



**QUEEN'S  
UNIVERSITY  
BELFAST**

**SCHOOL OF  
NURSING AND  
MIDWIFERY**

### **Funded PhD Opportunity in the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Queen's University Belfast 2022-23**

The School of Nursing and Midwifery, in collaboration with the Centre for Evidence and Social Innovation at Queen's University Belfast is delighted to announce an opportunity to apply for a fully funded PhD Studentship.

**Title:** EMDR to minimise the development of PTSD on the NICU: a feasibility study

Applicants must have at least a 2.1 degree (or equivalent) in a relevant subject area.

**The closing date for this application is 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022.**

**Interviews are anticipated to take place online on 25 March 2022.**

Apply using our online Postgraduate Applications Portal [go.qub.ac.uk/ HYPERLINK "https://go.qub.ac.uk/pgapply" pgapply](https://go.qub.ac.uk/pgapply) and follow the step-by-step instructions on [how to apply](#).

When prompted, applicants should supply a cover letter (max 2 pages long) outlining their suitability for the project, rather than a proposal document. [The cover letter should be uploaded with your application, instead of a proposal]

Within this document, please provide evidence to support the following additional criteria for this opportunity;

- Experience of working with people experiencing mental health challenges **OR** of working on a paediatric or Neonatal intensive care unit **OR** in midwifery / health visiting
- Experience of using EMDR would be an advantage, but training is available to a suitable candidate who has not any experience of using the technique

The full-time studentship is funded by the Northern Ireland Department for the Economy (DfE)

Funded studentships may cover maintenance and fees for a maximum of three years, depending on residency status. For further details about eligibility criteria (including academic, citizenship and residency criteria) please click on the DfE Research Eligibility Guidance

Notes: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/department-economy-studentships>.

The University is committed a policy of equal opportunity. Prospective students with a disability or long term condition are encouraged to disclose as early as possible in the application and selection process by contacting [admissions@qub.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@qub.ac.uk). Upon disclosure the University will ensure appropriate reasonable adjustments and additional supports can be put in place for applicants. Reasonable adjustments and additional supports will be determined on an individual basis, in line with the course entry requirements to ensure selection standards are maintained.

## **Proposal Document for 2022 Studentship commencing October 2022**

**Title:** EMDR to minimise the development of PTSD on the NICU: a feasibility study.

**Supervision Team** Dr Breidge Boyle (Primary Supervisor, neonatal expertise and Dr Derek McLaughlin (Supervisor, mental health and EMDR expertise). International advisor – Professor Mark Tomlinson - Stellenbosch University / WHO

### **Background**

The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) is a very stressful environment where up to 70% of parents may develop post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In a current study we e are estimating the prevalence of PTSD in parents of infants requiring care in the neonatal units in Northern Ireland and trialing Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) as a “rescue” therapy in those who show symptoms. The World Health Organisation increasingly advocate using EMDR as a “first aid” rather than a rescue treatment, designed to prevent the development of PTSD in stressful situations.

### **Aim**

To design an EMDR based intervention for parents whose infants are admitted to NICU, and test the feasibility of using it with parents in a single NICU in Northern Ireland.

### **Methods**

A sequential mixed methods study, where the feasibility of using a simple EMDR based intervention with parents whose baby is likely to be on NICU for more than one month. Pre and post testing for PTSD will be carried out. A qualitative evaluation of the acceptability of the intervention will follow.

#### **Phase 1**

The student, an EMDR practitioner (training is available to anyone with a suitable background who is not already a trained practitioner), will design a simple, evidence based EMDR intervention to use with parents while their infant is being treated on NICU.

#### **Phase 2**

Using validated tools to quantify their symptoms before and after, to implement the intervention on a sample of approximately 20 - 30 parents (Mothers and fathers) on a single NICU will be recruited. Participants will be retested for PTSD on discharge and again when they have been home for 4-6 weeks.

#### **Phase 3**

Semi structured interviews will be carried out to explore the experience of receiving EMDR as a participant. Focus groups will be held with staff to explore the acceptability of this therapy on the units and how the intervention can be used in the future.

**Anticipated contribution**

The findings will contribute our knowledge of techniques to minimise the development of symptomatic psychological trauma in this vulnerable group.

For further information please contact Dr Breidge Boyle, School of Nursing & Midwifery, QUB by email: [breidge.boyle@qub.ac.uk](mailto:breidge.boyle@qub.ac.uk)

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