



## Welcome to Edition 6 of the MYRIAD Newsletter

We hope that this newsletter finds you safe and healthy during this unprecedented time, and we want to express our admiration for all the amazing work that teachers are doing as key workers at the moment.

### A scientific response from Willem Kuyken.



COVID 19 is perhaps the most significant global challenge of this generation. As well as its effects on health, the coronavirus is also wreaking another kind of havoc - on our well-being. But a time of crisis can also be a time of discovery. Never has research been more important, in medicine, psychology and education. At the University of Oxford Mindfulness Centre we are refocusing our mindfulness research in response to the pandemic. Our MYRIAD research project will enable us to ask some important and new questions about the impact of the pandemic on young people's and teachers' well-being. As a team we anticipated the lock down and made the necessary changes to our ongoing projects. I have been so heartened by the level of support and resilience within the research team. We are reaching out to schools to accommodate their needs as they navigate the impact of the pandemic on their work and their engagement with our research. Finally, we have offered a range of resources to schools to support the mental health and well-being agenda.



**Research in Oxford** An exciting thing about working for a University such as Oxford is that it's a hub of research activity. Researchers across the University of Oxford are at the forefront of global efforts to understand the coronavirus and protect our communities. The University research teams already have some pivotal trials up and running, and in record time, managing to get going much sooner than the norm. Oxford Researchers are running a trial called RECOVERY, which is trialling potential drug treatments for COVID-19 patients admitted to hospital and (as you may have seen on the news) a vaccine team are about start trials of a new vaccine in healthy volunteers. Other researchers are working on projects involving rapid test development and new kinds of respirators, and a large scale project looking at the mental health of young people during these challenging times has just started. For more details on these projects and others:

<https://www.research.ox.ac.uk/Area/coronavirus-research>

Please see the next page for the details of one of these projects: the CO-SPACE study. It would be great if you would be able to send this round to the parents in your school to get as many people taking part as we can. We have attached the [recruitment poster](#) for you to do this.

**What has the MYRIAD team been up since the autumn term?** 2019 was MYRIAD's busiest year of data collection. For nearly 8 months of the year our researchers travelled the UK visiting 84 schools ranging all the way from Scotland to Devon. Thank you to all of our schools for looking after us so well when we visited you! Since January the MYRIAD team have been busy: we've been out in schools bringing our giant inflatable brain to life in our teenage brain workshop, working on the data that we've collected over the past few months, developing some exciting new public engagement activities, and preparing for our next round of school visits – phew! We've got a lot to focus on for now, and then we're looking forward to seeing all of our fantastic research leads, participating pupils and teachers again later this year.



**PSHE assessments 2018/19** Louise is continuing to complete the PSHE assessments for the academic year 2018/19 and may contact you by email. We recognise that individual circumstances will differ during these challenging times and if you would prefer not to be contacted, please ignore Louise's email or ask her to hold off until a later date. We recognise that our research may not be on your priority list right now.

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## Our trial manager considers how the MYRIAD Project may be affected by the current climate.

Trial managers can work for years on individual research projects and we plan, plan, plan how to run projects well. At the start of a project, we also think about all the things that could go wrong in a process, which is called risk assessment. In a project like MYRIAD that runs for around 5 years, it's not always possible to predict the challenges you might face that far in the future, but we think creatively about what might potentially happen. For example, I planned for Head teachers leaving schools and being replaced, for power cuts and lack of internet connections, even a mass norovirus outbreak that might shut schools for a few weeks. But never did I think to plan for a pandemic that would close all our schools and affect our lives like COVID-19. People's health is of course paramount and schools should stay shut as long as is necessary, but we are thinking about the impact it will have on the project, in particular if schools are shut into the Autumn Term. It feels like our research has never been more important to assess how young people are feeling in this climate. We will be reaching out over the coming months to you to see how we can work together to finish this important project, I know the MYRIAD team and you our fabulous schools will rise to the challenge.



Can you help us learn how families are coping with the challenges of COVID-19? Are you a parent or carer of a child in school years 0 (reception/foundation) to 11 in the

### Get to Know the Team

#### **Q & A with Elizabeth Nuthall MYRIAD Trial Manager**



#### **How did you come to work on the MYRIAD project?**

I have worked in research for around 25 years, in a broad range of areas, e.g. cancer, HIV, infectious diseases and childhood vaccines. My expertise is how to run projects and large teams, so this project really appealed to me as it's such a large schools based research project. Mindfulness is something that I find helps me personally, so it's been so interesting for me to combine my skill set with a personal interest of mine.

