

## **NZHPA Education Grant Report – College of Mental Health Pharmacy (CMHP) 2024 Conference Reflection by Sarah Case**

Thanks to the NZHPA education grant, I had the privilege of attending the CMHP 2024 conference in Glasgow. As a Mental Health Pharmacist working in the Otago University School of Pharmacy Clinic, this conference was an invaluable opportunity to enhance my understanding of global advancements in mental health pharmacy. It broadened my perspective by highlighting different approaches to mental health care and pharmacological treatment on an international scale.

I attended the CMHP 2024 awards dinner and accepted the Celia Feetam award for best overall performance in the Postgraduate Certificate in Mental Health Therapeutics in 2023/2024. It was a true honour to be there and meet the people who taught me at Aston University!

### **What I appreciated about the conference**

The CMHP 2024 conference provided a welcoming and stimulating environment to learn from a diverse group of mental health professionals, including pharmacists, researchers and clinicians. I appreciated the emphasis on collaboration and practical application, including how pharmacists can be central to advancing patient care in mental health settings. I particularly valued the opportunity to network with colleagues from across the globe, exchanging insights and exploring the unique challenges and innovations in mental health care in different countries. The discussions inspired me to consider practices and resources that could be implemented in New Zealand.

### **Key learning points**

#### **1. A global perspective on neurodiversity-inclusive care**

Dr. Mary Doherty's session on the Autistic SPACE framework stood out. Her advocacy for a neurodiversity-affirmative approach challenged conventional deficit-focused views on autism. She emphasised the value of simple adjustments, such as tailoring communication styles and creating sensory-sensitive environments, to improve patient outcomes. Her insights motivated me to assess and adapt our practice in the Pharmacy Clinic to ensure it is more inclusive and accessible.

#### **2. Personalising pharmacological treatments**

Dr Edoardo Ostinelli's session on precision psychiatry and shared decision-making demonstrated the importance of incorporating patient preferences and prognostic factors into treatment plans. This session was a powerful reminder of the pharmacist's role in tailoring approaches to optimise patient outcomes. The PETRUSHKA algorithm and other digital tools showcased the potential of technology to transform clinical decision-making.

#### **3. Pharmacists as advocates and experts**

The session "Your Job is to Become an Expert in Her Medicines: A Conversation with a Carer" deeply resonated with me. It highlighted the need to go beyond technical knowledge of medications to understand the patient's broader context, lifestyle and goals. This session was a compelling reminder of the pharmacist's unique ability to provide holistic, patient-centered care—a principle I strive to uphold in my current role.

### How this experience will shape my practice

Attending the CMHP 2024 conference has given me new insights and strategies that will shape my practice in meaningful ways:

- Implementing neurodiversity-inclusive practices that better support autistic patients and reduce barriers to care.
- Facilitating shared decision-making processes to ensure patients feel informed and empowered in their treatment journeys.
- Leveraging international connections and knowledge to enhance my contributions to mental health pharmacy in New Zealand.

### Conclusion

The CMHP 2024 conference was a profoundly enriching experience, deepening my understanding of mental health pharmacy and providing me with practical tools to enhance patient care. This experience will allow me to bring global insights into my practice and foster innovation in mental health care. I am deeply grateful to the NZHPA for supporting this opportunity, which will undoubtedly impact my professional growth and the quality of care I provide.



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Conference overview: <https://www.cmhp.org.uk/conference/conference-2024/>