

Thursday 22nd February 4pm – Maynooth University Psychology Department

Dr. Andrew P Allen (Maynooth Psychology)

Exploring the Effects of Reminiscence Therapy on Memory, Executive Function, and Mood in Healthy Older Adults and People with Early Dementia



Andrew is a postdoctoral researcher on the Recall Initiative, an Irish Research Council project investigating the effects of reminiscence therapy in healthy older adults and patients with cognitive impairment. Andrew studied Psychology (BA and MSc) at TCD and obtained his PhD at the University of Cardiff. Prior to his arrival in Maynooth he was a senior

postdoctoral researcher in the Dept of Psychiatry, UCC.

<http://andrewspsychologyarchive.blogspot.ie/>

Abstract

Normal healthy aging is associated with subtle decline in cognitive abilities such as memory and executive function, which can impact on wellbeing in later life. In contrast with normal healthy ageing in cognition, dementia is associated with serious functional impairment, and represents a major health burden to society. Studies on reminiscence therapy (RT) demonstrate improved autobiographical memory in dementia, and executive function and mood in healthy adults. The effect of RT on autobiographical memory, executive function and mood, as well as their neuroanatomical underpinnings, remains relatively unexplored in healthy older adults. This research program will investigate the effect of RT on autobiographical memory, executive function and mood in healthy older adults and people with dementia. Sixty-six participants aged 65+ will be randomly allocated to a 6-week RT (N = 22), active control (present lifestyle and current affairs discussion; N = 22) or passive control (N = 22) condition. Autobiographical memory, new learning, executive function, mood, and quality of life will be assessed pre-post intervention. Structural and functional MRI scans will be conducted during autobiographical memory and new-learning pre-post with ten participants in the RT group. Preliminary case-series analysis of the RT condition suggests some improvements in autobiographical memory (varied across semantic and episodic memory, and life epochs), new learning and executive function, suggesting that RT may ameliorate the effects of age related cognitive decline. Further research will examine the impact of RT on patients with early dementia.