graded Exercise Therapy were the most effective therapies for CFS. Authors of a follow up paper came to the SMC to discuss a new paper which explores whether therapies that are most effective at treating CFS also the most cost-effective.

[BBC](#), *Press Association, Independent, Huffington Post*

### **18 September 2012**

#### [Alzheimer's disease: causes, treatments, diagnosis, prevention](#)

Alzheimer's disease (AD) poses a great challenge both to society and the scientific community. Whilst drugs are available to help manage the symptoms of AD, so far a treatment to halt or reverse it has remained elusive. Experts came to the SMC to discuss where the research is heading.

[BBC News](#), *Independent, Telegraph, Daily Mail, Press Association, Agence France Presse, Times, Financial Times*

### **20 September 2012**

#### [Why 3,000 middle-aged men die by suicide each year](#)

In 2010 Samaritans identified that men in their 30s, 40s, and 50s – particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds – are at higher risk of dying by suicide. Figures released on 10 September 2012 appeared to confirm these results. Experts came to the SMC to explain their findings and recommendations.

[Times](#), *Independent, Telegraph, Daily Mail, BBC News, ITV News, Sky News, Press Association, Reuters, Huffington Post, Scotsman, BMJ*

### **15 October 2012**

#### [ADHD VOICES Report](#)

The VOICES report (voices on identity, childhood, ethics and stimulants) is the result of interviews with 151 children in the UK and the US about their experiences of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and taking stimulants. The SMC hosted Dr Iliana Singh, the author of the report.

[BBC News](#), *Guardian, Telegraph, Reuters, Huffington Post, BMJ*

### **17 October 2012**

#### [Depression: discrimination and stigma across Europe](#)

One of the biggest barriers to treating depression is the stigma and discrimination faced by those with depression that often stalls treatment and recovery. SMC brought together leading scientists to present the findings from their forthcoming Lancet paper.

[Independent](#), *BBC Radio 4 Today Programme*

### **24 October 2012**

#### [Pregnancy and Mental Health](#)

For some women, one of the most difficult choices to make whilst pregnant is whether to take psychotropic medication or risk living with a mental illness. We brought together two of the UK's leading experts to discuss the key issues surrounding pregnancy and mental health today.

[Telegraph](#), *Daily Mail, Press Association*

### **14 November 2012**

#### [Schizophrenia Commission findings](#)

The Schizophrenia Commission conducted an independent inquiry into the treatment and care of people with Schizophrenia along with the costs associated with Schizophrenia in the UK. Members of the Schizophrenia Commission were invited to the SMC to discuss their findings.

*BBC News, BBC Radio 1 Newsbeat, Channel 4 News, ITN, ITV News, Sky News, [Times](#), Independent, Guardian, Reuters, Press Association, Scotsman, Metro, BBC TV Breakfast, BBC TV News, BBC Radio 4 Today Programme, BBC Radio 2, BBC Radio 5 Live*

## **22 November 2012**

### [ADHD Treatments and Criminal Activity](#)

Untreated ADHD is associated with antisocial behaviour, substance misuse and criminal activity, yet treatment often stops in adolescence. Research carried out in Sweden investigated whether treatment has an impact on rates of criminal behaviour. The SMC hosted Dr Seena Fazel, one of the authors of the report.

*BBC News, Sky News, [Daily Mail](#), Times, Press Association, Bloomberg, Reuters, BMJ, Agence France Presse, Associated Press*

## **26 November 2012**

### [Risk factors for anxiety and depression in adolescents](#)

Adolescence is a critical period for the development of depression. Scientists at the University of Cambridge have found a link between a gene and early childhood adversity that could lead to development of a diagnostic tool to screen children and adolescents for common emotional mental health diseases.

*Mail, Reuters, [Guardian](#)*

## Appendix 2: List of Roundup press releases on mental health issues since May 2010

### 20 May 2010

[Expert reaction to new research into links between Alzheimer's and Down syndrome, as published in the journal PLoS ONE](#)

Researchers have discovered that the protein that forms damaging plaques in the brains of patients with Alzheimer's disease also accumulates in the eyes of people with Down syndrome, suggesting the possibility of new ways of diagnosing Alzheimer's disease.

