

**DR NIKKI DE TARANTO    MBBCh LLM MRCPsych**  
**CONSULTANT FORENSIC PSYCHIATRIST**

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**Qualifications**

**MBBCh** (University of the Witwatersrand) 1986

**MRCPsych** (London) 1993

**LLM in Legal Aspects of Medical Practice**  
(University of Wales) 2000

Certificate of Completion of Specialist Training in  
Forensic Psychiatry 1997

Up to date with CPD requirements of Royal Collage of  
Psychiatrists and with Appraisal and GMC Revalidation

Approved as an Approved Clinician under the Mental  
Health Act 1983 by the London Region Panel under  
authority delegated by the Secretary of State for Health

**Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellow 2001**

**Member of the Expert Witness Institute**

**Registered as a data controller by the Information Commissioner's Office**

## **GENERAL PSYCHIATRY TRAINING 1990-1994**

Royal Free Hospital psychiatry training rotation, London.

## **FORENSIC PSYCHIATRY HIGHER TRAINING 1994-1998**

North East Thames Regional forensic psychiatry higher training rotation, London, and Honorary Senior Registrar post at Broadmoor maximum security hospital

## **CURRENT POST 1998 to present**

I am one of twenty Consultant Forensic Psychiatrists at the North London Forensic Service, which provides its inpatient services and has its base at the Camlet Lodge Regional Secure Unit, Enfield. The North London Forensic Service is a clinical National Health Service tertiary assessment and treatment facility as well as an academic and teaching unit. It provides all inpatient, outpatient, liaison and outreach forensic mental health services to a large area of north, central and east London (population over 3.5 million), as well as court diversion, prison inreach and national specialist offender services (such as the National Stalking Service and the Fixated Threat Assessment Centre).

My various roles and responsibilities at the North London Forensic Service over the more than twenty years I have been there have included:

- Chair of the referrals, bed management admissions and discharge panels for the whole service (for over twenty years).
- Care of inpatients of the service, as head of a multi-disciplinary team, in both medium secure and low secure parts of the service.
- Assessments of patients referred by diverse agencies including general psychiatric services, psychiatric intensive care services, the Probation Service, the police, the courts, Social Services, the Crown Prosecution Service and solicitors.
- Medical lead for Serious Untoward Incident (SUI investigation) and Safety Huddle panels for the forensic directorate.
- Supervision and teaching in the unit and allied services, supervision and appraisal of junior doctors.
- Participation in and organisation of academic activities, audit, management and Clinical Governance activities in the unit and the Trust.

## **DETAILS OF CLINICAL EXPERIENCE IN FORENSIC PSYCHIATRY**

- Inpatient assessment and treatment of a wide variety of mentally ill, personality disordered, substance dependent and learning disabled patients in medium secure and low secure accommodation.
- Assessments of inpatients and outpatients referred to forensic psychiatry services by other psychiatric units, bail and health care hostels, prisons, social and probation services, courts, solicitors and a number of other agencies.
- Liaison work and assessment of residents as visiting psychiatrist to Kelley House Bail Hostel for women, Camden, over a number of years.
- Regular participation in Psychiatric Court Diversion Schemes, as assessing psychiatrist in the custody area and providing reports and oral evidence to the court.
- Visiting Forensic Psychiatrist at Pentonville Prison over several years, seeing patients for assessment and treatment.
- Assessment and treatment of patients at Broadmoor Maximum Security Hospital including preparation of risk assessments, court reports and case conference reports, and individual psychotherapy.
- Outpatient supervision of restricted patients, outpatient treatment of a wide range of offenders including violent and sexual offenders.

## **TEACHING AND LECTURING EXPERIENCE**

- Giving formal lectures, seminars and clinical teaching sessions in clinical and academic settings, including teaching of junior doctors, medical students and trainees from other disciplines. This includes teaching junior doctors studying for membership of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, and Specialist Registrars in Forensic Psychiatry.
- Supervision, appraisal and teaching of junior doctors and medical students in my team.

