

Co-occurring physical, psychological, and neurodevelopmental presentations in young people



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WHAT DID WE DO?

The UCC DCLinPsych programme has developed research collaborations with healthcare partners to advance our understanding of a range of co-occurring presentations and rates of diagnosis. Examples of qualitative research projects include:

UCC & CUH paediatrics: recruiting young people presenting with Functional Neurological Disorder and their parents to increase our understanding of this condition.

UCC and St. Vincent's University Hospital: recruiting young adults with a co-occurring Irritable Bowel Disease and mental health needs to inform how best to provide information on the link between physical and mental health.

UCC & HSE CAMHS: completed study with autistic adolescent girls with co-occurring mental health needs, exploring our understanding of how they make sense of having co-occurring needs and what they want from a service.

Our research engages with the paradigm shift in international research and models of care in physical and psychological health, recruiting participants between the ages of 12 – 25.

Research in this age range allows us to track psychosocial development where 75% of mental disorders develop and peak.

Mental health needs are the largest cause of disability in young people, and a major cause of premature death due to related physical health needs and suicide (McGorry et al, 2024).

Mental health needs that co-occur with physical and neurodevelopmental needs can lead to increased complexity in assessment and intervention at a key stage of human development.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Our research is important as it gives a voice to young people with complex co-occurring needs whose experience tends to be under-represented in the existing literature.

It has the potential to inform clinicians' understanding of co-occurring needs, raising awareness of phenomena such as diagnostic overshadowing, where a mental health presentation can be incorrectly attributed to a neurodevelopmental disorder, or a physical health condition, impeding access to the most appropriate intervention.

Our findings will contribute to the development of transdiagnostic psychological interventions which move beyond a diagnosis specific approach to focusing on psychological processes which maintain a range of difficulties.

SCAN FOR MORE INFO

