

Paediatric Neurology in a post-truth world

4th EPNS Masterclass Cambridge, UK September 10th-12th 2020



Evidence, and belief.

The EPNS Masterclass was instituted to address some of the practical dilemmas of clinical practice in the 21st Century. Building on the unique features of our first three Masterclasses, this is a small, interactive meeting with - where possible - delegates attending in "couples" of a senior mentoring clinician and the leaders of tomorrow: to share and learn from each other in areas where often there are no easy answers.

We are privileged to have speakers from a wide range of backgrounds: as well as the world class clinical faculty you would expect from the EPNS we have parents, ethicists, philosophers and researchers from disciplines you don't ordinarily meet. We will draw on the Cambridge tradition of rigorous, yet respectful, intellectual exchange across the artificial boundaries of academic disciplines.

Oxford Dictionaries declared "post-truth" its 2016 word of the year, defined as "relating to circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than emotional appeals". This is the world we live in. Truth has become a lifestyle choice: even the most robust facts are disputed or dismissed. Vaccines cause autism because I read about it on Facebook, and those who deny it are the tools, or fools, of Big Pharma.

The primacy of scientific method is under threat, but we have to acknowledge its enemies make criticisms and that these situations arise from lack of trust in "experts". Results *are* marred by publication bias, perverse commercial and professional incentives, and occasional outright academic fraud. Everyone is talking about the 'replication crisis'. Science advances one funeral at a time.

We have a world-class clinical faculty to summarise current opinion and recent advances in some current "hot controversies" including PANDAS/PANS, medicinal use of cannabis, chronic Lyme disease, and adverse neurological effects of vaccines.

But can we also learn anything *more generally* about how to approach families passionately believing in what we think is mistaken pseudoscience? Faced with a parent convinced her child's problems are due to chronic Lyme Disease; that seizures will be cured by supplements, or a stroke by stem cells how do

we respond? How useful are systematic reviews and *p* values? Relationships can break down to the point that they threaten clinical careers. How do we prevent "digging in" and tribalism?

Speakers from the worlds of philosophy, cognitive science and behavioural psychology will be complemented by expert parent views.

Also, following Masterclass tradition we get a perspective on our question from the Humanities. This year we are delighted to have acclaimed photographer Chris Frazer Smith helping us consider "ways of seeing".

When: 10-12 September 2020

Where: Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, UK

Other: Accommodation is in en-suite single college rooms. We are limiting numbers to 40 participants to preserve the interactive nature of the meeting. We prefer participants to register as a pair and complete a joint booking form but welcome enquiries from "unattached" individuals.

Cost: The cost of the Master Class is €620 per person or €1150 per pair. This includes:

- Accommodation on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday nights with breakfast (note these are student rooms and can be quite basic)
- Access to the full Masterclass programme
- Lunches on Thursday, Friday and Saturday
- Conference dinner in College on Friday evening followed by an after-dinner discussion (capacity in the Dining Hall is sufficient to accommodate all delegates but we are unlikely to be able to accommodate accompanying partners)

An *optional* social event comprising a tour of Cambridge and Dinner is available *for an additional €50 each* (or you can have Thursday evening and dinner on your own)

The EPNS is also please to offer **Bursaries** to two pairs of delegates from countries in World Bank income groups 1, 2 or 3 to cover the course fee (but not travel costs)

Attendees are responsible for organising their own transport and any additional nights' accommodation. If advice regarding accommodation is required, please email info@epns.info. See the separate application form

Places are limited, we expect demand to be high. **Both attendees** (mentor and young neurologist) **must be fully paid up members of the EPNS** (if you would like to join the EPNS, please email info@epns.info for guidance).

PLEASE CONTACT [INFO@EPNS.INFO](mailto:info@epns.info) TO REGISTER YOUR INTEREST