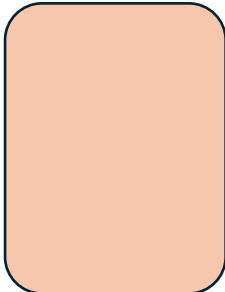


Speaker biographies for Thursday 25th June 2026

First morning session



Dr Anthony Cox

Consultant in Interventional Neuroradiology in Southmead Hospital, Bristol and Lead for INR across the Bristol NHS Group

Dr Anthony Cox is a Consultant in Interventional Neuroradiology at Southmead Hospital, Bristol, where he has held a substantive consultant post for the past seven years. He has served as Clinical Lead for Radiology, a role held for three years, and is Lead for INR across the Bristol NHS Group for the past five years.

Dr Anthony Cox has played a central role in the development and transformation of the regional mechanical thrombectomy (MT) service. Working alongside the Interventional Neuroradiology team, they have led the expansion of the service from approximately 50 thrombectomy procedures per year, delivered during standard weekday hours (9–5), to a comprehensive 24/7 service now performing around 450 procedures annually—making it one of the largest thrombectomy services in the UK.

His academic and educational contributions include authorship of numerous peer-reviewed publications and several book chapters. They are a regular invited speaker at national and international meetings and have lectured extensively across Europe.

Dr Anthony Cox is a Clinical Expert Advisor to NICE, has been on the NHSE National Thrombectomy visits as an advisor to the national medical director Prof Powis and has a strong interest in service innovation and data quality. Anthony has developed specialist software to support accurate clinical coding in mechanical thrombectomy, improving HRG reimbursement processes and enabling robust data submission to the national SSNAP database.

His professional interests include service development, health informatics, and improving access to advanced stroke interventions.



Niki Turner

National Allied Health Professional Lead for Stroke in Wales
Stroke Implementation Network, NHS Wales Executive

Niki is a physiotherapist with an interest in neurological rehabilitation, specialising in stroke for most of her career and a passionate advocate for high standards of stroke rehabilitation and life after stroke care. She studied for a Master's degree in Neurorehabilitation at Cardiff University, completing an Advanced Clinical Practice placement at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery in London as part of this. Niki has particular interests in hyperacute stroke management including thrombolysis, thrombectomy and early rehabilitation after stroke. She has published her work on physiotherapists' experiences of early mobilisation after thrombolysis practice and the development of a HASU-ready nursing workforce on the acute stroke unit. Niki was appointed in October 2021 as the first National AHP Lead for Stroke in Wales. Alongside this role she is now the Service Manager for Stroke at Cardiff and Vale University Health Board.



Dr Shakeel Ahmad MB ChB FRCP (Lon)

National Clinical Lead in Stroke Medicine
Consultant in Stroke Medicine
University Hospital of Wales

Shakeel Ahmad was appointed as a stroke consultant in 2009. He has been the clinical lead for stroke in Cardiff & Vale University Health Board until he was appointed as National Clinical Lead in Stroke Medicine for Wales. He has completed 1 year IHI Improvement Advisory fellowship at Boston, USA and has led on a number of successful QI projects. He led and collaborated on the 'Stop A Stroke Project' with Primary Care Quality & Public Health Wales to develop a tool to identify high risk stroke patients in AF that require intervention in line

with up to date NICE guidance. This project was supported by Welsh Government and has been implemented across Wales. He received the professional excellence award from the Stroke Association in 2019. His other current roles are, the Regional Specialty Advisor for Stroke, member of the Stroke Specialist Advisory Committee – RCP London, Training Programme Director for Stroke in Wales and Chair of All Wales Thrombectomy Network Group. In his last post he was Associate Medical Director for Neurosciences & Complex Disease – Welsh Health Specialised Services (WHSSC), that has commissioned mechanical thrombectomy service for Wales. He has led the roll out and implementation of AI for stroke imaging across Wales and led on a pilot to test the Pre-Hospital Video Triage (PVT).

Second morning session



Dr Sally Davenport

Programme Lead for the Neurophysiotherapy MSc programmes
University College London

Sally Davenport is the Programme Lead for the MSc in Neurophysiotherapy at UCL. She has a wealth of experience as a senior clinician working in various fields of neurophysiotherapy. For many years, she has led neurophysiotherapy programmes, mentoring and teaching at both undergraduate and postgraduate education levels. Her research involves exploring patient and carer learning and the importance of the sense making that people post stroke do of their rehabilitation.



