

# HENRY COHEN HISTORY OF MEDICINE LECTURE 2025

## Can History Help Solve the Mental Health Crisis? Five Insights from the Past

Professor Matt Smith,  
University of Strathclyde

Thursday 22 May  
17:30 – 19:30  
Liverpool Medical Institution



Rates of mental illness are rising, waiting lists are lengthy and recent BBC programmes have revealed scandalous conditions and abuse at psychiatric facilities. Apart from demanding more funds to support an ineffective mental health system, few solutions have been suggested.

History provides examples of preventive approaches to mental health, ranging from the role of diet and nature in preserving good mental health to acknowledging the detrimental effect of socioeconomic problems. Past societies also accepted many different ways of being 'normal'. Most solutions, past and present, have required investment. So the question is, what are we willing to pay?

Matthew Smith is Professor of Health History at the University of Strathclyde's Centre for the Social History of Health and Healthcare, where he is also one of the University's co-leads for the Health and Wellbeing strategic theme.



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