

Speakers Brochure



Improving Wellbeing, Teamwork and Resilience at Work Conference

Welcome

Welcome to the “Improving Wellbeing, Teamwork and Resilience at Work” conference. This one-day (in person) conference is being facilitated by the National Endoscopy Programme (Wales) and supported by Cook Medical. We are excited to invite you to participate in this interactive forum dedicated to improved wellbeing, teamwork, and resilience leading to enhanced patient care, and retention of our workforce. Together, we can drive a compassionate and caring culture in NHS Wales and make a meaningful impact on how we look after ourselves, our patients and each other. Throughout the day there will be opportunities to network with colleagues and international experts in an informal setting. As you participate in the conference activities, I encourage you to approach each session with an open mind and a spirit of collaboration.

Dr Umakant Dave, MBE
WAGE President



Chris Ruane

Chris was the former MP for The Vale of Clwyd up to 2019. In 2013 he worked with Lord Layard and the Oxford Mindfulness Centre to establish mindfulness practice in the UK Parliament. Since then, 350 UK parliamentarians and 800 members of their staff have received mindfulness training. In his period out of office, 2015–17, and since 2019 he has worked with the Mindfulness Initiative to develop links with politicians and mindfulness advocates in 50 legislatures around the world and helped to establish mindfulness practice in 13 of those legislatures.

He served on the board of Oxford Mindfulness Centre for nine year and is the current Chair of the Mindful Initiative's Global Network. He has spoken on mindfulness and wellbeing at the UN (twice), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Paris, and the Dalai Lama's Mind and Life Conference, Munich. He has given talks on mindfulness and wellbeing at the following Universities Oxford, Harvard, Berkeley, Bangor, UCL, Lyon, Aarhus and Radboud. He has also spoken at international wellbeing conferences in Washington, Toronto, Los Angeles, Sydney, London, Bangor, Mexico and Brazil.

He has written about his experience on introducing mindfulness to legislatures in the prestigious American Psychological Association's Journal, The Humanistic Psychologist.



Umakant Dave (MBE, MD, DNB (Gastro), PGCE, FRCP, FAcadMed)

I am a consultant physician/ gastroenterologist in Swansea, UK and an Honorary Senior Lecturer in Swansea University. I am an expert endoscopist (advanced colonoscopist and ERCPist) and a national trainer in endoscopy training. I have established a national registered charity with two colleagues to enhance endoscopy training in Bangladesh.

My particular passion is for training and wellbeing of doctors and other healthcare workers. I have attended mindfulness teacher training (Bangor university 2016-2019) and multiple mindfulness teacher training retreats/ courses. I have been teaching mindfulness in Swansea Medical School (2016 onwards) and have run many mindfulness and wellbeing study days/ sessions for healthcare workers in the UK and internationally. I have published number of articles and contributed to a book chapter in the field of mindfulness/ wellbeing in healthcare professionals/ medical students. I am a president of Welsh Association of Gastroenterology and Endoscopy (WAGE). My "Wellbeing" work was recognized by the Royal College of Physician (2020). I was awarded MBE in the queen's jubilee celebration for the contributions to NHS (2022).



Dr Robert Marx

Robert is co-Lead for the Sussex Mindfulness Centre. He is a lead consultant clinical psychologist and cognitive-analytic psychotherapist. He has been involved in running mindfulness groups for NHS staff and patients since 2006. He has led the national NHS England funded MBCT in NHS Talking Therapies for 7 cohorts and contributes to other SMC trainings in MBCT, MSC and adapted mindfulness interventions. He leads short mindfulness and compassion based retreats and has co-developed a compassionate leadership training used in various public sector settings.



Dr Penny Letchford
MBBCH, MRCPsych,
MSC Psychiatry, MSc
Medical Education

Penny became a consultant psychiatrist in 2013 and now works as an associate medical director for Mental Health and Learning Disabilities in South Wales. With extensive knowledge and a strong passion for scientific, evidence-based approaches to wellbeing, Penny brings a unique combination of clinical expertise and embodied practice to every setting. As a certified Advanced Breathwork instructor, Yoga Therapist, and Yoga teacher, she has designed and delivered a wide range of wellbeing courses, workshops, and retreats focused on supporting sustainable mental, emotional, and physical health. She specialises in helping individuals and teams manage burnout, stress, and anxiety, drawing on both research-backed methods and practical tools that foster resilience and self-regulation. She has extensive experience working with both small groups and large corporate audiences, offering sessions that are not only engaging and informative but also highly relatable and impactful. Her work bridges the gap between research and real-life application, empowering participants with practical tools that foster long-term wellbeing.