Professor Martin James

Consultant Stroke Physician, Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital
and Honorary Clinical Professor, University of Exeter Medical
School

Martin James is Consultant Stroke Physician at the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital, Exeter, and Honorary Clinical Professor at the University of Exeter Medical School. He trained in Southampton, and he completed his research in hypertension in the elderly in Leicester. His ongoing research interests include improving methods for the prevention of first and recurrent stroke, and operational research in hyperacute stroke care, particularly around supporting the wider use and implementation of stroke reperfusion treatments using insights from big data and machine learning/AI. He is joint editor of the UK

National Clinical Guideline for Stroke 2023, and has just completed his term of office as Clinical Director of the Stroke Programme, which runs the national stroke audit 'SSNAP'. He has previously served terms as both President and Honorary Secretary of the British (now British and Irish) Association of Stroke Physicians, and as a trustee of the main stroke support organisation in the UK, the Stroke Association.

Parallel Session 1: Cognition



Dr Mohammad Zia Ul Haq Katshu

Associate Professor of Psychiatry

Institution: Institute of Mental Health, University of Nottingham

Dr Katshu is a Clinical Associate Professor and Joint Director at the Centre for Translational Neuroscience in Mental Health at the Institute of Mental Health, University of Nottingham. He is an Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist in Early Intervention and Chronic Psychosis with a special interest in Neuropsychiatry at the Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. His work focusses on understanding the biological underpinnings of neuropsychiatric disorders, specifically psychosis, with the aim to develop individualised treatments, including next generation neuromodulation. His work is supported by British Medical Association, Wellcome Trust, MRC, and NIHR.



Dr Alexandre Carter

Associate Professor in the Stroke Section in the Department of Neurology and the Division of Neurorehabilitation in the Department of Orthopedic Surgery
Washington University in Saint Louis, Missouri

Dr. Carter is an Associate Professor in the Stroke Section in the Department of Neurology and the Division of Neurorehabilitation in the Department of Orthopedic Surgery at Washington University in Saint Louis, Missouri. Dr. Carter obtained his Ph.D. working on the cellular mechanisms of brain plasticity at Harvard University and his M.D. at Harvard Medical School and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology before moving to Washington University. His work is now centered on understanding how brain injury disrupts brain networks and how different treatments can restore those networks to promote

better recovery. Dr Carter has expertise in neuroimaging to study brain network connectivity, in neuromodulation using transcranial magnetic stimulation, vagus nerve stimulation, and brain-computer interfaces, and in pharmacological optimization of brain plasticity after injury. Dr. Carter also studies the mechanisms of various behavioral treatments to promote recovery after stroke such as prism adaptation therapy for hemispatial neglect. As a physician-scientist committed to rehabilitation, he works closely with therapists to implement the delivery of evidence-based therapies. As a board certified neurologist, Dr. Carter sees patients from the first moments of their injury and follows them for years, helping to guide them along the long road to recovery.



Lisa Tabor Connor, PhD OTR/L
Professor of Occupational Therapy and Neurology
Washington University School of Medicine

Lisa Tabor Connor, PhD, MSOT, OTR/L is the Elias Michael Professor and Associate Dean for Occupational Therapy and Professor of Neurology at Washington University School of Medicine. Professor Connor's laboratory focuses on the biopsychosocial determinants of recovery from stroke and the ability of people to reintegrate into their communities. This work aims to understand the barriers and facilitators to participation in everyday life activities after stroke to guide and optimize the delivery of rehabilitation interventions. The overarching goal of this work is to create evidence-based, targeted interventions to enable people post-stroke to participate more fully in community life. Dr. Connor has co-authored more than 100 peer-reviewed publications and more than 15 invited papers and chapters.

Professor Connor enjoys tackling “big, thorny problems” through a multidisciplinary team science approach. Her work with large scientific teams has yielded new knowledge to support people with neurological conditions that affect participation in their meaningful occupations. She currently collaborates with a team of scientists and clinicians in North Wales to better understand longitudinal stroke recovery from acute event to community living, researchers

investigating functional outcomes of subarachnoid haemorrhage surgeries, and occupational therapy scientists and computer scientists developing a machine-learning-based cognitive support system.



Dr Lauren Hepworth

Senior Lecturer, University of Liverpool, and Consultant Orthoptist, Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust

Dr Lauren Hepworth is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Liverpool, and a Consultant Orthoptist at the Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust. She leads and is involved with numerous studies involving visual impairment following stroke. She is chair elect for the UK Stroke Forum, member of the Secretary of State for Transport's Honorary Medical Advisory Panel on driving and visual disorders and member of the European Stroke Organisation Nursing and Allied Health Professions committee.

Parallel Session 2: Recovery



Dr Ken Valyear

Senior Lecturer in Cognitive Neuroscience
Bangor University

Dr Ken Valyear is a Senior Lecturer in Cognitive Neuroscience at Bangor University, where he leads the Hand and Brain Lab. His research sits at the intersection of cognitive and clinical neuroscience, focused on brain plasticity and sensorimotor function. His research programme comprises two main pathways—nerve injury and stroke—linked through a common focus on the neuroscience of upper-limb function and shared goal of improving rehabilitation for people with sensory and movement impairments.