*Daily Mail, Dail Mirror, Telegraph*

e.g. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-1280049/Eye-test-hope-detect-Alzheimers-years-symptoms.html>

### 28 May 2010

[Expert reaction to research on treating heroin addiction, to be published in The Lancet](#)

A trial of 127 persistent heroin addicts has shown that treatment using injectable methadone resulted in a significant drop in the use of street heroin after six months.

*BBC News Online, Associated Press*

e.g. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/10175671.stm>

### 10 August 2010

[Expert reaction to study to diagnose autism in adults using brain scans](#)

Researchers at the Institute of Psychiatry, Kings College London developed a simple brain scan that they say can be used to detect autism in adults with 90% accuracy.

*BBC News, The Guardian, The Independent, The Daily Telegraph, Reuters, Financial Times*

e.g. <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE6795I420100810>

### 08 September 2010

[Expert reaction to research published in PLoS ONE on B vitamins and cognitive decline](#)

The research investigated the impact of vitamin B supplements on the rate of brain atrophy in people with mild cognitive decline, an early indicator of potential Alzheimer's disease onset in later life.

*Daily Telegraph, BBC News, The Guardian, The Times*

e.g. <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/health/news/article2719589.ece>

### 16 September 2010

[Expert reaction to research published in Journal of Investigative Dermatology on acne and mental health](#)

Research from Norway looked at the link between severe adolescent acne and mental health problems including depression.

*Reuters*

e.g. <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE68F1N120100916>

### 30 September 2010

[Expert reaction to Lancet paper on ADHD and genetics](#)



Review of the first three years of the mental health research function at the Science Media Centre

New research provided insight into attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and genetics.

*New Scientist, Times, Associated Press, Reuters*

e.g. <http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn19528-have-gene-findings-taken-the-stigma-from-adhd.html>

#### **07 October 2010**

[Expert reaction to NICE draft guidance that extends recommendations on Alzheimer's drugs](#)

Drugs will now be made available to patients that were previously not available on grounds of cost.

*Telegraph, Guardian, Express, Reuters, Daily Mail, BBC News, Press Association, Financial Times, Independent, Mirror*

e.g. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/oct/06/alzheimers-drugs-nhs-government>

#### **13 October 2010**

[Expert reaction to BMJ paper on the effectiveness of Reboxetine for acute treatment of major depression](#)

The British Medical Journal published research looking at published and unpublished data into the effectiveness of the anti-depressant Reboxetine.

*Bloomberg, Guardian, Press Association, BBC, Telegraph*

e.g. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-10-12/pfizer-s-reboxetine-doesn-t-quell-depression-analysis-finds.html>

#### **12 November 2010**

[Expert reaction to research in BMJ into link between suicide and acne](#)

Research, published in the BMJ, linked the presence of acne and its treatment with isotretinoin, to increased suicide risk

*BBC News, Telegraph, Guardian, The Times*

e.g. <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/health/mental-health/article2804915.ece>

#### **16 November 2010**

[Expert reaction to new research on heavy smoking during pregnancy and repeat offending](#)

Scientists comment on work that links smoking during pregnancy to criminal behaviour in their children.

*The Sun, Daily Mail, Scotsman, Yorkshire Post, Metro*

e.g. <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/woman/health/health/3229366/20-a-day-turns-baby-into-crook.html>

#### **02 December 2010**

[Expert reaction to report by the King's Fund and the Centre for Mental Health calling for radical changes to mental health services](#)

Mental Health Services in England could undergo a massive overhaul in a bid to cut costs.

*BBC News online*

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-11885481>

#### **08 December 2010**

[Expert reaction to a study on mobile phones and behaviour, as published in a BMJ specialist journal](#)

Review of the first three years of the mental health research function at the Science Media Centre

Research, published in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, a BMJ specialist journal, linked mobile phone use with behavioural problems.

