



SCIENTIFIC SYMPOSIUM

BREAKING BARRIERS:
Enhancing Autism Care in Psychiatric Intensive Units
WEDNESDAY 12TH MARCH

PROGRAMME subject to change

12th Mar 2025

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TIME	SESSION
1.15 – 1.30PM	SYMPOSIUM CHAIR WELCOME Dr Mehtab Rahman - Consultant Psychiatrist, Roxeth Ward Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit & Byron Ward, Cygnet Hospital Harrow and NAPICU Executive Committee Member
1.30 – 2.00PM (30 mins)	A CALL FOR CHANGE: RETHINKING THE ROLE OF PICU IN AUTISM CARE Mr James Harrison – Independent Clinical Nurse Specialist
2.00 – 2.30PM (30 mins)	CREATING AUTISTIC SPACE IN PICU: A SIMPLE FRAMEWORK TO MAXIMISE THE THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE Dr Mary Doherty – Clinical Associate Professor and Consultant Anaesthetist
2.30 – 2.40PM (10 mins)	Comfort Break
2.40 – 2.50PM	SPEAKER INTRODUCTIONS BY SYMPOSIUM CHAIR Mr Bernard Fox - NAPICU Director of Patient Representation
2.50 – 3.10PM (20Mins)	OPTIMISING MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT IN AUTISTIC PATIENTS THROUGH SENSORY-FOCUSED CARE Ms Michelle Van Vuren - Cygnet Regional Lead Occupational Therapist (London) and Head of Occupational Therapy at Cygnet Harrow
3.10 – 3.40PM (30 mins)	HOPE IN PICU: A CARER’S JOURNEY THROUGH AUTISM & INTENSIVE CARE Mrs Vanessa Lee - NAPICU Carer Representative
3.40 – 3.50 PM (10 Mins)	SYMPOSIUM CLOSE Dr Mehtab Rahman - Consultant Psychiatrist, Roxeth Ward Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit & Byron Ward, Cygnet Hospital Harrow and NAPICU Executive Committee Member Mr Bernard Fox - NAPICU Director of Patient Representation



SYMPOSIUM CHAIRS

12th Mar 2025



Mr Bernard J. Fox – Symposium Chair

Bernard suffered his first major psychotic episode in 2004. Sectioned, he spent time both in PICU and Acute care. Over three main admissions, Bernard has had direct experience of two PICUs and four Acute Wards. Since joining the NAPICU Executive Committee over a decade ago, Bernard has visited numerous PICUs across the country with NAPICU interest in mind. Bernard has been involved in NAPICU's collaboration with BAP (Rapid Tranquillisation Guidance) Design in Mental Health and the NAPICU/RCPSYCH PICUS Accreditation scheme. Most recently assisting the UEA with Psychology training and examination. Fervently pro uniform for Hospital settings he remains very keen to share his experience where it might help to improve Patient/Care providers outcomes and job satisfaction.



Dr Mehtab Ghazi Rahman – Symposium Chair

Consultant Psychiatrist and the Responsible Clinician for Nile Ward Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit, St Charles Hospital, London. He qualified from St Bartholomew's and the Royal London Medical School and completed his psychiatric training under the St Mary's and Charing Cross training schemes in London. Dr Rahman has received awards for his quality improvement work in improving physical health in mental health settings and reducing violence in psychiatric intensive care settings.



SYMPOSIUM SPEAKERS

12th Mar 2025

Mr James Harrison

Independent Clinical Nurse Specialist



James has worked for almost 20 years with autistic people, mostly children, qualified as a Learning Disability Nurse and Social Worker in 2013 and spent time working in a range of settings including PICU, LSU, MSU, Locked Rehabilitation, Prison and Specialist ED Services. In this time James has focussed on working with Autistic people to transition them out of hospital as quickly and safely as possible, advocating for them to not to enter hospitals at all. More recently James has become the Clinical Lead for a charity providing Peer Support Workers to Tier 4 CAMHS in-patient services to try to reduce in-patient stays for autistic people and has commenced research in this area.

