

EMBARGO: 09.00 Monday 30 September 2019

£10m funding from Wolfson for adolescent mental health research

Wolfson Centre to tackle youth anxiety and depression

A pioneering research centre focused on understanding and developing new ways of reducing anxiety and depression in young people will be established with funding of £10m from a major UK charity, the Wolfson Foundation.

The Wolfson Centre for Young People's Mental Health, based at Cardiff University, will be a dedicated interdisciplinary research centre where Cardiff University experts will work in partnership with Swansea University, Welsh Government, NHS Wales, University Health Boards and schools across Wales.

Paul Ramsbottom, Chief Executive of the Wolfson Foundation said: "There is still much to understand about the causes, prevention and treatment of mental health, and it is an area that has traditionally been underfunded in the UK.

"By launching this initiative and making this award, we want to make a statement about the importance of young people's mental health - and of supporting high quality research into the subject.

"Our expert, international panel rated the proposal from Cardiff extremely highly. The research expertise that has been assembled is impressive, ranging from genetics to epidemiology.

"The Centre will build excellent links to schools and health services across Wales, and the research will be informed by the experiences of young people – all based on a dataset that gives Wales a distinct advantage in research in this area.

"It is a true privilege for the Wolfson Foundation to be involved."

Welcoming the investment, Cardiff University's Professor Frances Rice, who will co-direct the new centre alongside Professor Stephan Collishaw, said: "We know that 75% of young people with an anxiety disorder or depression go unrecognised and receive no intervention. The impact on the young person, their families and their life chances can be devastating.

"That's why we are delighted, following a rigorous selection process, that the Wolfson Foundation has chosen to make such a substantial investment to establish the *Wolfson Centre for Young People's Mental Health*.

"For the first time we will be able to bring together experts in child and adolescent psychiatry, genetics, social science, and public health in Wales to shine a light on adolescent mental health and develop much needed new interventions."

The Wolfson Centre will focus on five scientific areas:

- It will examine longitudinal data that track children over time to better understand how anxiety and depression develop.
- It will consider the role genetic and environmental factors play in anxiety and depression in young people.

- It will develop a new intervention to support young people and families where a parent suffers from depression.
- It will look at the role schools play in promoting positive mental health in youngsters.
- Working jointly with experts from Swansea University, it will use information uniquely available in Wales to better understand long-term outcomes of those young people who experience anxiety and depression.

All the Wolfson Centre's scientific findings will be developed in partnership with young people, practitioners and policy makers and the information generated will be used to shape public health and school policies with the aim of helping promote better mental health in young people.

Co-director Professor Stephan Collishaw added: "Wales is a living lab of some 1.3m young people.

"We are already a global leader in mental health research and genetics with unique connections at other universities, Welsh Government, the NHS and schools.

"This major investment from the Wolfson Foundation will allow us not only to understand the causes of anxiety and depression but help create early interventions to ensure that young people get the right help, advice and support they need."

The Wolfson Centre will work with leading experts in the field from around the globe and will develop the next generation of youth mental health experts.

As well as academic leads for each area of research, ten Wolfson Future Leaders Postdoctoral Fellows will be appointed.

There are also plans for a number of Wolfson PhD students as well as an annual adolescent mental health summer school which will provide training in adolescent mental health research to fellows, students and practitioners at the early stages of their professional training.

-Ends-

Notes:

For further information on the Wolfson Foundation or to arrange an interview with Chief Executive, Paul Ramsbottom, please contact:

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About the Wolfson £10 Mental Health Initiative

The Wolfson Mental Health Initiative was launched by the Wolfson Foundation as a competitive process to make a single transformative award to outstanding research looking

at youth mental health. The Initiative was launched in 2018 and, following a rigorous process shortlist panel interviews took place in London on 6 September 2019. The outcome of the Initiative was an award of £10 million to Cardiff University.

The Expert Panel

The Wolfson Foundation was advised by an international panel, comprised of leading experts:

Professor Trevor Young, University of Toronto, Canada (Chair)

Professor Philip Corlett, Yale University, USA

Professor Ashok Malla, McGill University, Canada

Professor Pat McGorry, Orygen – the National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health, Melbourne, Australia

Professor Andreas Meyer Lindenberg, Central Institute of Mental Health, Mannheim, Germany

Professor Brenda Penninx, Amsterdam University Medical Centers, Netherlands

Lord Turnberg, Wolfson Foundation, UK (ex officio)

The Wolfson Foundation

The Wolfson Foundation (www.wolfson.org.uk) is an independent charity that supports and promotes excellence in the fields of science, health, education and the arts and humanities. Since it was established in 1955, over £900 million (£1.9 billion in real terms) has been awarded to more than 11,000 projects throughout the UK, all on the basis of expert review. In 2011, following a similar Initiative, Wolfson awarded University College London (UCL) £20m to set up the Leonard Wolfson Experimental Neurology Centre at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neuroscience to research early intervention in neurodegeneration. A recent trial undertaken in this Centre showed ground-breaking results for people with Huntington's disease.

www.wolfson.org.uk

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Cardiff University

Cardiff University is recognised in independent government assessments as one of Britain's leading teaching and research universities and is a member of the Russell Group of the UK's most research-intensive universities. The 2014 Research Excellence Framework ranked the University 5th in the UK for research excellence. Among its academic staff are two Nobel Laureates, including the winner of the 2007 Nobel Prize for Medicine, Professor Sir Martin Evans. Founded by Royal Charter in 1883, today the University combines impressive modern facilities and a dynamic approach to teaching and research. The University's breadth of expertise encompasses: the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; the College of Biomedical and Life Sciences; and the College of Physical Sciences and Engineering, along with a longstanding commitment to lifelong learning. Cardiff's flagship Research Institutes are offering radical new approaches to pressing global problems. More at

www.cardiff.ac.uk