## COURSES AND CONFERENCES ATTENDED

### More than five years ago

- **Forensic Section of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, Annual Conference**, Killarney, Ireland, 1995; where I presented a poster on Needs Assessments in Patients in Medium Security.
- **Quarterly meeting of the Society of Veterinary Pharmacology**, Royal Society of Medicine, London, 1996; where I presented a lecture on the Pharmacological Treatment of Violence: the Human Experience.
- **Forensic Section of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, Annual Conference**, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 1999.
- **Congress of the International Academy of Law and Mental Health**, Toronto, Canada, 1999; where I chaired a session on international humanitarian law.
- **Congress of the International Academy of Law and Mental Health**, Siena, Italy, 2000; where I presented a paper on Psychiatric aspects of International War Crimes Law.
- **International Conference of the Physicians Insurers Association of America**, Royal College of Medicine, London, 2000, on "Reforms to the Tort System"; where I presented a paper on tort reforms.
- **Annual Conference of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law**, Vancouver, Canada, 2000.
- Conference on **The Position of the Defence at the International Criminal Court**, organised by the International Criminal Defence Attorneys Association, The Hague, Netherlands, 2000.
- Conference on **Preparing for the International Criminal Court**, organised by an alliance of a number of non-governmental organisations, The Hague, Netherlands, 2001.
- **International Congress of the International Association of Forensic Mental Health Services**, Munich, Germany, June 2002, where I presented a paper on Fitness To Plead in International Law.
- **Montreal Conference on the Foundation of the International Criminal Bar**, Montreal, Canada, July 2002, where I presented the case for non-barristers to be admitted as associate members of the International Criminal Bar.
- **International Congress of the International Association of Forensic Mental Health Services**, Melbourne, Australia, April 2005, where I presented a paper on adulthood sequelae of childhood sexual abuse.

- **What Works for Women Offenders**, Prato, Italy, International Conference arranged by Monash University, June 2005.
- I was the senior organiser of the **XIIIth Annual North London Forensic Service International Conference** in September 2005, in Cambridge, UK, on the theme of **"Fear, Psychiatry and the State"**.
- **HCR-20 Risk Assessment Tool 3-day training course by Prof James Ogloff of Monash University**, held at North London Forensic Service, December 2005.
- I was the senior organiser of the **IXth Annual North London Forensic Service International Conference**, September 2006 in Cambridge, UK, on the theme of **"Taking Risks: Challenges and Rewards in the Forensic Rehabilitation Pathway"**.
- I was the senior organiser of the **Xth Annual North London Forensic Service International Conference**, September 2007 in Cambridge, UK, on the theme of **"Sex Matters: Sexuality, Sexual identity and Sex Offending"**.
- Three-day training course in **"A Model for Assessing and Treating Sexual Offending Risk"** run by the Northumbria Sexual Behaviour Unit, in London, November 2007.
- Conference on **"Mother, Madonna, Whore" 20 Years On: Developing the Work of Estela Welldon**, at the Tavistock Centre in London, May 2008.
- 4<sup>th</sup> **National Conference in Treating Schizophrenia**, Institute of Physics, London, April 2011.
- **"Expert Evidence in the Family Courts: A Relational Approach"**, two-day course at the Tavistock Clinic, London, February 2012.
- Two-day seminar on **Management of Challenging Behaviour**, Pears Centre, London, March 2012.
- Two-day **training in Applied Behaviour Analysis** by Sean Rhodes, Board Certified Behaviour Analyst, London, May 2012
- **Autism Today** conference, Manchester, October 2012.
- **Advanced Training in Risk Assessment (HCR-20 Version 4 And SAPROF)**, North London Forensic Service, February 2013.
- **Safeguarding Adults training and Updated Training to Level 3 in Child Protection**, Barnet Enfield and Haringey Mental Health Trust, March 2014.
- **Approved Clinician Refresher training**: Springwell Hospital, London, October 2014

