

Research Forum 2025 - Biographies

Dr Mithira Nithianandan

Acting Executive Clinical Director and Consultant Psychiatrist, Spectrum

Dr Mithira Nithianandan is a consultant psychiatrist and Acting Executive Clinical Director at Spectrum Personality Disorder Service. She has had training in Dialectical Behaviour Therapy and Metallization Based Treatment. Dr Nithianandan believes that training and support for the mental health workforce are crucial for addressing the needs of people with personality disorder. She has a particular interest in supporting primary care providers in working therapeutically with clients living with BPD.

Toni Gutschlag

Executive Director, Mental Health and Clinical Support, Eastern Health

Toni is an experienced health executive including in the areas of operational management, delivery, and strategic leadership in mental health and addiction. She joined Eastern Health from New Zealand where she had 28 years of health system experience. Her most recent role was Southern Executive Director Mental Health, Addictions, and Intellectual Disability for Te Whatu Ora, Health New Zealand. Toni is responsible for Mental Health and Wellbeing, Statewide Services, Medical Imaging, Pathology and Pharmacy.

Dr Robert B Dudas

Consultant Psychiatrist, OPMHS, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust; Visiting Researcher, Department of Psychiatry, University of Cambridge; Honorary Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry, University of East Anglia; Training Programme Director for Psychiatry, NHS England, East of England; Academic Secretary, Eastern Division, Royal College of Psychiatrists, UK

Robert Dudas has combined clinical work, academic research, and teaching, and in his research, he has used a wide range of approaches from neuropsychology, through brain imaging and experimental research, to meta-analyses in a variety of conditions, including borderline personality disorder, autism, depression, and dementia. His recent book, published with CUP, *Values in Psychiatry*, explores the role of values in the development and recovery from mental illness as well as progressive developments in psychiatry, and

outlines a new research methodology to address the challenge of integrating the biological, psychological, social, and existential dimensions of mental illness.

Prof Susanna Every-Palmer

Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist, Te Whatu Ora/ Health New Zealand; Head of Department, Department of Psychological Medicine, University of Otago, NZ

Professor Susanna Every-Palmer is a forensic psychiatrist and Head of the Department of Psychological Medicine, University of Otago, Wellington. Her primary research interest is improving outcomes for people with serious mental illness, and she has published extensively in this area. This has included leading a series of studies into the treatment of complex trauma in patients with multiple comorbidities in forensic care. Susanna has held numerous senior leadership roles in the mental health sector, both in Australasia and internationally. These include positions as a forensic Clinical Director, the Acting Director of Mental Health for New Zealand, the Chair of the NZ Committee of the RANZCP, a forensic psychiatrist on the New Zealand Parole Board, and Vice-President of the Pacific Rim College of Psychiatry.

A/Prof Jillian H Broadbear

Head of Research & Innovation, Spectrum Personality Disorder and Complex Trauma Service

A/Prof Jillian Broadbear is the Head of Research & Innovation at Spectrum Personality Disorder and Complex Trauma Service. She holds a PhD in Biopsychology from the University of Michigan and spent two decades working in the substance misuse and mental health fields, conducting pre-clinical and clinical research. After returning to Australia, Jillian took up an academic role at Monash University, convening the Bachelor of Behavioural Neuroscience degree and continuing her psychopharmacology research. She was fortunate to learn about a research position opening at Spectrum ten years ago and has never looked back! Jillian is passionate about leading research that can be applied through education and advocacy, thereby improving knowledge in the field and growing services that assist everyone whose lives are affected by personality disorders and complex trauma.

Dr Fiona Donald

Clinical Psychologist, Spectrum

Dr Fiona Donald is a clinical psychologist at Spectrum within the Mentalization-Based Treatment (MBT) and Complex Care teams. Fiona has a particular interest in how people with BPD experience treatment, publishing on the experience of recovery from consumer and clinician perspectives, as well as on the relationship between self-compassion and recovery.

Dr Karthika Kasiviswanathan

Research Officer, Spectrum

Dr Karthika is a dedicated medical professional and researcher committed to improving access to adequate and appropriate care received by people living with borderline personality disorder (BPD). Since joining Spectrum in 2024 as a Research Officer, they have led several projects integrating clinical expertise with the voices of lived experience. Their contributions include co-editing *A Practical Guide for Area Mental Health Services* and authoring a comprehensive review aimed at improving support for parents with BPD. Guided by both personal and professional passion, Dr Karthika's work focuses on advancing evidence-based practices and fostering compassionate, person-centred care for people with BPD.

