



Body, Mind and Medicine: Forms of Mental Illness and their Consequences in the Ancient World and Today

Conference at Durham University (28–29 October 2022)

This event – jointly organised by Durham University, the Wolfson Research Institute for Health and Wellbeing, and the University of Edinburgh – offers an interdisciplinary platform for academics as well as the general public. It will be held as a two-day online conference (via “Zoom”).

By giving examples, ranging from antiquity to the present day, of how mental ailments have been experienced, theorised and treated, this event is aimed at exploring ancient and novel approaches to forms of mental disease, thus simultaneously creating connections between the disciplines of Classics and Medical Humanities. The main focus will be threefold: (1) exploring the language pertaining to mental ailments from antiquity (ancient Greek and Latin) to today; (2) investigating the consequences of mental disease, thus examining how mental illness may lead to a fracture between the individual and the community, which entails navigating issues of isolation, stigmatisation and (in-)communicability connected with the experience of disease; (3) exploring the plurality of remedies provided for mental illness both in antiquity and nowadays: this will include both strictly medical and pharmacological therapies, along with alternative remedies, such as philosophy and the therapeutical use of speech.

In particular, this conference will engage with people interested in how the experience of mental disease in ancient times shows breaks and at the same time continuity with the way we experience disease today. As such, this event will not only increase the attendees’ awareness regarding communication and disease in Graeco-Roman antiquity, but will also help them to reflect upon our current experience of communication and isolation due to the rise of COVID-19.

The dialogue with experts from neighbouring disciplines, students and the wider public will help to recontextualise the notion of disease, and diseased body, through human experience. By comparing different methodological and theoretical approaches, this interdisciplinary event will provide everyone involved with the tools for widening and diversifying our own research methods regarding the study of the body, the senses, medicine and community in our respective disciplines.

Organisers: Chiara Blanco, George Gazis & Thorsten Fögen

This event is generously co-sponsored by the



Programme:

Friday 28 October 2022

SESSION 1: Communicating mental disease

- 9.30–10.00 h **Chiara Blanco, George Gazis & Thorsten Fögen**: Introduction
- 10.00–10.45 h **Marke Ahonen** (University of Helsinki): “The ancient Greek vocabulary of mental disease”
- 10.45–11.15 h C o f f e e b r e a k
- 11.15–12.00 h **Frédérique Biville** (Université Lumière Lyon 2): “The Latin vocabulary of mental disease”
- 12.00–12.30 h Group discussion on the modern vocabulary of mental disease
- 12.30–14.30 h L u n c h b r e a k

SESSION 2: Consequences of mental disease

- 14.30–15.15 h **Edith Hall** (Durham University): “Survivors of bereavement by suicide: The Greek tragedians’ perspective”
- 15.15–16.00 h **Chiara Blanco** (University of Edinburgh): “Delirium and isolation: An ancient Roman perspective”
- 16.00–16.30 h C o f f e e b r e a k
- 16.30–17.15 h **Peter Coventry** (University of York): “Mental health in the new millennium: Urbanisation, ageing populations, and climate change”
- 17.15–18.30 h Roundtable discussion on Sessions 1 & 2
Amanda Ellison, Barbara Bechter, Edith Hall, George Gazis, Thorsten Fögen, Giulia Bonasio, Nick Summerton (all Durham University), Nicola Wilson (Wolfson Research Institute, Durham University)

Saturday 29 October 2022

SESSION 3: Alternative (i.e. behavioural and other) therapies

- 9.30–10.15 h **Simon Trépanier** (University of Edinburgh): “The reception of Empedocles as a mad philosopher”
- 10.15–11.00 h **George Kazantzidis** (University of Patras): “Mental illness and its remedies in Celsus’ *De medicina*”
- 11.00–11.30 h C o f f e e b r e a k
- 11.30–12.15 h **Leanne Trick** (Durham University): “Using causes and context to improve prevention and treatment of common mental health conditions”
- 12.15–13.00 h **Nicola Kendall** (Durham University): “Namaste care: Rationale and use in end-of-life mental health care”
- 13.00–14.30 h L u n c h b r e a k

SESSION 4: Pharmacological therapies

- 14.30–15.15 h **Alain Touwaide** (University of Salerno & University of Illinois at Chicago): “Pharmaco-therapeutics for mental illness in antiquity”
- 15.15–16.00 h **Paul Chazot** (Durham University): “Mental health disease and new pharmacological therapies: Beyond SSRIs (Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors)”
- 16.00–16.30 h C o f f e e b r e a k
- 16.30–17.30 h Roundtable discussion on Sessions 3 & 4
Brian Castellani, Thorsten Fögen, Sophie Hodgetts, Phillip Horky, Nathan Gilbert, Alison Lane (all Durham University), Zach Lee (University of Leicester), Chiara Blanco (University of Edinburgh)