*Metro, Daily Mail, Telegraph, The Sun*

e.g. <http://www.metro.co.uk/news/849621-mobile-phones-could-affect-unborn-babies>

### **02 February 2011**

[Expert reaction to publication of the mental health strategy](#)

The Government published its new strategy to support people with mental health problems.

[BBC online](#)

### **04 February 2011**

[Expert reaction to \*Lancet\* paper about ADHD and diet](#)

Research claimed that certain foods and additives can worsen the behaviour of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and that restricting their diets may help.

[Guardian](#), *PA*, *Reuters*

### **10 February 2011**

[Expert reaction to BNA statement on cuts to neuroscience](#)

The British Neuroscience Association released a statement expressing concern over proposed cuts to neuroscience research in the UK.

### **16 February 2011**

[Expert reaction to \*Neuropsychopharmacology\* paper on high-fat diet and the brain](#)

Research suggested that a high-fat diet could promote brain activity.

### **17 February 2011**

[Expert reaction to \*Lancet\* study looking at treatments for Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/ME](#)

The study made the first definitive comparison of various treatments for CFS/ME to deduce the most effective treatments.

[Telegraph](#), *Independent*, *BBC*, *Reuters*

### **23 February 2011**

[Expert reaction to study published in \*BMJ Open\* suggesting most people with 'locked-in' syndrome are happy](#)

A survey of patients with 'locked-in' syndrome - in which the patient is conscious but cannot move any part of their body - purported to show that most such patients are happy.

[Independent](#), *BBC online*

### **01 March 2011**

[Expert reaction to new research published in the \*British Journal of Psychiatry\* on unrecognised bipolar disorder in primary care patients with depression](#)

The paper identified patients with bipolar disorder who were wrongly diagnosed with depression and given wrong treatments which made their symptoms worse.

[Pulse](#)

### **01 March 2011**

Review of the first three years of the mental health research function at the Science Media Centre

[Expert reaction to new research on cannabis and psychosis to be published in the BMJ](#)

Research looking at potential link between cannabis use and the risk of psychotic symptoms.

[Telegraph](#), [BBC website](#), [Mail](#), [Independent](#)

**04 April 2011**

[Expert reaction to new research on exceptional visual ability in people with autism as published in the journal Human Brain Mapping](#)

Research suggested that people with autism may have more highly-developed visual centres in the brain.

[BBC website](#)

**06 April 2011**

[Expert reaction to paper on structural brain damage risk in long term ecstasy users](#)

Preliminary research suggesting that long-term ecstasy use can cause structural brain damage.

Mail on Sunday, [Guardian](#)

**03 May 2011**

[Expert reaction to new research on role of neurogenesis in antidepressant response to be published in Molecular Psychiatry](#)

Research suggested that antidepressants may have neuroprotective actions in the brain.

**09 May 2011**

[Expert reaction to new research about breast feeding and behaviour to be published in Archives of Disease in Childhood](#)

New research suggested that babies that were breastfed show better behaviour later on than those who were bottle fed.

[The Times](#), [The Sun](#), [Reuters](#), [Telegraph](#)

**11 May 2011**

[Expert reaction to new research about post-partum depression as published in Neuropsychopharmacology](#)

Concentration of a particular hormone during pregnancy linked to incidence of post-partum depression.

[MarieClaire](#), [Daily Mail](#)

**24 June 2011**

[Expert reaction to new research into common drugs and risk of cognitive impairment and mortality in older people](#)

New research into the long-term side effects of common drugs revealed a raised risk of cognitive impairment and increased mortality.

[Financial Times](#), [Times](#), [Telegraph](#)

**05 July 2011**

[Expert reaction to new research on reduction of mental illness beds and involuntary detention to be published in BMJ](#)

Reaction to research on the association between provision of beds for patients with mental illnesses and rates of involuntary admissions in the NHS.

*ITN News*

**19 July 2011**

[Expert reaction to new research on the effects of prenatal exposure to maternal stress on later life as published in \*Translational Psychiatry\*](#)

Research suggested that maternal stress suffered during pregnancy could be linked to children's ability to cope with stress later in life.

