Title:  **The Acceptability of Undertaking Sexual Health and Behaviour Research
 in People with Severe Mental Illness: A UK Perspective**Presenter: ***Samantha Gascoyne****, Final Year PhD Student and Research Fellow/Trial
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The global prevalence rates of people with severe mental illness (SMI) have indicated a greater risk of HIV, Hepatitis B and C infections compared with expected rates found in the general population. One of the suggestions for the elevated rates of blood borne viruses (BBVs) in this population is that people with SMI are more likely to engage in behaviours associated with increased risk of infection. However, there has been very little research exploring the intersection of mental health and sexual health in the UK.

Therefore, a study was undertaken to explore the acceptability and feasibility of recruiting people with SMI to a study about sexual health and assessment of sexual risk behaviour in the UK. Six participants meeting the inclusion criteria were recruited into the study, and completed all aspects of the questionnaire/interview session that were relevant to their sexual lifestyle. A number of different recruitment methods were required to access and recruit people with SMI to the study. Although it was found that it was difficult to engage clinical staff with this subject, the results do provide some preliminary evidence that exploring the sexual health and behaviours of people with SMI in the UK is acceptable, which supports the international literature in this field. The data collection tools used were considered appropriate with participants feeling the questions were relevant to them.

Future research is needed in this area and should consider exploring the prevalence rates of BBVs and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the UK as this currently unknown. As engaging clinical staff in this subject was found to be challenging, future research should consider developing a training package to enable mental health professionals to feel comfortable and confident in supporting service users with their sexual health behaviour and relationships which some would argue is an ethical obligation of their role.