

## Sussex Clinical Academic Conference 2024

### Summary Report

The third annual Sussex Clinical Academic Conference was held on Wednesday, 17th July, at the University of Brighton's Falmer campus.

The conference leadership team was made up of Amy Darby (Research Training Hub Coordinator and IAT Coordinator) and the hub Co-Directors, Dr Jessica Eccles (Reader in Brain-Body Medicine, Integrated Academic Training Co-Lead, BSMS) and Dr Cate Bell (Programme Lead for Clinical Academic Careers and Nurses Midwives and Allied Health Professionals Research, University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust), with support from Virginia Govoni (Head of the Health Research Partnership) and Christina Koulouglioti (Research Fellows Lead for the Hub and Senior Research Fellow, University Hospitals Sussex). This year the decision was made to host the conference under the umbrella of the new [Sussex Health and Care Research Training Hub](#), which launched in Spring to support health & care researchers across Sussex. This is the third annual conference of this kind and the decision to launch it as a Hub event brought a multidisciplinary focus to the event, to align with the goals of the Hub.

The purpose of this event was to promote the exciting and innovative research environment at Sussex, provide more information on research and clinical academic pathways, and create a space for networking and collaboration. This conference would bring together colleagues who don't often get to meet for a day of insightful discussions, networking opportunities and knowledge exchange.

The day started with three talks on a variety of research related topics. Dr Amy Moore (Director of Kings College CATO) began the morning with a fascinating talk about the experience of setting up and running a CATO office. This was followed by a video presentation from Dr Jane Padmore (CEO of Sussex Partnership) about her journey into research with a strong message about the importance research impact. Chrissy Goodban (Head of Speech and Language Therapy at the University of Roehampton) ended the first half of the morning with an inspiring presentation that told the story of her career path into becoming a clinical academic. After a short break and a chance to view posters, Dr Kathy Greenwood (Professor of Clinical Psychology, Sussex Partnership and University of Sussex) gave a detailed and fascinating talk about her experience of research, which featured a wealth of information about potential opportunities. Dr Fiona Cresswell (Clinical Senior Lecture in Global Health and Infection at BSMS) then gave a talk on her unconventional journey into clinical academia which presented a very human perspective on the experience. The morning concluded with a short presentation by Community Researchers from the Research Engagement Network, this inspiring and interesting talk provided an opportunity to learn more about the importance of embedding the patient voice in research.

The afternoon session started with the oral presentation competition which consisted of 9 fascinating and inspiring talks from candidates on their recent or ongoing studies. Each researchers gave an 8 minute presentation and following each category of talks, the audience members took place in a live vote for their favourite, using Slido. This interactive element allowed for an un-biased approach to the competition and gave everyone a chance to have their say, regardless of their background. Following this a team of expert panel members took questions from the audience and shared their experiences of research in Sussex.

The conference concluded with a prize giving session, in which the following people were announced as winners of the oral and poster presentation competitions:

- Best Academic Foundation Programme Poster Presentation: Dr. Tilly Gibson-Watt
- Best Medical Academic Poster Presentation: Dr. Elaina Pasangha
- Best Health and Care Professional Poster Presentation: Amanda Ferrell, Mary John, and Tanya Proctor
- Best Academic Foundation Programme Oral Presentation: Dr. Myat San
- Best Medical Academic Oral Presentation: Dr. Elizabeth Cross
- Best Health and Care Professional Oral Presentation: Sandra Dooley

The conference was attended by 117 delegates from various health and care organizations across Sussex, including colleagues from University Hospitals Sussex, the Universities of Sussex and Brighton, and the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. These delegates included a diverse range of professions primarily medical doctors, nurses, pharmacists and physiotherapists. This event was also attended by representatives from the following organisations, to present stalls during the networking / poster viewing segments of the day:

- [University Hospitals Sussex Knowledge and Libraries](#)
- [Clinical Research Network](#)
- [Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- [Research Champions – University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- Sussex Community Researchers
- [Joint Clinical Research Office](#)

Feedback from those who attended was positive, highlighting the organisation of the event as well as the inspiring and engaging content. The variety of speakers and the content throughout the day was also appreciated by delegates and several attendees commented on the value of hearing about academic journeys from different perspectives. Networking was another key highlight, with attendees enjoying the chance to connect with professionals from different disciplines. The poster competition received positive feedback for its variety and high-quality presentations. The multidisciplinary panel was also commended for providing diverse viewpoints and insightful discussions. The venue and catering were well-received as well as the option for attendees to sit outside during the lunchbreak. The location of the Asa Briggs Lecture theatre means it looks out across a green space on the University of Brighton Falmer campus and this really enhanced the experience for speakers and guests. Many attendees expressed overall satisfaction with the conference, finding it to be a valuable and educational experience. The event exceeded expectations, offering a well-organized platform for learning, networking, and professional engagement across a broad spectrum of topics.

A highlight of the event was the launch of the [Sussex Research Careers Advisory Service](#), a new initiative designed to integrate research into clinical careers. The service has already attracted much attention, reflecting a growing interest in this area.

Speakers and discussions throughout the day emphasised the critical need to embed research within clinical professions. They highlighted the importance of disseminating research opportunities widely to both staff and managers, and the necessity of engaging management support to foster a research-oriented culture.