*Telegraph, [BBC online](#), Daily Mail*

**22 July 2011**

[Expert reaction to study of B-vitamin treatment and cognitive decline](#)

A small clinical trial showed that B vitamins may be linked to the slowing of cognitive decline in people with mild cognitive impairment.

**08 August 2011**

[Expert reaction to new research on genetic associations for human intelligence differences to be published in \*Molecular Psychiatry\*](#)

Research led by scientists at the University of Edinburgh ran genome-wide association studies looking at the link with human intelligence and found it to be linked with a large number of genetic loci.

*Guardian, [Times](#)*

**09 August 2011**

[Expert reaction to the riots in London and other UK cities](#)

An expert offered a psychological perspective on the London riots.

*[Times Higher Ed](#)*

**26 August 2011**

[Expert reaction to discovery of antipsychotic drugs in packs of Nurofen Plus](#)

A warning was issued after packs of the popular painkiller were found to contain prescription-only antipsychotic drugs.

*[Metro](#), Reuters, Express, PA, BBC online, Channel 4*

**12 September 2011**

[Expert reaction to the biological effects of day care as published in \*The Biologist\*, a journal of the Society of Biology](#)

An article by psychologist Aric Sigman claimed to link day care with various biological effects in children.

*[Mail](#)*

**13 September 2011**

[Expert reaction to BMJ paper on mortality gap for those with serious mental illness](#)

New evidence demonstrates that the total burden of premature deaths from natural causes in people with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder is substantial.

*No coverage*

**06 October 2011**

[Expert reaction to BMJ editorial on Coroners' verdicts and suicide statistics in England and Wales](#)

A BMJ editorial suggested that official statistics on suicide rates may have omitted some cases because of changes in the way that they are recorded.

*BBC, Telegraph, [Independent](#),*

**24 October 2011**

[Expert reaction to research into fizzy drink consumption and violence as published in the journal \*Injury Prevention\*](#)

A paper from American researchers highlighted what they saw as a potential relationship between consumption of fizzy drinks and violent behaviour.

*Times, Mail, PA, Independent, Mirror*

**30 October 2011**

[Expert reaction to new research into the genetics of schizophrenia as published in \*Nature Genetics\*](#)

New research suggested a possible genetic target for susceptibility to schizophrenia.

**03 November 2011**

[Expert reaction to research into zinc deficiency and autism spectrum disorders as published in the journal \*Scientific Reports\*](#)

New research examined zinc deficiency in children as related to autistic spectrum disorders.

*Mail, Telegraph*

**16 November 2011**

[Expert reaction to research looking at the brain's reward system in excessive video-game players as published in \*Translational Psychiatry\*](#)

A large collaborative study compared the brain structure of heavy video-gamers and non-gamers and found specific differences, although not a causal link between gaming and structural change.

*Mail, BBC online, Telegraph, Times, [Reuters](#)*

**21 December 2011**

[MRC funding of CFS research](#)

The Medical Research Council announced £1.5m of funding for research into the underlying biological causes of chronic fatigue syndrome.

*No coverage*

**22 December 2011**

[Retraction of \*Science\* paper linking CFS with the XMRV virus](#)

A paper originally published in *Science* in October 2009, claiming to show an association between the XMRV virus and chronic fatigue syndrome, was retracted by the journal.

*BBC News, [Channel 4 News](#)*

**27 December 2011**

[Epilepsy and violent crime](#)

A Swedish study published in *PLoS Medicine* concluded that there is no link between epilepsy and violent crime.

[Wales Online](#)

#### **4 January 2012**

##### **[Gender personality differences](#)**

Researchers from Torino and Manchester looked at current methods of measuring personality differences between the sexes.

*Telegraph*, [Daily Mail](#)

#### **9 January 2012**

##### **[Alzheimer's and nicotine patches](#)**

US researchers found that nicotine patches could have a small effect against the onset of Alzheimer's - although experts cautioned that this did not mean that smoking could have beneficial health effects.

*BBC News*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mirror*, [Sky News](#)

#### **11 January 2012**

##### **[Internet addiction and abnormal white matter integrity](#)**

This study used neuroimaging to compare normal brains with the brains of people suffering from internet addiction, and identified physical differences between them.

