

## **Martin Lawlor Research Bursary Award - Post-Conference Attendance Report**

**Charlotte Williamson**

The European Psychiatric Association (EPA) Section in Epidemiology and Social Psychiatry hosted its 21<sup>st</sup> Congress in Lausanne, Switzerland from 11 - 14 September 2024. The biennial section conference was dedicated to the latest research in psychiatric epidemiology and social psychiatry, with a strong focus on connecting early, mid and senior researchers from Europe and beyond working in the field. The congress was attended by over 300 international delegates including academic leaders in psychiatric epidemiology and social psychiatry, proving an excellent opportunity to develop and grow my research network.

Attending the congress and presenting both an oral presentation and a poster allowed me to disseminate and discuss some important findings from my PhD research so far to the wider international research community. This included presenting the findings from the qualitative component of my PhD as part of a symposium on 'The Biological, Psychological and Social Consequences of War. An Update on the UK Military Psychiatric Epidemiology a Decade after the Withdrawal from Afghanistan'. My oral presentation was entitled "'Man Up and Get on with It": UK ex-serving personnel's experiences of seeking help for self-harm, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts'. In addition, I presented a poster as part of a series of posters relating to the topic of Suicide and Self-Harm. My poster presented the results from one of my quantitative studies entitled 'Lifetime self-harm, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts among UK serving and ex-serving personnel: Rates and Associated Factors'.

During the congress, I attended a range of presentations, symposia, workshops and networking events. I found a series of presentations on Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviours particularly interesting as this provided opportunity for learning and development within my research area but outside of the usual context/population. Some examples of presentations within the series of talks included (1) results from a two-year cohort study on young and middle-aged males in Australia exploring the transition from suicidal ideation to suicide attempt, (2) findings from a qualitative study exploring the experiences of suicide attempt survivors when sharing their stories of suicidality and overcoming a crisis through the media and public talks, and (3) feasibility results of a study using artificial intelligence to predict suicidality in youth seeking help from a German crisis text line. I also attended two of the workshops dedicated to early career researchers. 'Introduction to health data linkage - methods and challenges' provided a useful introduction to a method in which I have little experience but hope to use in the future, and 'An ECR's guide to real world impact' provided useful tips and advice on how to ensure my research has impact in ways I may not have considered previously.

Overall, attending and presenting at the EPA Section in Epidemiology and Social Psychiatry allowed me to showcase my research, develop my research network and provided an opportunity which was beneficial for enhancing my understanding of my research area and for my long-term professional development.

