



inform

British Academy/Wellcome Conference 2023

'Public Health after COVID: Beliefs, Religion and Competing Epistemologies'

Friday 26th May 2023

Venue: The Great Hall, King's College London, Strand Campus, King's College, London, WC2R 2LS

You will be asked to sign in at reception of the Strand Building.

Entry to the King's Building is through the Strand Building Reception, located on the Strand. Instructions for how to find the building are here: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/visit/strand-campus>

Co-convenors:

Dr Suzanne Newcombe (The Open University and Inform, based at King's College London)

Dr Karen O'Brien-Kop (King's College London)

Registration: from 9.45

Tea/coffee and arrival: 10.00-10.30

Opening session: 10.30-11.00

Session 1: 11:00-13.00

Title of session:

Global and Plural Paradigms of Belief, Health and Healing: Focus on Asia

Frameworks for promoting health and healing have always been pragmatic, plural and subject to trans-cultural exchanges. This panel will focus on exchanges between medico-religious traditions of historical Asia and the ways in which ancient historical fundamentals of religious healing have survived and flourished into the present day, finding new audiences worldwide. Ayurveda, Daoism, Siddha medicine and Yoga provide powerful worldviews that are incorporated into the self-understandings of billions of people globally. In different contexts these worldviews can be associated with autonomous healing traditions outside of mainstream biomedicine. What are the conflicting epistemologies that can intersect to produce vaccine hesitancy and/or misinformation about Covid-19? What factors have shaped these group discourses and

choices historically to inform and influence present-day attitudes to the pandemic? How has the impetus of globalisation accelerated these processes in recent decades?

Chair:

Karen O'Brien-Kop (Lecturer in Modern Asian Religions, King's College London)

Speaker	Affiliation	Paper title
Dominik Wujastyk	Professor of Classical Indian Polity and Society, University of Alberta, Canada	Medical Epistemologies, Trust and Traditional Medicine in India'
Suzanne Newcombe	Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies, The Open University and Honorary Director of Inform, Based at King's College London, UK	Yoga, indigenous Indian medicine and the importance of interrogating the experiential episteme
V. Sujatha	Professor of Sociology, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, India	Could we understand the pandemic without the virus? The use of Siddha medicine in the management of infectious fevers in Tamil Nadu
Dominic Steavu	Assistant Professor of Daoism and Chinese Buddhism, University of California, Santa Barbara, USA	Daoist Meditation as Ritual Framework in Post-Covid Psychedelic Self-Care and Therapy

Lunch (provided): 13:00-14:30

Session 2: 14:30-16.30

Title of session:

Pluralist Revivals and Reactions to Covid-19 in Local Contexts

This panel will examine how historical epistemologies are being revived and expanded for the post-Covid age, putting local contexts on the global stage. In Iran, medical epistemology is witnessing a return to herbal and humoral discourses as a response to the pandemic, drawing on classical Islamic models of health. Hasidic communities draw upon Jewish theological and mystical epistemologies in negotiating their interactions with secular health authorities, what were the specific reactions of these communities to public health messaging during Covid? In Africa and its diaspora, Pentecostal Christian theories of healing through religious practices are gaining greater prominence

in public health responses to the pandemic. Meanwhile in Korea, shamanism and Covid-19 responses are intertwined with media trends. What insights can we gain from comparative analysis of localised case studies? How are marginalised knowledges being adopted in national health strategies as a means to ensure greater reach for policy interventions? In what ways are communities and public health authorities reviving historical religious modes of healing for a post-pandemic age – and with what motivations, hopes and effects?

Chair:

Erminia Colucci, Associate Professor in Visual and Cultural Psychology (Cultural & Global Mental Health), Middlesex University, London

Speaker	Affiliation	Paper title
Hormoz Ebrahimnejad	Lecturer in History, University of Southampton, UK	Covid and the revival of herbal/humoral discourse in Iran within the context of modern medical epistemology
Heather Munro	Lecturer in Social Anthropology, King's College London	The Rise of Alternative Therapies and Traditional Medicine in Hasidic Communities
Abel Ugba	Lecturer in Centre for African Studies, University of Leeds, UK	There is always a reason, but not always an explanation: A critical exploration of notions of health, healing and wellbeing in African Pentecostalism
Liora Sarfati	Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor), Department of East Asian Studies, Tel Aviv University, Israel	Covid19 and the Understanding of Illnesses in Korean Shamanism

Refreshments and snacks: 16:30-17:30

Evening Event: 17:30-19:45

Film Screening: Harmoni

Venue: Lecture Theatre 1, Bush House, King's College London, Strand Campus, King's College, London, WC2R 2LS

You will be asked to sign in at reception of the Bush House.