*Press Association*, *Daily Mail*, *BBC News*, [Sky News](#), *Independent*, *Telegraph*, *Fox News*, *Marie Claire*

#### **23 January 2012**

##### **[Magic mushrooms and the brain](#)**

Two papers looked into the effects on the brain of psilocybin, the active compound in magic mushrooms, and its potential for use in treating depression.

*Reuters*, [Independent](#), *Telegraph*

#### **25 January 2012**

##### **[Gender and mild memory loss](#)**

A paper in *Neurology* suggested that men are at a higher risk of developing the earliest signs of dementia than women.

*Daily Mail*, [BBC News](#)

#### **25 January 2012**

##### **[Depression and long working hours](#)**

Data from middle-aged civil servants suggested that working long hours of overtime may predispose to major depressive episodes, as published in the journal *PLoS ONE*.

[Daily Mirror](#)

#### **30 January 2012**

##### **[Maternal support and hippocampus size](#)**

A paper published in *PNAS* found that the volume of the hippocampus correlated with childhood depression and with maternal behaviour in early childhood.

[Telegraph](#), *Press Association*, *Daily Mail*, *Reuters*

**1 February 2012**

**[Beta-amyloid burden and cognitive changes](#)**

A paper in the journal *Neurology* showed that high levels of the protein amyloid beta in the brain, which is correlated with Alzheimer's disease, is also associated with decreased brain function in healthy adults.

[BBC Radio 4 Today Programme](#)

**1 February 2012**

**[Addiction vulnerability and the brain](#)**

A paper in the journal *Science* looked into the subtleties of cause and effect of brain abnormalities and addiction.

*BBC News*, [Daily Mirror](#), *Daily Mail*, *Reuters*

**9 February 2012**

**[Fifth edition of diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders \(DSM5\)](#)**

Accompanying a press briefing on the same subject, the SMC gathered comments from the mental health community on the proposed fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

*Guardian*, *Daily Mail*, *Telegraph*, *Reuters*, [Financial Times](#), *BBC Radio 5 Live*

**9 February 2012**

**[Bexarotene and Alzheimer's](#)**

*Science Express* published details of a mouse study that showed the compound Bexarotene could reverse the build-up of amyloid in the brain, one of the symptoms of Alzheimer's.

*Daily Mail*, *Sun*, *BBC News*, *Channel 4 News*, *ITV News*, [New Scientist](#)

**13 February 2012**

**[Childhood maltreatment and the stress response](#)**

A study into how maltreatment in childhood can have an effect on areas of the brain that control stress responses was published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

[Guardian](#)

**21 February 2012**

**[Neurotransmitters and response to financial loss](#)**

A paper published in the journal *Molecular Psychiatry* suggested that the neurotransmitter norepinephrine (noradrenaline) may have a role to play in how people respond to financial loss.

[Reuters](#), *Daily Mail*

**23 February 2012**

**[Antipsychotics and mortality in dementia patients](#)**

A study in the *British Medical Journal* suggested that elderly nursing home residents taking certain antipsychotic medication had an increased risk of death.

[Daily Express](#), *Daily Mail*, *Telegraph*, *BBC News*

**27 February 2012**

### **[Sleeping pills and death](#)**

A study published in *BMJ Open* reported an association between the use of several commonly used sedative drugs and an increase in the risk of dying from a number of causes.

*Metro, Telegraph, Times, BBC News, [Evening Standard](#), Guardian*

**28 February 2012**

### **[Global mental health challenges](#)**

The SMC circulated reactions to a report on the challenges facing global mental health, published in *PLoS Medicine*.

*No coverage*

**28 February 2012**

### **[Art therapy outcomes for schizophrenics](#)**

A paper in the *BMJ* looked at the efficacy of group art therapy for people with schizophrenia.

*No coverage*

**1 March 2012**

**[Internet-based cognitive behavioural therapy for adolescents with cfs](#)** –*the Lancet* published research into the effectiveness of a web-based program of cognitive behavioural therapy that appeared to reduce symptoms of chronic fatigue syndrome.