Dr. Carter Lebares

Dr. Carter Lebares is an experienced general surgeon who routinely performs both emergency and elective procedures. She holds an associate professorship at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF). As a trailblazer in her field, she founded the Lebares Resilience Lab and serves as the Director of the UCSF Center for Mindfulness in Surgery. Receiving a medical degree from the University of Minnesota and completing her surgical residency at UCSF, she is a fellow of the American College of Surgeons, a Member of the Academy of Master Surgeon Educators, and Vice Chair of the ACS Committee on Surgeon Wellbeing. As the Director of the UCSF Centre for Mindfulness in Surgery, Dr. Lebares has dedicated over two decades to personal practice and scholarly research in mindfulness meditation, stress management, cognition, and resilience. As the Principal Investigator for the Lebares Resilience Lab, her work is focused on improving stress resilience, mental health, and performance in surgical professionals and trainees, enhancing quality of care and fostering positive outcomes for both patients and healthcare providers. Her current research awards include funding from the UCSF Health Experience Excellence fund, Clinical Nurse Research Fund, the British Medical Association Foundation, and the Association for Surgical Education Foundation's CESERT Platinum Award. She has previously secured support from the Physicians Foundation. Dr. Lebares is an accomplished educator, having completed Mindfulness Teacher Training for Physicians at the University of Rochester and graduating from the Teaching Scholars Program in Medical Education at UCSF. Currently, she is pursuing a PhD in Healthcare Education through UCSF and Utrecht University, Netherlands.



Phedra Dodds

Phedra Dodds has spent 25 years working in endoscopy; as an endoscopy nurse, Clinical Endoscopist and now National Endoscopy Programme Lead. In 2013 Phedra became a Consultant Nurse for Endoscopy and was awarded a PhD in Medicine for an RCT studying the effects of IBD individualised patient education. After two decades as an endoscopist she hung up her scope and led two endoscopy academies – one in the Southwest of England and then one in Wales. She has worked for JAG as the JETS Workforce Clinical Lead transforming endoscopy workforce education and now holds the nurse lead post within the BSG Project 90 and is creating a gastroenterology educational package. She has published widely on subjects such as endoscopy, workforce development and service improvement. She lives quietly within the mountains of Wales, knitting, gardening, reading, and watching old movies.



Wyn G Lewis
MB BCH (Wales), MD
(Wales), FRCS (Ed &
Eng), DSc (Cardiff),
FACadMed, FIoL

Wyn Lewis hails from the Gwendraeth Valley in South Wales (SW) and following general education at Ysgol David Hughes (North Wales) graduated from the Welsh National School of Medicine (1984). Following basic surgical training rotations in SW he undertook research, higher surgical training and Lecturer (Leeds University) was appointed Consultant General Surgeon, Royal Gwent Hospital Newport (1995) specialising in Upper GI Cancer (UGICa). He transferred his practice to UHW, C&V UHB (2005), to help centralise UGICa services in S Wales and now also holds contracts with AB & SB UHBs.

He has a clinical research pedigree focused on surgery for inflammatory bowel disease, colorectal cancer (MD 1995), and UGICa (DSc 2009). He has authored over 200 scientific publications in the fields of GI surgery and postgraduate education, and the gastric cancer element of his work was recognised by the Nishi memorial award of the Japanese Gastric Cancer Association (2003), a Hunterian Professorship (RCS England 2007), and DSc (Cardiff University (CU) 2011). He holds a personal Chair in Surgery (CU 2013), visiting Chair (USW 2018), and Honorary Chair Bangor University. He is a former member of the JCST SAC, RSPA for Wales, RCSE Examiner for both MRCS and FRCS, and is currently HEIW's Head of School Surgery.



