MQ Data Science Group – Terms of Reference

Written in August 2016 – To be reviewed in January 2018

Background

MQ Transforming mental health was set up to raise money in order to fund research that will transform our understanding of the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental illness. This translational and goal-driven approach differentiates MQ from many other funders in the field.

MQ has identified data science as an area of research focus as we believe it has real near-term potential to inform research and lead to improvements in care. The potential of large datasets is only just beginning to be realised and provides huge opportunity to link a breadth of biological research (genes, imaging, phenotypic) research, real world clinical data, data from wearable devices and potentially other administrative datasets, for example educational records.

The UK has some of the world's most complete healthcare, morbidity and administrative datasets. These resources cover most of the UK's population and are of high value for researchers studying the causes, consequences and management of mental disorder. However, these resources are largely unlinked and have not yet been optimised for use in mental health research.

Purpose of the group

MQ has convened UK experts in mental health data science and established the MQ data science group in 2015. Our goal is to harness the power of UK data resources for mental health research. We seek to accomplish this by working towards a higher investment in the area, facilitating the availability of mental health data and promoting data linkages and the application and development of appropriate analyses.

Specifically the group aims to

- Identify and address obstacles to use of datasets for mental health research purposes
- Promote research in this field within the academic and clinical communities, in policy, and towards the general public.
- Foster collaboration between investigators and across universities, regions and countries
- Build momentum, career direction and capacity

Membership

Membership of the group is open to UK-based researchers working the field of mental health data science. It explicitly seeks to have a representation across all academic and clinical disciplines relevant to the area. In addition, representation from relevant government departments and bodies, industry, as well as patient/public interest groups will be sought. We will also exceptionally solicit expertise from relevant overseas organisations and representatives. The group aims to be a productive working group. For this reason, the group size is restricted to 50.

Data science advisory group

The data science advisory group provides strategic advice to MQ and governance to the wider group. Members serve a 3-year term, which can be renewed for an additional two years.

The chair of the scientific advisory board is appointed by MQ. MQ staff considers the needs and balance of the advisory group, including in terms of discipline and, in consultation with the chair, invites new members to join the advisory group.

Ways of working

The group will share knowledge on current initiatives, latest findings and practical aspects of data science. The group will discuss which research questions in mental health data science have the greatest potential to generate positive impact, and how these can be addressed.

Meetings
The primary platform for exchange and discussion is a meeting of the data science group, which will be held bi-annually. The chair of the advisory group acts as the chair of the meeting.

The agenda is generated by MQ in consultation with the advisory group and will typically include project presentations, practical workshops and discussions on selected topics. Meeting outputs will be summary notes and agreements on next steps.

Collaborative projects
Where discussions identify a benefit of collaboration, the group may form a sub-group dedicated to work on a specific collaborative project. Projects can be of varied nature, such as producing a publication summarising group discussions, a collaborative funding application, or a research project.

Supporting a positive policy environment
The group will share expertise and provide advice on policy and governance aspects of data science, such as collection of routine data, consent issues, public and patient involvement, and safeguarding.

Role of MQ as Group Facilitator

MQ supports the administrative and leadership activity of the group provided resources are available. Meetings are scheduled for the participation of the majority of group members. MQ supports travel costs of invited attendees to the extent that resources are available. Financial or in kind support are greatly appreciated.

MQ will develop and implement a focused grant-making programme in this area. MQ coordinates with other funders in the field and will make every effort to share this information with the group. MQ will share information on other developments in the field as they become available to us.