Dr Dinuli Nilaweera

Research Officer, Spectrum

Dr Dinuli Nilaweera is a Research Officer at Spectrum, having previously contributed as a Research Volunteer. Dinuli holds a PhD in Public Health from Monash University, where her research explored the impacts of stressful and traumatic events across the lifespan. Through building greater empathy and understanding of personality disorders, Dinuli aims to advance research that reduces the stigma of complex mental illnesses in clinical settings, academia and the wider community. She has a particular interest in understanding chronic suicidality in personality disorders and improving access to resources for health professionals.

Joseph Fettling

Research Volunteer, Spectrum

Joseph (Joe) is a Research Volunteer at Spectrum and is currently undertaking an Honours year in Psychology. He's passionate about mitigating mental health stigma, especially towards those experiencing "borderline" (hopefully soon-to-be renamed!) characteristics. At Spectrum, he's had the pleasure of contributing to a variety of projects focused on improving clinical outcomes for those experiencing BPD. Outside the office, he enjoys running, cooking, and filling his home with miniature Zen gardens.

Marianne Weddell

Clinical Specialist (DBT/WFD), Spectrum

Marianne Weddell is a Clinical Psychologist with 25 years' experience across public and private sectors. Currently the Clinical Specialist and P4 Psychologist at Spectrum, she leads the Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) program and is a senior member of the Workforce Development Team. Marianne has extensive experience treating diverse clinical presentations, managing teams, and training clinicians. She has a particular interest in Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), focusing on enhancing service and family systems. In her private practice, Talk Psychology in Geelong, she works with DBT graduates and individuals with complex lived experiences. She views therapy as a path to self-understanding and building a life worth living.

Miss Claudia Vella

Provisional Psychologist, Deakin University

Claudia is a provisional psychologist currently in her final year of her Doctor of Psychology (Clinical) candidature. Claudia is a developing clinician with a strong interest in working with individuals experiencing trauma-related disorders and borderline personality disorder (BPD). She is passionate about supporting clients in understanding the impact of their past experiences on current difficulties and in building skills for emotional regulation, stability, and recovery.

Dr Helen Mildred

Senior Lecturer in Post Graduate Psychology, Deakin University. Director of Research & Evaluation, Eastern Health Infant Child, Youth Mental Health Service

Dr. Mildred has over 25 years of experience as a clinical psychologist, educator and researcher. She has a strong interest in training and workforce development, and is committed to conducting applied research aimed at supporting policy development and service improvement. Through her collaborative appointments with Deakin University and Eastern Health, Dr Mildred has supervised 30 MPsych (Clinical), DPsych (Clinical) and PhD theses to completion, and has over 30 publications in the areas of self-injury, personality disorder and child & youth mental health.

Meg Blackie

Clinical Psychology Registrar, Acorn Psychology and Swinburne University of Technology

Meg is a Clinical Psychology Registrar who has been working out of Acorn Psychology, a private practice in Canterbury, for three years. Meg recently had her PhD passed, which explored the use of Digital Mental Health Interventions for cPTSD. She has ongoing research and clinical interest in the treatment of trauma, OCD, and anxiety related disorders. Her primary therapeutic modalities include CBT, ACT, IFS Therapy, and EMDR. Meg has presented at two international conference and authored nine papers, with five published and four currently under review.

Miss Melissa Morando

Research Assistant, Spectrum

After completing her Honours in Psychology, Melissa has translated experience in addiction research, staff-wellbeing program coordination, and anxiety-support into her research at Spectrum, contributing to publications and presenting at the 2024 Spectrum Research Forum. Passionate about trauma-informed practice, promoting interpersonal connection, and adjusting treatment programs to suit consumer needs, she connects empirical rigour with person-centred care. Melissa's keen interest in quantifying and improving client outcomes has aided her in supporting the evaluation of the Ironbark Program alongside the clinical and medical teams at several Prevention and Recovery Care Services across Victoria.

Dr Joy Yee Quek

Psychiatrist, PARC (Prevention & Recovery Care Service), Austin Health

Joy has been a public psychiatrist for over two decades. She has worked across community and inpatient settings, including psychiatry intensive care, continuing care, crisis assessment and treatment, and is currently based at Austin PARC, a community residential subacute unit.

Dr Haley Peckham

Researcher, Centre for Mental Health Nursing, University of Melbourne

Dr Haley Peckham's background includes philosophy, mental health nursing, psychotherapy and neuroscience and her perspective is grounded in a colourful lived experience of recovering from complex trauma. Haley is a cross-disciplinary scholar and researcher and pioneered the Neuroplastic Narrative, a non-pathologising theory which combines the neuroscience of how experiences shape brains with the evolutionary biology that illuminates why experiences may shape us the way they do. This less shaming and more empowering alternative to the medical model has helped Haley in her own recovery, and she shares it in the hope it is helpful for both clinicians and people wanting to understand and recover from their own experiences or complex trauma.