- International conference on **“Psychopharmacology in Forensic Settings”**, Royal College of Physicians, London, October 2014.
- **“Implementing the new NICE Guidelines in Schizophrenia”**, Hallam conference centre, London, November 2014.
- **Training in Collaborative Risk Assessment** (implementing HCR-20 risk assessments in collaboration with service users): North London Forensic Service, November 2014.
- Seminar by Prof Paul Mullen of Monash University, on his group’s important paper on **“Psychopathology in a large cohort of sexually abused children followed up to 43 years”**, held at the North London Forensic Service in July 2015.
- Seminar by Prof Paul Mullen on **“Child Sexual Abuse: Abusers and Abused, from new data to clinical and criminal justice approaches to management”**, held at the North London Forensic Service in July 2015.
- Keynote speaker at international seminar in **Psychopathy and Forensic Services**, organised by University of Rijeka, at the forensic psychiatry department of the Rab Island psychiatric hospital in Croatia, in August 2015.
- Seminar by Prof Jeremy Coid on his research into **gangs and mental health, and gang-related sexual health issues**, held at the North London Forensic Service in November 2015
- Eight-week training course on **“Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction”** at the Tavistock Clinic, London, October-November 2015.
- Over twenty years of participation in weekly academic teaching programme (during term-time) at North London Forensic Service, which includes case presentations, journal club, academic teaching, and speakers on a wide variety of topics (ongoing to present day).

## COURSES AND CONFERENCES ATTENDED

### In the past five years

- Two lectures on **The History of the Expert Witness** by Prof Keith Rix, held at the North London Forensic Service in February 2016 and March 2017.
- Seminars on **The Lone Actor Terrorist** by Dr Paul Gill, held at the North London Forensic Service in May 2016 and March 2017.
- Training on use of **The Oxford Risk of Recidivism Tool**, by Prof Seena Fazel, held at the North London Forensic Service in May 2016.
- Two-day **Premex Plus Annual Clinical Negligence Seminar**, London, June 2016.
- Organiser and speaker at international workshop on **Dealing with Serious Untoward Incidents in a Psychiatric Service**, at the forensic psychiatry department of the Rab Island psychiatric hospital in Croatia, in August 2016.
- **Annual conference of the Expert Witness Institute: “The role of experts; domestic and global”**, London, September 2016.
- Lecture on **Legal Highs**, held at the North London Forensic Service in November 2016.
- Lecture on the **Jimmy Savile Investigations** by Ray Galloway, former police officer who directed the independent investigation into the activities of Jimmy Savile in Leeds, held at the North London Forensic Service in November 2016.
- Two-day workshop on **Medico-legal Report Writing and Courtroom Skills training** by Bond Solon, London, October 2017.
- Two-day masterclass on **Root Cause Analysis**, Healthcare-UK, London, April 2018.
- Lecture and screening of his documentary **“NCR: Not Criminally Responsible”** by John Kastner, Emmy award winning Canadian filmmaker and campaigner, at North London Forensic Service in October 2018.
- Lecture on **“Memory and Miscarriages of Justice”** by Prof Martin Conway of University of London, held at the North London Forensic Service in November 2018.
- Training seminars on **“Spice”** (novel psychoactive substances), held at the North London Forensic Service in September and November 2018.
- Conference on **“Sexual Abuse and Mental Health”** organised by Healthcare Conferences UK in conjunction with NHS England and the NSPCC, London, November 2018.

- Seminar on **Cycle of Sexual Offending**, North London Forensic Service, May 2019.
- Organiser and speaker at international workshop on **Novel Psychoactive Substance Use in Forensic Services**, at the forensic psychiatry department of the Rab Island psychiatric hospital in Croatia, in August 2019.
- Workshop on **Childhood Sexual Abuse** by The Lucy Faithfull Foundation, November 2019.
- **Approved Clinician Training** (under Section 12 of the Mental Health Act), and **Mental Capacity Act training**, November 2019.
- Seminar on **Principles of Treatment in High Security**, held at North London Forensic Service January 2020.
- Workshop on **Serious Incident reviews: Learning the Lessons**, held at North London Forensic Service, May 2020.
- Lecture on **New Directions in Radicalisation** by Bettina Rottweiler (UCL), May 2020
- Lecture on “**Tarpaper: a mass shooting in a small New Hampshire town**”, by Shannon Fairchild, July 2020
- Full-day **Courtroom Skills Course** by QCs Jonathan Dingle and Andrea Barnes, July 2020.
- Seminar on **Joint Expert Discussions**, Association of Personal Injuries Lawyers, July 2020
- **Clinical Negligence Update** conference organised by The Legal Training Consultancy including training from Patricia Hitchcock QC, Simon Fox QC and Richard Booth QC), September 2020.
- **Advanced Medico-legal Report Writing** training, from Jonathan Dingle QC and Andrea Barnes QC (Normanton Chambers), September 2020
- Two-day **Expert Determination** training from The Academy of Experts, October 2020.
- **Annual Bond Solon Expert Witness Conference**, November 2020
- International five-day **conference on “Innovation@Work”**, run by The Economist Magazine, exploring the subject of the new world of remote working in business and professional services, February 2021.
- Conference on **Investigation and Learning from Deaths in NHS Trusts**, Healthcare Conferences UK, February 2021.