**What does your role in the project involve?** I am the Trial Manager for the project, so this means I oversee the running of all aspects of the project. At the start this meant setting up and planning for the whole 5 years, including designing the project, applying for ethical approval, planning the budget, setting up all the study procedures and recruiting the large number of staff who have worked on the project. Now the project is up and running and the end is in sight, I am more of a conductor making sure the project continues to run well and to a high standard and to provide drive to the group to keep to our milestones and targets.

**What is the best thing about your role?** I feel very lucky to work in such a fabulous team. It wasn't an accident that we are all quite different on the team, I really believe our varied skill sets complement each other to form this dream team! It helps that everyone is so conscientious and also we like to have some fun together too.

**What do you like to do in your spare time?** I am often described as the busiest person people know! I am a busy little bee, normally out and about doing something. I am a regular at my local gym and I do yoga and karate, I am in a book club, I recently started learning mandarin and I love to eat out, especially sushi. My life has clearly changed a lot in the last few weeks, so I am adjusting to doing all these activities in a different way. I found it quite hard to start with, but I now feel quite settled into this new way of life and particularly enjoy my zoom karate classes in my kitchen!

UK? If you are, we invite you to take part in a regular online survey being run by the University of Oxford. The survey will take up to 20 mins the first time you do it and about 10 minutes thereafter. We will ask you to complete the survey weekly for a month, then fortnightly for a month, and then monthly until children and young people are back in school. Your responses will help us to find out how

children, young people and their families are getting on, what is working for them, and what they are finding difficult so that we can understand how best to help. Please click here for further information: <http://cospaceoxford.com/survey>

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## How are MYRIAD adapting to home working?

We have been getting to grips with virtual meetings using programs such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom, and have been enjoying the occasional unplanned visits from pets and family members. We have been trying to support each other's wellbeing by having lunches and tea breaks together online, and making sure we check in with everyone each day. We are all very grateful that we are able to carry on the important work that the MYRIAD Project is doing, particularly during this difficult time.

### MYRIAD gets resourceful!

Here are some of our researchers' best past times while practicing social distancing at home!

**Katie:** As a parent to a 7 and 10 year old my days in lockdown have been mainly spent letting go of my hang ups over screen time, honing my keep up skills in the garden with my football obsessed son and getting up extra early to enjoy much needed time by myself!

**Isobel:** I've been using the extra time during the day to start running again – something I usually dread doing at the end of the day and often avoid. Otherwise, I've been on Pinterest marking out all the meals I like the look of but usually don't find time to plan.

**Matt:** I have been baking more and then doing 10km on the exercise bike every morning to counter the excessive cake consumption!

**Laura:** I'm currently working in lockdown with my 18 month old daughter. How is it going? Let's just say when she goes back to nursery I'm going to be buying her key worker something that reflects the admiration I have for them looking after her for 8 hours a day, maybe a

Ferrari or an island in the Maldives. Teachers, I salute you.

**Alice:** I've been doing puzzles that I didn't complete at Christmas and have become a quiz host for my family and friends on Zoom.

### Other news from the MYRIAD team?

Three of our researchers have received some exciting news in 2020. Lucy Radley will be beginning MSc study in Health Psychology but lucky for us, will still be working with MYRIAD! Unfortunately we are sad to say goodbye to Anam Raja and Alice Phillips, who will be leaving the team to pursue PhDs in September. Anam Raja will be going to the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine to work on the development of a whole school approach to an anti-bullying programme, using restorative justice principles. Alice Phillips will be heading to the South West to study at The University of Bath, investigating how we can improve access to mental health services for young people who are looked after by the government.

### Coming soon to the MYRIAD Website...

The MYRIAD team have been working on ways to open up access to our outreach and public engagement resources. Some of the

resources we soon hope to have available include our research lessons: How to design a Good Research Project, Ethics in Research and Careers in Research. We are also planning to add more so do check the website regularly and watch this space! <http://myriadproject.org/>

### Looking after your wellness

The University have been working hard to put together resources to help keep our brains occupied and stimulated. Check out Curious Minds for free online resources, including inspiring Ted Talks and access to The Bodleian Library's digitized collections: [https://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/about/curious-minds?utm\\_source=mc&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=2003-conted-online-free-resources-announcement](https://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/about/curious-minds?utm_source=mc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2003-conted-online-free-resources-announcement)

**Any Questions?** If you or staff, pupils, parents or other members of your school community have any questions about the project please get in touch with the MYRIAD team at: [myriad@psych.ox.ac.uk](mailto:myriad@psych.ox.ac.uk)

If there is anything you would like to hear about in future newsletters, please let us know.

Just another day on ZOOM for the MYRIAD Team!



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