

WINNERS
2020



2020
Medical
Humanities
Awards

The background is a deep blue gradient with a complex pattern of white, overlapping, curved lines that resemble a stylized globe or a network of connections. The lines are thin and create a sense of movement and depth.

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) – in association with the Wellcome Trust – has announced the 2020 shortlist for the Medical Humanities Awards.

The list showcases the best research taking place at the interface of the arts and humanities and medicine and celebrates its positive impact on medical outcomes.

Winner
BEST RESEARCH
AWARD

Hearing the Voice

University of Durham

Hearing voices that others don't is an experience people typically associate with distress – with the suffering of psychosis, with the fear of the unusual or unshared, with the shame arising from social stigma. Over the last eight years, we have pursued three closely related goals: to help those who are distressed by their voices, to find out what voices are like and why they happen, and to explore how hearing voices is an important and meaningful part of human experience.

Putting lived experience front and centre of our research, our interdisciplinary approach has brought the knowledge, critical instincts and creative processes of the arts and humanities together with clinical, scientific and experiential perspectives to transform the way people think about voices. We have published major studies of people's experience of hearing voices in contexts ranging from contemporary mental health services to medieval mysticism, from spiritual worship to the practices of writing and reading. We have transformed scientific approaches by shedding light on the connection between voices and ordinary self-talk, sensory perception and memory. Working in partnership with voice-hearers and clinicians, we produced the world's most comprehensive website about hearing voices (understandingvoices.com) and a new clinical tool for the management of unusual sensory experiences (MUSE) now used in Early Intervention in Psychosis services across the North of England. We have also brought our research to thousands across the world in exciting and innovative ways: a major touring exhibition on hearing voices, documentary film and theatre, and Ninja Theory's award-winning video game *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice*.



Winner
BEST DOCTORAL
OR ECR RESEARCH
AWARD

The Weight of Expectation: how stigma gets under the skin and is bad for our health

Oli Williams (Kings College London)

The Weight of Expectation: how stigma gets under the skin and is bad for our health.

Oli Williams' doctoral research joins the dots between inequality, health, and everyday life. It demonstrates how the 'war on obesity' promotes stigma. Oli's aim was to understand how this stigma impacted people living in one of the most deprived areas in England. This involved observing local weight-loss groups, and combining local people's day-to-day experiences of weight-management with biomedical and social research.

The findings highlight how ineffective weight-based stigma is at preventing weight-gain or promoting weight-loss. Instead this stigma detrimentally impacts people's health and discriminates against poorer sections of society. Oli collaborated with illustrator Jade Sarson to turn these findings into an evidence-based comic: *The Weight of Expectation*. Artwork from the comic was exhibited nationally, including a joint exhibition with photographer Abbie Trayler-Smith.

The comic is having international impact. It is used in health services and medical education around the world to support current healthcare professionals improve standards of care and to teach the next generation about the detrimental impacts of weight-based stigma. Because of this the British Science Association selected Oli to deliver the Margaret Mead Award Lecture for Social Sciences at the British Science Festival.

This work also supported a petition calling on Cancer Research UK (CRUK) to stop running stigmatising obesity campaigns. The petition received public support, extensive media coverage and led to constructive dialogue with CRUK. Oli was subsequently selected to contribute to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Obesity, and was the only early-career researcher invited to speak at the parliamentary conference 'How to Beat Obesity Stigma?'