## POSTGRADUATE QUALIFICATIONS

I have been a **Member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists** since passing the qualifying examination at first attempt in 1993.

I achieved the **LL.M. in Legal Aspects of Medical Practice** at the Faculty of Law, University of Wales, Cardiff in 2000. My dissertation was on **Psychiatric Aspects of International War Crimes Law**.

I was awarded a **Winston Churchill Memorial Travelling Fellowship** in 2001 and travelled on sabbatical for two months in 2002 to South Africa to study the use of psychiatric expert evidence at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

## **MEDICO-LEGAL EXPERIENCE**

Over the past twenty-five years I have prepared reports, advised probation officers, courts, solicitors and counsel and given written and oral evidence in thousands of cases in many different courts including Magistrate's Courts, Family Courts, Crown Courts, civil courts, County Court, the Appeal Court, Coroner's Court and the Jersey Court, as well as Mental Health Review Tribunals, fitness to practice hearings and employment tribunals. Types of cases in which I have prepared reports or given evidence include:

- Wide variety of criminal offences.
- Decisions about the imposition of restriction orders.
- Parenting, child protection and custody issues.
- Fitness to plead and insanity, issues related to intent.
- Drug-related offences.
- Coroner's inquests.
- Voir dire and evidence admissibility issues.
- GMC and RCVS fitness to practice cases.
- Employment cases.
- Immigration/deportation cases including Human Rights issues
- Capacity assessments.
- Personal injury cases including those involving compensation for psychiatric disability following physical or sexual abuse or assault.
- Cases involving compensation for psychiatric disability following medical or clinical negligence.
- "Nervous shock" (secondary victim) cases

Diagnoses and problems of the patients in these cases have included:

- Schizophrenia and the other major mental illnesses, including affective disorders.
- Personality disorders.
- Substance misuse and dependence.
- Autistic spectrum disorders.
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder.
- Anxiety disorders
- Temporal lobe and other forms of epilepsy, and other organic brain conditions..
- Mental retardation, organic brain syndromes, head injuries.
- Sexual perversions including paedophilia, sadism and bestiality.
- Sexual dysfunction.
- Disorders of impulse control.
- Psychosomatic and somatisation conditions.
- Dissociative disorders, Munchausen syndrome and malingering.
- Adjustment and acute stress disorders.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder, including complex PTSD and delayed-onset PTSD.

## **SPECIFIC AREAS OF EXPERTISE**

### **CLINICAL NEGLIGENCE**

I have carried out hundreds of assessments in clinical and professional negligence cases, against individual clinicians, NHS Trusts, and private care providers, including complex clinical and multi-track high-value negligence cases.

These are both cases where there is a claim for psychiatric injury as the result of allegedly negligent treatment of a physical health condition, and also cases where negligent treatment by mental health care providers has been alleged or admitted (including suicide and homicide cases).

I am instructed both by Claimant solicitors and by solicitors acting for NHS Resolution, in about equal measure.

### **ABUSE/ASSAULT COMPENSATION CASES**

I have carried out hundreds of assessments in cases of claims related to compensation for physical, emotional, sexual or racial abuse, physical or sexual assault, or neglect (which may have occurred either in childhood or in adulthood), with the legal actions being against both individuals and organisations. The defendants have included football clubs, the Scout Association, churches and religious bodies, private schools, Local Authorities, the fire brigade, the military, sports training bodies, leisure centres, hospitality venues, private clinics and other commercial organisations. I do over fifty such assessments per year at present. I have given oral evidence in court on a number of these cases.

