

PharMed

*Inter-disciplinary Pharmacy based research with a focus on
Medication use*

Who are we?

The PharMed research team



CHIEF INVESTIGATOR - Professor Ian Maidment

Ian is an Academic Clinical Pharmacist leading both MEDIATE & RESOLVE. Prior to moving to academia, he spent nearly 25 years in practice mainly within mental health services

MEDIATE & RESOLVE RESEARCH ASSOCIATE - Dr Jo Howe

Jo is a healthcare researcher with a background in Neuropsychology. She successfully defended her PhD in April 2022!



MEDIATE & RESOLVE RESEARCH ASSISTANT - Hafsah Habib

Hafsah is a pharmacy graduate who is new to realist research. Her current focuses are grey literature searching as well as the use of social media for dissemination



Welcome to the third issue of our newsletter! This edition of PharMed is dedicated to our MEDIATE research study and will be taken over by one of our service users, Max Carlish. We hope you enjoy.

As a reminder, MEDIATE is a realist review exploring MEDication optimisATIion in severE mental illness (MEDIATE) - here is an update on how it's going:

We have now completed all stakeholder group meetings with practitioners. In total, five meetings were conducted. Our final Lived Experience Group (LEG) meeting will be held in early December. We have read a lot of peer reviewed journal articles and we have learnt a lot in the process. We have finished the data analysis and are looking forward to presenting the findings in our next issues of PharMed!

Meet Max - a service user on the MEDIATE research study!



What is MEDIATE? A word from a service user

Three years ago, with no previous experience of research, I joined with an excellent staff ally and other service users to found LEAR (Lived Experience Action Research). As Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (BSMHFT)'s first service user research PPI (patient and public involvement) group, we were determined to use our personal experience of mental illness - as patients and carers - to enhance the current research in BSMHFT and from elsewhere.

We wanted to do this by making research more accessible, relevant, and impactful—specifically from the perspective of users.

Professor Ian Maidment was one of the first visitors to LEAR, before he'd even obtained funding for the MEDIATE study from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). We could tell immediately that he was tuned in to the potential of service users to highlight crucial areas of interest that had been overlooked by traditional research. For example, when exploring the fraught area of medication optimisation for people with severe mental illness (the subject of MEDIATE), we told him that the relationship between the 'prescriber' and the 'prescribed to' was of paramount importance. Furthermore, this relationship, we said, was often inherently coercive and riven with power imbalances. We were able to recount many personal instances where lack of trust had led to both over-prescription of, and non-adherence to, medication.

Having obtained funding and credited LEAR with important early conceptual development in the MEDIATE protocol published in the British Medical Journal (a first for us), Professor Maidment and his wonderful research associate Dr Jo Howe (ably assisted by Hafsa Habib), went about recruiting the two lived experience groups – one composed of service users, and the other of clinicians. These would both form vital components of the MEDIATE team's chosen methodology, realist research.

One of our fellow service user's poignant comments that 'it's a lonely relationship you have with medication' was all too true, so regularly meeting under the aegis of MEDIATE was wonderful—and therapeutic in itself. Brilliantly facilitated by Jo, Hafsa, and Katherine, our dedicated staff ally, we went on to have many fruitful, penetrating, and often deeply moving conversations about our experience with medication and prescribers.

Fast forward a few months, and as a self-declared service user with a long history of severe mental illness (and a sometimes less than functional relationship with psychotropic medications), it seemed counterintuitive to be proudly announcing this in a lecture theatre full of mental health nursing academics, teachers, and practitioners. Would they immediately come after me with nets and tranquiliser darts, I found myself paranoically musing?



Max delivering a talk at the 28th International Mental Health Nursing Research Conference

And yet this was exactly the situation I found myself in, at the recent International Mental Health Nursing Research Conference, which this year – its 28th – took place in St. Catherine's College, part of my 'alma mater', Oxford University. Now, after more than 30 years, I was back there – a freshly minted NIHR pre-doctoral Fellow in mental health research – with my brilliant mentor from the BSMHFT Katherine Allen, who, along with Ian and Jo, had worked so hard to help me gain the Fellowship. Now, I had been given the enormous privilege by them and the MEDIATE team of representing this ground-breaking (and potentially life-changing) study from the point of view of a service user's involvement. Katherine (who gave me so many good ideas and great encouragement)

“Not just bacteria on a petri dish”

and I had been working on the talk for weeks.

We had settled on 'Not just bacteria on the petri dish' as part of my provocative title, partly because I wanted to get across the way that service users have been historically situated in traditional research—prodded, poked, and treated as passive blobs. I contrasted this with the MEDIATE team's commitment – both methodological and moral – to truly engage with our voices as service users.

I explained the way that our lived experience was used in the research process to interrogate the results of the literature review in an iterative sequence that allowed the research questions to evolve and modulate, in response to our input. As a telling example of this, in our later sessions we started exploring transfers of information between the prescribers and the prescribed to, even touching on how peer support could be used to inform service users in order to optimise medication. It was a measure of how influential we had been in the process that Jo said that she'd had no idea that the research would go in this direction when it started.

We got some great feedback on the lecture, and the potential of MEDIATE to inform the debate, as well as to provide recommendations for future practice. All in all, it was an amazing experience of presenting my first paper, in an area – PPI – that I'm passionately committed to exploring further. I will always be grateful to Ian, Jo, and Katherine for giving me this incredible opportunity.

December 2022

An update on RESOLVE – Realist Synthesis Of non-pharmacological interVENTions for antipsychotic-induced weight gain (RESOLVE) in people living with Severe Mental Illness (SMI)

We are pleased to now have ethical approval to start data collection. We are holding research interviews with practitioners, service users and carers who have direct experience of living with or caring for someone who has experienced weight gain due to antipsychotic medication. If you would like to take part in our work, please email j.howe1@aston.ac.uk. We will offer a £30 gift voucher for participation!

Keep your eyes peeled for the next issue for updates on MEDIATE and RESOLVE. For regular updates follow us on twitter at @PharMed_

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