Professor Rebecca
Crane PhD

Professor Rebecca Crane PhD is the former director of the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice at Bangor University. She has written numerous peer-reviewed articles on how mindfulness-based programs can be implemented with integrity into mainstream practice settings, and how they can support inner change that contributes to collective and systemic societal shifts towards a more equitable and sustainable world. She has written Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy Distinctive Features, co-authored Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy with People at Risk of Suicide, and co-edited Essential Resources for Mindfulness Teachers and is a Principal Fellow with the Higher Education Academy.



Stephan Schoenig

Stephan Schoenig is Founder of BeWell IT, using technology to make evidence-based wellbeing practice accessible to all. With over 25 years of IT industry experience and an MSc in Mindfulness-Based Approaches from Bangor University, Stephan bridges digital innovation and clinical wellbeing interventions. Building on research conducted during his Masters studies, he developed the BeWell Catalyst platform. Through a strategic partnership with Dr Carter Lebares at UCSF, this platform now powers the ESRT StrongMind application, bringing a digital experience to Enhanced Stress Resilience Training for healthcare professionals whilst providing real-time insights. With over 700 users served and international speaking engagements including WellMed-5 2024 and the International Conference on Mindfulness 2025 in Hong Kong, Stephan specialises in helping healthcare teams move from individual wellbeing practices to sustainable organisational transformation.



William Beasley

Will Beasley is a consultant upper gastrointestinal surgeon in Morriston Hospital within Swansea Bay University Health Board, and a director and grower at Cae Felin. Cae Felin is a regenerative agricultural project on health board land that has harvested two awards stemming from its growing success. Cae Felin Community Supported Agriculture, located near Morriston Hospital, has been recognised for transforming over seven acres of land owned by Swansea Bay University Health Board. It has contributed to wellbeing of staff and community and has also been hailed for creating inspiring green spaces which are being used in particularly innovative ways. This project has received multiple awards, and recent awards come in the form of internal and external recognition, having won the Sustainability in Healthcare accolade at the health board's annual One Bay Way Staff Awards. Cae Felin has also won the Innovative Development of Green Space at a Health Site award at the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare's 'NHS Forest 2024 Integrating Trees and Green Space into the NHS' conference.



Elizabeth Williams

It's my great privilege to be chair of Mindfulness Wales/Meddylgarwch Cymru and to work with my amazing Trustee colleagues and our wider network of Friends in taking forward our vision of sharing mindfulness to help Wales become a more compassionate, kinder, fairer society. My background is in education starting as a teacher and headteacher and ending as Head of Children and Young People's Strategy in the Welsh Government. I trained to teach MBSR and MBCT but I now focus on the range of lighter touch programmes aimed more at the general population. My main priority is in education with staff and pupils of all ages and I work with the Mindfulness in Schools Project to train staff all over the world to teach their programmes. I'm also involved in teaching Compassionate Mind Training to staff, pupils and the wider population in Wales in collaboration with the University of Derby. All of this fits beautifully into our Nurturing Mindful Communities project and I'm enjoying finding out more about the mindfulness happening already all over Wales to help us weave mindfulness into all sorts of communities.



Matt Jones

I am a teacher with over 30 years of experience in education, having worked in a large primary school in Rhondda Cynon Taf. My journey into wellbeing began a decade ago when I completed an eight-week mindfulness course for school staff. This experience highlighted the importance of personal wellbeing in effectively supporting others and sparked a deep interest in health and wellbeing within educational settings. I went on to lead the development of a whole-school approach to health and wellbeing in my own school and later served as a lead practitioner for the Central South Wales consortium of schools. I trained with the Mindfulness in Schools Project to teach mindfulness to both students and staff, which led to my ongoing involvement with Mindfulness Wales. In recent years, I have focused on compassionate approaches to wellbeing. I collaborate with the University of Derby to deliver Compassionate Mind Training to school staff, pupils, and the wider community across Wales. I also volunteer with the Compassionate Practices Collective, supporting initiatives such as Compassion Circles for professionals in health and social care. Now retired from full-time teaching, I continue to contribute to the field as an associate practitioner with the mental health charity Valleys Steps and recently joined the board of trustees at Mindfulness Wales.



For further information about any of the conference's speakers or to be kept up to date for future events please get in touch at:

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