I am one of the panel of psychiatric experts providing jointly instructed psychiatric assessments in compensation claims to the Redress Schemes for Lambeth Council and for Manchester City Football Club.

### **CAPACITY ASSESSMENTS**

I am up to date with training under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and carry out many assessments a year under this Act, including regarding capacity to consent to treatment, to conduct litigation and/or to manage any compensation payments which may result.

## NOTE ON FORMAT OF ASSESSMENTS

I have always offered some appointments remotely, in cases where the client has been unable to travel because of mental or physical health problems, or distance.

At the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic I moved to offering remote assessments only, and this is still the case at the time of writing this CV. I offer appointments by Skype, FaceTime, Zoom, or Microsoft Teams, whatever the preference of the client. **Please see the appendix** to this CV, which is a brief explanation of how it works and of the positive features I have experienced in relation to remote assessments of patients in post-traumatic cases.

*Nikki de Taranto February 2021*

## APPENDIX

### Positive aspects of conducting psychiatric assessments in medico-legal post-traumatic cases remotely

*Published as a paper in The Psychiatric Eye (London newsletter of the London Division of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, Autumn 2020 edition)*

At the start of Covid-19 lockdown in the UK I moved my medico-legal practice entirely online, using Skype, FaceTime or Zoom. I conduct the interviews from my locked study at home, using a headset so the client's voice is not broadcast over speakers. Prior to the interview I ask the solicitor to explain this to the client to reassure them.

I had a fairly neutral attitude to this change initially, although I realised early on that the lack of travel had immediate benefits. I was saving hours of time, was never late for a meeting, and was always in a calm and focused mental state, not having had to negotiate roads or trains, look for parking or worry about finding the venue. The case was completely fresh in my mind as I had directly before the start of the interview been reading the paperwork in the comfort of my own study.

As time went on, I started hearing from clients directly how they too were finding this way of working positive. The most common starts to interviews in the pre-Covid era were the client saying "doctor, I very nearly didn't come", or "I was so scared about coming". What I now started to hear was "I was so relieved when my solicitor told me I could do the meeting by Skype".

The experience of working in this way has continued to a positive one for both me and the clients. From a financial and environmental point of view the benefits are obvious, as they have been to everyone in the world now adjusting to increased remote working.

I have however, with the aid of feedback from the clients, found that there are for many of them individual psychological and mental well-being benefits:

- (a) They feel that they were less anxious in the run up to the remote meeting than they would have been before a face-to-face meeting.
- (b) None of the stress of travel, finding the venue or worrying about being late.
- (c) No sitting in a waiting room in an anxious state, and I am never late as there is no chance of any travel problems.
- (d) They are in the comfort of their own space (for example, one lady was in bed, hugging a pillow).
- (e) They can have unlimited refreshments with them or go to fetch them at any time.
- (f) They can smoke during the interview. This has been an unexpected one. I have had several clients smoke through the interview to manage their stress

level. Clients could always, in face-to-face interviews, ask for a cigarette break, but that is not the same as being able to smoke at leisure.

- (g) They can ask for a short break, or to resume later in the day, which would not be possible when working in the old way, with a booked consulting room and travel involved. Of course clients have always had the opportunity to discontinue a meeting if they cannot cope, but this would then mean their having to come back, with all the stress of travel etc, perhaps weeks later. Now the meeting can easily be broken into as many parts as the client requires (and a number have requested this).
- (h) If an interview runs over time and I have another commitment directly afterwards, I no longer have the difficult choice between letting the next commitment (which may well be another anxious client) wait, or requiring the current client to travel to come back again another time.
- (i) The nature of these interviews means that clients frequently become distressed, and this cannot always be avoided where you are addressing post-traumatic issues. Of course I would always try to ensure that the client is reassured, and to allow them time to compose themselves, but this is not always completely possible in face-to-face interviews, where the next client may be waiting outside, or the room may be booked for someone else. This means that sometimes a client who is visibly upset or crying has had to walk through a waiting room and then drive, or travel on public transport, to get to the solace of their own home. All of this is avoided now.