Originally from Canada, Dr Valyear completed his PhD in Neuroscience at Western University, where he was awarded an NSERC Canada Graduate Scholarship and the Governor General’s Gold Medal. He subsequently undertook postdoctoral training in rehabilitation neuroscience at the University of Missouri, supported by an NSERC Postdoctoral Fellowship, before establishing his research group at Bangor University in 2015.

Dr Valyear’s research brings together tools from neuroscience, experimental psychology, rehabilitation science, biomedical engineering, and computer science—including brain imaging, brain stimulation, motion capture, immersive technologies, and wearable technologies.



Sarah Giannini

Specialist Speech and Language Therapist in acute stroke and rehabilitation

Swansea Bay University Health Board

Sarah Giannini is a Specialist Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) in acute stroke and rehabilitation at Swansea Bay University Health Board (SBUHB).

Sarah trained at the University of St Mark and St John, Plymouth, and has 7 years' worth of experience working across a variety of settings, including inpatient and outpatient services. She has worked across multiple health boards in Wales, and she has also worked internationally in Australia. Her caseloads have included a wide range of acquired and progressive neurological conditions, as well as patients with Voice disorders, Head and Neck Cancer, General Medical conditions, and those requiring Critical Care support.

Sarah has a particular interest in acute stroke rehabilitation and the use of innovative treatments such as pharyngeal electrical stimulation (Phagenyx) to support dysphagia recovery. She is committed to maintaining up-to-date, evidence-based practice to ensure the best possible outcomes for her patients, improving their quality of life.

The SALT team at SBUHB are proud to be the first in Wales to implement Phagenyx, marking an important step forward in evidence-based dysphagia rehabilitation. She is excited to contribute to the Stroke Welsh Conference to share insights and discuss the potential of Phagenyx in enhancing stroke rehabilitation pathways.



Ella Phillips

Highly Specialist Speech and Language Therapist (SALT)
and Stroke Rehabilitation Lead

Organisation

Swansea Bay University Health Board

Ella Phillips is a Highly Specialist Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) and Stroke Rehabilitation Lead at Swansea Bay University Health Board (SBUHB).

She has worked across multiple health boards in Wales, gaining experience with a wide range of client groups, including head and neck cancer and acquired and progressive neurological conditions such as Parkinson's disease and motor neurone disease. However, her passion for supporting stroke survivors and their families throughout their rehabilitation journeys has led her to specialise in stroke care.

Ella is trained in Fiberoptic Endoscopic Evaluation of Swallowing (FEES) and Videofluoroscopy (VF), both of which are used within Phagenyx treatment to measure clinical change.

She is passionate about stroke recovery and the use of evidence-based practice, and is presenting today to share her experience of using Phagenyx for stroke-related dysphagia rehabilitation within SBUHB.



Dr Alakendu Sekhar

Consultant Neurologist & stroke physician and the
Thrombectomy MDT Chair
The Walton Centre NHS Foundation Trust

Dr Alakendu Sekhar is a consultant Neurologist & stroke physician and the Thrombectomy MDT Chair at The Walton Centre, where he leads multidisciplinary decision making for complex thrombectomy cases and advances best practice in hyperacute stroke pathways.

He also serves as a clinical negligence stroke expert witness empanelled with Re:Cognition Health UK based in Harley Street district of London, where he undertakes medico-legal consultation with focussed interest in clinical negligence in stroke & brain injury litigation.

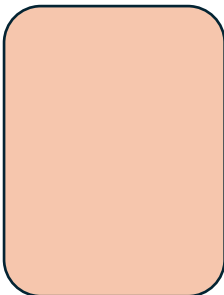
His medicolegal work includes preparing expert reports and giving evidence in court in complex stroke litigation, contributing to the clarification of clinical expectations and legal accountability in UK stroke medicine.

Dr Sekhar's clinical and educational focus centres on safe, timely, guideline aligned stroke care, with particular interest in system performance, documentation standards, and defensibility. Through his combined clinical and medicolegal roles, he supports service improvement and promotes high quality, accountable stroke practice.



Dr Andrea Lowman
Consultant Neurologist
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

Dr Andrea Lowman is a Consultant Neurologist in the Llandough Centre for Specialist Spinal and Neurological Rehabilitation, within The Neurological Rehabilitation service, which is a regional service for those with Acquired brain injury including PDOC. Her practice also includes outpatient services for complex neuro-disability including those with MS, MND and a spasticity service.



Georgina Jones
AHP Lead for Prolonged Disorders of Consciousness (PDOC)
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

Georgina Jones is an experienced Occupational therapist who also works within the Neurorehab service, and is the AHP lead for the PDOC service, which include acute in-reach, assessment within the NRU, and community outreach post discharge. Georgina coordinates the service, as well as taking the lead in service development, teaching and training for the Team.