Winner
BEST INTERNATIONAL
RESEARCH
AWARD

Polio across the Iron Curtain

Dora Vargha (Exeter University)

My research on the Cold War politics of polio epidemics in the 1950s has explored a crucial moment in global health history from an Eastern European perspective, entwining an analysis of international organizations, state socialist governments, the medical profession, and parents and children in an epidemic that did not respect geopolitical divisions. My book, *Polio Across the Iron Curtain* (Cambridge University Press, 2018, winner of the 2019 EAHMH Book Prize) has allowed me to investigate the manifold politics of vaccine development, use and failure; treatment regimens and postwar disability; and scientific collaboration and mistrust. This research led me to think more about what the history of epidemics can contribute to understanding and informing current policies in epidemic management. I particularly got interested in epidemic temporalities and started developing a conceptual framework on *After the End of Disease*. This work, in turn, led to several publications, among them co-written articles in *The Lancet* and the *Boston Review*, and a policy workshop at the Wellcome Trust in 2019 co-organized with colleagues from Oxford and the University of Edinburgh, where we began developing guideline suggestions for international organisations in epidemic management, based on expertise in medical humanities and social sciences. In 2020, I contributed with my research on the history of polio and global health to the work of the World Health Organization's Western Pacific Office, as a member of the Foresight Thinktank on the History of Pandemics. Our report, titled *History as a Partner in Public Health* will be published this Autumn.



Winner
LEADERSHIP
AWARD

Victoria Bates

University of Bristol

Dr Victoria Bates is Senior Lecturer in Modern History at the University of Bristol. Her expansive research expertise ranges from nineteenth-century forensic medicine to current-day sensory studies. Victoria has recently focused on developing new types of impactful interdisciplinarity, through partnerships between medical humanities researchers and professionals in creative and design industries. Her Future Leaders Fellowship, '[Sensing Spaces of Healthcare](#)' (UKRI, 2020–24/27), brings together history, medical humanities, spatial/sensory studies and design for the first time. A key part of this project is a collaboration with Fresh Arts (Southmead Hospital) and GOSH Arts (Great Ormond Street Hospital) to develop and install a sensory prototype that will improve the hospital environment for all those who use it. This Fellowship builds on Victoria's previous work as lead of a multidisciplinary project on nature, wellbeing and the non-visual senses (2018, AHRC). The project involved developing novel research methods through an '[immersive experience](#)' using olfactory and acoustic technologies. Victoria is also dedicated to building inclusive research communities. She is the co-founder/lead of two networks: '[Senses in Modern Health/care Environments](#)', and '[MedEnv: Intersections in Medical and Environmental Humanities](#)' (Wellcome Trust, 2019–22). These international and interdisciplinary networks bring together creative partners, professional stakeholders and early career researchers. Victoria also leads a number of medical humanities initiatives at a more local level. For example, as part of her commitment to supporting postgraduate and early career scholars in the field, she runs a '[Regional Medical Humanities](#)' network and training programme across the South West and Wales.



Winner
BEST COMMUNITY-LED
AWARD

Change Minds, archives for mental health

Laura Drysdale (Restoration Trust)

Since 2015 The Restoration Trust has partnered Norfolk Record Office and local mental health providers to run Change Minds, an archives and mental health programme. A new Change Minds project, Dr Hills' Casebook, is now underway.

Change Minds engages people with mental health challenges in a transformative co-created archival adventure. Over 15 three-hour sessions, a facilitated group of around 10 people investigate case records of patients in local 19th C. asylums. Everyone chooses a patient and learns research skills as they investigate their life story. They use this research as the basis for creative writing, art and theatre, leading to a shared public event.

Communications, exhibitions, performances and publications extend Change Minds' reach and normalise conversations about mental illness then and now.

Credible research into outcomes for people is integral to Change Minds. Our question is: Does a creative exploration of history and identity through archives achieve sustained, measurable health and wellbeing outcomes for people with mental health conditions? Mixed methods research led by Dr Scaife, a social psychologist at UEA found that people's wellbeing improved, including longer term.

No comparable research has taken place in the archives sector so Change Minds generated great interest. Norfolk Record Office now host a national Archives and Wellbeing Network that is seeking funding for programmes in England, Scotland and Ireland using a hybrid remote/outdoor model evolved in response to Covid-19. UEA is trialling a version of Change Minds for student wellbeing and Bethlem Museum of the Mind piloted [Change Minds Online](#) during lockdown.



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