X(Twitter): @JSHInsightsLtd

Facebook: JSH Insights

Instagram: jshinsightsLtd

LinkedIn: James (JSH Insights) Harrison

Dr Mary Doherty

Consultant Anaesthetist in Ireland and Clinical Associate Professor at the School of Medicine, University College Dublin



Dr Mary Doherty is an autistic Consultant Anaesthetist, a parent of two neurodivergent young people, and founder of Autistic Doctors International - an organisation dedicated to peer support, advocacy, research, and education. She is a Clinical Associate Professor at University College Dublin School of Medicine, and her PhD looked at leveraging the insider perspectives of autistic doctors to improve healthcare for autistic people, including development of the Autistic SPACE framework. With academic interests including healthcare for autistic people alongside the experiences of autistic doctors and medical students, she provides evidence-based autism and neurodiversity training for healthcare professionals.

Presentations Abstract:

The Autistic SPACE framework, and how it might be applied to PICU settings, will form the basis for this talk, which will include a mixture of personal experiences, research findings and recommendations for optimising the therapeutic alliance with autistic people who are experiencing serious mental health problems.

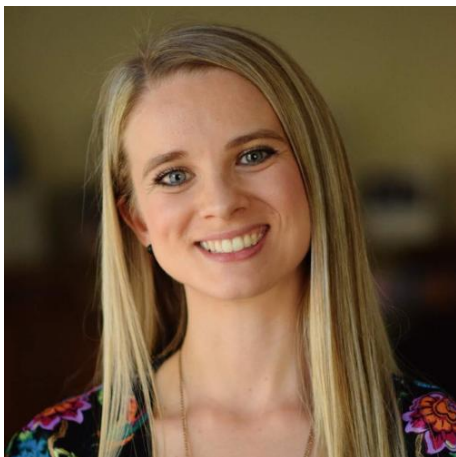


SYMPOSIUM SPEAKERS

12th Mar 2025

Ms Michelle Van Vuren

Cygnets Regional Lead Occupational Therapist (London) and Head of Occupational Therapy at Cygnets Harrow



Michelle qualified as an Occupational Therapist in 2011 in South Africa. She joined Cygnets Harrow in June 2022 to lead the Occupational Therapy department. She was later promoted to a Regional Lead Occupational Therapist in 2024. She has worked as an occupational therapist in vocational rehabilitation, SEN schools, and acute mental health care. She also gained experience in outdoor based/ experiential learning with children, adolescents, and adults. Michelle is trained to conduct occupational therapy groups by using the Interactive Group Model. She is also trained in the Vona du Toit Model of Creative Ability (VdTMoCA) which allows her to provide therapeutic interventions through positive risk-taking. Michelle is a member of the Cygnets Sensory QI Project group; this group was a finalist for the 'Delivering Service Excellence; The Showstopper Award' at the Cygnets Staff Achievement Awards in 2024. Michelle has a passion for seeing people realise their full potential and discovering their true identities through engagement in activities. She loves travelling, ice cream, Wednesdays, and alpacas.

Presentation Abstract:

This presentation explores the critical role of sensory processing in facilitating meaningful engagement with autistic patients on a PICU ward. It examines sensory interventions and strategies designed to address individual sensory needs, promote positive interactions, and enhance therapeutic outcomes.

LinkedIn: Michelle Van Vuren

Mrs Vanessa Lee

NAPICU Carer Representative



Vanessa Lee is a carer to her son, Harry and until recently for her husband, Kevin, who sadly passed away after 38 years together. They have 5 sons: two with a diagnosis of ADHD. Harry has a diagnosis of autism and schizoaffective disorder.

Vanessa is keen and committed supporter of services, working with local police and inpatient healthcare to advocate and educate, using her own experiences to support kinder and safer care. After an upsetting experience when Harry was sectioned, she produced a training film for Sussex Police to provide information on dealing with individuals who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder. She helps with quality improvement to reduce restrictive practices and championed the appointment of a therapy dog to her local Psychiatric Intensive Care ward. In 2019, Vanessa was recognised as the RCPsych Carer Contributor of the Year.

Vanessa has helped numerous parents who have children with ADHD and Autism through her role as an Individual Needs Assistant and has set up a local family support group. Vanessa is a representative on the board of NAPICU as their Carer Representative.