*[Daily Mirror](#)*

**15 March 2012**

### **[Mobile phone radiation and neurodevelopmental damage](#)**

A paper in *Scientific Reports* found that exposing pregnant mice to mobile phone radiation caused certain brain complications in the unborn rodents. Suggestions that this might have applications to ADHD in human children led the SMC to source comments.

*Daily Mirror, [Sun](#), Telegraph, Daily Mail, Press Association, New Scientist*

**19 March 2012**

### **[Electroconvulsive therapy and depression](#)**

A study in the journal *PNAS* suggested that electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) may act to treat depression by modifying the brain's functional architecture.

*[BBC News](#), Reuters*

**22 March 2012**

### **[Antidepressants and hypertension in pregnancy](#)**

A study in the *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology* suggested that the use of SSRI antidepressants during pregnancy was linked with increased risk of pregnancy-induced high blood pressure. The SMC sent out comments and a Before the Headlines analysis.

*No coverage*

**26 March 2012**

### **[Dementia funding](#)**

David Cameron announced that funding for dementia would more than double in the UK by 2015. The SMC sourced quotes from mental health experts.



[Research Fortnight](#)

**4 April 2012**

[The genetics of autism](#)

Three papers published in *Nature* concerned the genetic architecture of autism spectrum disorders, the underlying causes of most of which remain unknown. The papers suggested autism may be caused by variation in multiple unrelated locations within the genome.

**18 April 2012**

[Speed, ecstasy and teen depression](#)

Teenagers using speed and ecstasy were found to be prone to subsequent depression, indicated research published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, independently of previous bouts of depressive symptoms or other drug use.

*No coverage*

**25 April 2012**

[Glutamate inhibitors and autism](#)

A drug targeting the actions of glutamate, a chemical substance in the brain, was found to reduce repetitive behaviour and partially reverse lack of sociability in mice, symptoms regarded as key indicators of autism, said a study in *Science Translational Medicine*.

[BBC News](#)

**26 April 2012**

[Berry consumption and cognitive decline](#)

A study of female nurses in the US, published in *Annals of Neurology*, suggested that eating greater amounts of blueberries and strawberries is associated with a slower rate of cognitive decline.

[Daily Mail](#)

**6 May 2012**

[Halting brain cell death in mice](#)

A study in mice suggested a common mechanism underlying nerve cell death in neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and prion diseases. Published in *Nature*, the study suggests an avenue to develop treatments for these diseases.

*Telegraph, Daily Mail, BBC News, Reuters, [Daily Express](#), New Scientist*

**7 May 2012**

[Psychopathy and brain structure](#)

A study in *Archives of General Psychiatry* found differences in brain structure between people with psychopathy from those with anti-social personality disorder.

*Daily Mail, [Reuters](#)*

**8 May 2012**

[Co-proxamol withdrawal and suicide rates](#)

*PLoS Medicine* published a six-year study following the withdrawal of the analgesic co-proxamol in the UK in 2005, finding there was a major reduction in suicides involving this drug, without apparent significant increase in deaths involving other analgesics.

*No coverage*

### **9 May 2012**

#### **[American Psychiatric Association's revision of DSM5](#)**

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) announced some revisions of the soon to be published fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. This followed substantial unrest in the scientific and clinical community, and wide media coverage following a briefing held at the SMC with accompanying roundup comments.

*Reuters, [Huffington Post](#)*

### **15 May 2012**

#### **[Genetics of schizophrenia](#)**

A study mapping the genes and biological pathways involved in schizophrenia, suggesting that there is much more consistency in the genes and biological pathways involved in schizophrenia across populations than previously appreciated, was published in the journal *Molecular Psychiatry*.

*No coverage*

### **16 May 2012**

#### **[Violent crimes and mental illness](#)**

Following a number of stories of horrific attacks in which the perpetrator has a mental illness, and with the danger that these stories could feed into the myth that mental illness is equivalent to violence, the SMC sent out quotes from mental health professionals.