Entry to the King's Building is through the Bush House Reception, located on the Aldwych. Instructions for how to find the building are here:

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/visit/strand-campus>

Introduction by the Director and PI, Dr. Erminia Colucci, Middlesex University, London

Discussion Chair: Professor Simon Dein, Goldsmiths University of London

Respondent: Anto Agus Sugianto

This film is an output of the research project **Together for Mental Health** financially supported by the Global Challenges Research Fund, awarded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). The aim of the project is to use ethnographic film and participatory methods to explore attempts by mental health workers to establish collaborations with faith-based and traditional healers to prevent the use of coercion and provide care for persons affected by mental illness.

Preview: <https://youtu.be/GjTk9wyuHEY>

Project website: <https://movie-ment.org/together4mh/>

Anto's story

https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=1432&v=jGALhkwzg4g&feature=emb_imp_woyt

Saturday 27th May 2023

Venue: The Great Hall, King's College London, Strand Campus, King's College, London, WC2R 2LS

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Arrival with tea/coffee: 10.00-10.30

Session 3: 10.30-12.30

Title of session:

Transnational Approaches to Health and Healing in the time of Covid-19

In some cases, transnational religious networks work to promote self-healing, greater wellbeing and health and are integrated into mainstream public health systems. The same beliefs and practices can at times cause harm to those who choose them in addition to, or instead of, biomedical interventions, and these networks can simultaneously work to undermine mainstream biomedical narratives about promoting health and wellbeing. This panel will highlight alternative beliefs and practices that are transnational in nature but which have unique characteristics and modes in local contexts. How have Buddhist models of medicine, such as mindfulness meditation, been employed in the Global North in mainstream biomedical understandings of mental health? How have Latin American worldviews informed by mediumship and healing spread to diaspora communities in North America and Europe? How has Covid-19 misinformation gained traction through religious and non-religious worldviews, and what lessons can we learn?

Chair:

Mark Sinclair, Lecturer in Philosophy, Queens University Belfast

Speaker	Affiliation	Paper title
C. Pierce Salguero	Associate Professor of Asian History and Religious Studies, The Abington College of Pennsylvania State University, USA	A Survey of Attitudes Toward Covid-19 Vaccines among Asian Medicine Practitioners in the US
Joana Bahia	Professor of Social Anthropology, State University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	Transnational Mediumship: Interconnections of Afro-Brazilian Religions, Healing and Technology

David Robertson	Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies, The Open University, UK	Covid, Conspiracy Theories and Marginalised Knowledge
Eugenia Roussou	Senior Researcher, Centro em Rede de Investigacao de Antropologia, Lisbon, Portugal	Epistemologies of Contemporary Spirituality and Healing after Covid: Pluralising Afflictions, Competing Beliefs in Southern Europe

Lunch (provided): 12:30-13:30

Session 4: 13.30-15.30

Title of session:

Contemporary Clashes – Competing Paradigms in the Post-Covid Age

This panel will explore the competing epistemologies in public health rhetoric and think about ways forward for mainstream public health discourses. A tension exists between an inclusive public health agenda and ways in which alternative epistemologies can drastically destabilise public health. Marginal and marginalised identities, such as subcultures associated with yoga and shamanism are among networks of online vaccine misinformation and resistance. While other minority groups have longstanding skepticism of biomedicine based on colonial impositions on health and autonomy which have continued beyond the period of formal colonialism. For historical, pragmatic and social reasons, former colonised nations and their diasporic communities have often met health and wellbeing needs through networks that overlap with religious beliefs and practices. How can these tension be better discussed and understood in order to best promote the health of all in our interconnected, global world?

Chair:

Distinguished Professor Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad, FBA, Department: Politics, Philosophy and Religion, University of Lancaster, UK

Speaker	Affiliation	Paper title
Kin Cheung	Associate Professor of East and South Asian Religions, Moravian University, USA	Placebo Effects and Qi: Incommensurable Paradigms of Healing and Mind-Body

Quinton Deeley, MD	Senior Lecturer in Social Development and Neuroscience, King's College London and Consultant Neuropsychiatrist in the National Autism Unit and Neuropsychiatry Brain Injury Clinic at the Maudsley and Bethlem Hospitals, UK	Trust and Doubt in the Internet Age: QAnon, Vaccine Hesitancy, and the Politics of Belief
Azita Chellappoo	Lecturer in Philosophy at the Open University, UK	Epigenetics, Precision Medicine, and Inherited Trauma: Unpacking the Relationship between Indigenous Epistemologies and Health Interventions in the Postgenomic Age
Benson Igboin	Senior Lecturer, Department of Religion and African Culture, Adekunle Ajasin University, Nigeria	One Eye Cannot See the Whole World: A Transgressive Approach to Global Health Epistemologies

Tea/coffee: 15.30-16.00

Plenary discussion: 16.00-17.00

Closing remarks: 17.00-17.15