*No coverage*

### **16 May 2012**

#### **[Blast injuries, the brain and psychiatric problems](#)**

A paper in *Science Translational Medicine* outlined how military veterans suffering blast-related brain injury may be at increased risk of developing chronic traumatic encephalopathy or CTE, a degenerative brain disease found in people with a history of repetitive brain trauma.

*[Reuters](#), [New Scientist](#)*

### **6 June 2012**

#### **[Exercise as a treatment for depression](#)**

Research published in the *BMJ*, suggested that encouraging depressed patients to exercise, in addition to usual care, did not reduce symptoms of depression more than the usual care alone.

*[Metro](#)*

### **11 June 2012**

#### **[Mindfulness meditation and the brain](#)**

Researchers writing in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* suggested that a form of mindfulness meditation might be used to prevent or treat some mental conditions, after four weeks of participation in the technique induced changes in white matter in a brain region implicated in self-regulation.

[Daily Mail](#)

**22 June 2012**

[Suicide in young men](#)

The second of two papers in the *Lancet* examined another under-investigated area of suicide research. After reviewing research published over the last decade, they found strikingly few studies distinguishing the factors which identify those young men (aged 19 – 30) at greatest risk of suicide, and very few studies determining which suicide prevention interventions are effective in young men.

*No coverage*

**22 June 2012**

[Suicide and self-harm in adolescents](#)

Globally, suicide is the most common cause of death in female adolescents, and the third most common cause of death in male adolescents. A paper in the *Lancet* examined existing research to look at the connections between self-harm and suicide in young people.

*No coverage*

**22 June 2012**

[Anders Breivik trial](#)

Prosecutors in the trial of Anders Breivik, who killed 77 people in Norway on the 22 July 2011, decided to ask that he to be sent to a mental institution not prison.

*No coverage*

**27 June 2012**

[Gene therapy for nicotine addiction](#)

A mouse study raised the potential of a gene therapy treatment for nicotine addiction via an anti-nicotine antibody which prevents nicotine from entering the brain, according to a study in *Science Translational Medicine*.

*Daily Mail, BBC News, Sky News, [Times](#)*

**2 July 2012**

[Schizophrenic and bipolar parents and autistic children](#)

Schizophrenia or bipolar disorder in parents or siblings may be associated with increased risk of autism spectrum disorder, suggested a study in *Archives of General Psychiatry*.

*No coverage*

**9 July 2012**

[Novel hormone-based antidepressant](#)

Researchers reported in *PNAS* that a circulating metabolic hormone helps alleviate the symptoms of depression in mice.

*Sun, [Press Association](#)*

**18 July 2012**

[Binge drinking and cognitive decline](#)

A study presented at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference 2012 (AAIC 2012) in Vancouver suggested consistent heavy drinking appeared to have a negative impact on cognitive decline.

[Independent](#), *BBC News*

### **31 July 2012**

[Expert reaction to poor mental health link to reduced life expectancy](#)

A paper in the *BMJ* found people with symptoms of anxiety or depression had an increased risk of death from several major causes.

[BBC](#)

### **06 August 2012**

[Expert reaction to 'Neural Mechanisms of Decision Making in Hoarding Disorder'](#)

Patients with hoarding disorder exhibited abnormal activity in regions of the brain, according to a report in the *Archives of General Psychiatry*.

[Daily Mail](#)

### **14 August 2012**

[Expert reaction to association between suicide rates and the economic recession](#)

Economic recession and rising unemployment may have driven more than 1,000 people in England to commit suicide, according to a study published in the *BMJ*.

[Reuters](#), *Huffington Post*

### **16 August 2012**

[Expert reaction to knowledge about the biological basis of psychopathy and judges sentencing](#)

Invoking scientific evidence about the biological contributing factors of a defendant's mental illness makes judges slightly more lenient in their sentencing decisions, reports a new study in *Science*.

[Reuters](#)

### **5 September 2012**

[Expert reaction to new research into sleep disturbance and Alzheimer's in mice](#)

Scientists writing in *Science Translational Medicine* found that mice with the early signs of Alzheimer's disease have disrupted sleep.

*No coverage*

### **13 September 2012**

[Expert reaction to psychotropic drugs and driving risk](#)

Drugs prescribed to treat anxiety, depression and insomnia may increase patients' risk of being involved in motor vehicle accidents, according to a study published in the *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*.

*No coverage*

**18 September 2012**

[Expert reaction to self-harm and risk of premature death](#)

People who have a history of self-harm are more than three times as likely to die prematurely as the general population, with the risk also much higher for individuals living in socially deprived areas, according to a UK study published in *The Lancet*.

*No coverage*

**8 October 2012**

[Expert reaction to fish, mercury and risk of ADHD symptoms as published in \*Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine\*](#)

A study of children in the USA suggested that exposure to mercury for babies in the womb may be associated with a greater risk of ADHD but that fish consumption during pregnancy may be associated with a lower risk of ADHD.

[Telegraph](#)

**16 October 2012**

[Expert reaction to genetic markers of response to anti-depressants as published in \*PLoS Medicine\*](#)

A large study in *PLoS Medicine* suggested genetic markers cannot predict which patients with major depression will respond to anti-depressant drugs.

*No coverage*

**17 October 2012**

[Expert reaction to research into mental health trends through the 2008 recession as published in \*BMJ Open\*](#)

Men have borne the brunt of worsening mental health across the population of England since the start of the economic downturn in 2008, according to research published in *BMJ Open*.

*Financial Times, Irish Times, Channel 4 News, ITV News*

**25 October 2012**

[Expert reaction to findings from the \*American Society for Reproductive Medicine \(ASRM\)\* talk on the use of antidepressants in pregnancy](#)

At the 2012 meeting of the *American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM)*, a review of literature on the use of SSRI antidepressants in pregnancy was presented.

*No coverage*

**8 November 2012**

[Expert reaction to the 'dementia friends' initiative](#)

The Government announced plans to train one million 'Dementia Friends' by 2015 to help spot signs of the illness.

*No coverage*

**8 November 2012**

[Expert reaction to research on bipolar disorder treatments and pregnancy outcomes](#)

A study published in the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)* discussed how bipolar disorder treatments affect pregnancy outcomes.

*No coverage*

27 November 2012

[Expert reaction to new research suggesting an association between air pollution and autism](#)

A study in *Archives of General Psychiatry* suggested exposure to traffic-related air pollution, particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide during pregnancy and the first year of a child's life appears to be associated with an increased risk of autism.

*BBC News, Times, Telegraph, [Daily Mail](#), Express, Press Association, Metro, Scotsman*

**17 December 2012**

[Expert reaction to news of multiple shooting in the US state of Connecticut](#)

On 14 December, Adam Lanza opened fire at the Sandy Hook school in Newtown, Connecticut, killing 20 children and six adults.

*No coverage*

## Appendix 3: Funding

### Year 1: April 2010 - March 2011

Charlie Waller Memorial Trust  
Maudsley Charity  
Medical Research Council  
Mental Health Foundation  
Mental Health Research Network (England)  
Mental Health Research Network Wales  
Rethink  
Scottish Mental Health Research Network  
Wellcome Trust

### Year 2: April 2011 - March 2012

Cardiff University  
European College of Neuropsychopharmacology  
Maudsley Charity  
Medical Research Council  
Mental Health Foundation  
Mental Health Research Network (England)  
Mental Health Research Network Wales  
Scottish Mental Health Research Network  
Wellcome Trust

### Year 3: April 2012 - March 2013

Cardiff University  
European College of Neuropsychopharmacology  
Institute of Mental Health, Nottingham  
Maudsley Charity  
Medical Research Council  
Mental Health Foundation  
Mental Health Research Network (England)  
Mental Health Research Network Wales  
Scottish Mental Health Research Network  
Wellcome Trust

### Notes

- *Maudsley Charity (previously South London and Maudsley NHS Trust Charitable Funds) awarded the SMC a grant of £10,000 p.a. for 3 years*
- *Rethink and the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust were, unfortunately, not able to fund the project beyond Year 1*
- *ECNP gave the Centre a donation of £2,000 in Year 2 and in Year 3 the Centre received the ECNP Media Award which included a cash award of €5,000*