

DEEP-DIVE TALKS



Explore the unheard stories of medicine

THACKRAY INSIGHTS
2025/2026



THACKRAY
MUSEUM OF
MEDICINE

DEEP-DIVE TALKS

Insights 2025 /2026

Can you smell, touch and taste cancer?
Can medicine treat the soul? Which song
makes you feel like a teenager again?
This season of Thackray Insights invites
you to delve deep into eye-opening topics
and groundbreaking discoveries with
leading academics.

Our deep-dive talks take place on select
Saturday mornings from 10.30am–1pm
throughout our autumn/winter season.
Take a seat, enjoy two 45 minute talks
and grab a complimentary drink during
the interval.



BOOK YOUR TICKETS

£14.95 PER EVENT

ARE YOU A STUDENT?

thackraymuseum.co.uk/insights

Book 3 or more events for 20% off your total booking.

We offer a select number of free tickets to every
Insights event for those studying A-level or above –
email groups@thackraymuseum.org to find out more.



Guts and glory

SAT 11 OCT 2025
10.30AM

DR JANE FREEMAN
DR PIERS MITCHELL

Our guts are home to a complex and fascinating community of millions of microbes known as the gut microbiome. They exist in a delicate balance, helping us digest food, produce vitamins, keep our immune systems working well and importantly, protecting us from disease-causing microbes called pathogens. Dr Jane Freeman will describe how an artificial model of the gut microbiome – filled with poo – is teaching us new ways of protecting this vital and misunderstood part of the body.

What happens when you manure a vegetable patch with human faeces? Studies by the Ancient Parasites Laboratory at University of Cambridge found that Medieval monks were ‘riddled with worms’ and parasitic infection. In this talk, the leader of that group Dr Piers Mitchell explores the impact of intestinal parasites on ancient civilizations in Britain and across the world.

Dr Jane Freeman, FRCPath is an Associate Professor in Clinical Microbiology at the University of Leeds and Clinical Scientist in microbiology at Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust.

Dr Piers Mitchell leads the Ancient Parasites Laboratory. He has published more than 200 scientific articles and six books as well as filming for over 20 TV documentaries about disease in past populations.



The living dead

SAT 8 NOV 2025
10.30AM

DR AOIFE SUTTON-
BUTLER
PROF LAURA KING

The cemetery worker exists in a transitional space — overseeing the dead to their final resting place. It's a life that confronts the reality of death in unexpected ways. Join Dr Aoife Sutton-Butler as she digs up the dirt on what it's really like to work the graveyard shift and how we can preserve our relationship with the departed.

Death is inevitable and yet for human beings there remains something deeply unsettling about that truth. Can we live forever? Through personal experiences and intimate stories, Professor Laura King uncovers how the dead stay alive through their loved ones and remain an active part of family life over many generations.

Dr Aoife Sutton-Butler is a cemetery registrar with a PhD from University of Bradford's School of Archaeological and Forensic Sciences. She is the author of the Lady Graveyard Keeper Substack and was awarded the Royal Institution Freer Prize Fellowship in the history of science and heritage conservation.

Professor Laura King is a historian of families and emotional relationships in modern Britain. She is Professor of Collaborative History at the University of Leeds, as well as a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society a member of the Women's History Network.



Factories and fevers

SAT 10 JAN 2026
10.30AM

DR EMMA STORR
DR DAVID SAUNDERS

In Victorian Leeds over 40,000 children under the age of nine were buried in Leeds Cemetery. Working class children as young as five were working long hours in dangerous factories and living in cheap housing, riddled with poor sanitation and infectious diseases. In a time when life was cheap, Dr Emma Storr explores the main protagonists – from doctors to politicians – fighting for better working and living conditions for the poor.

Does public health have the power to end homelessness? From wartime Britain to Covid-19 – where more than 37,000 people were provided immediate and unconditional access to emergency housing – Dr David Saunders examines how infectious disease has shaped society's understanding and responses to homelessness.

Dr Emma Storr is a retired GP and clinical lecturer. She ran a special study module on the 'The ill child in history' for medical students at University of Leeds. She is also a writer and author of two poetry collections and a pamphlet.

Dr David Saunders is a former medical historian and support worker. He earned his PhD at Queen Mary University of London in 2020, with a thesis investigating the experiences of civilian volunteers for medical experimentation in wartime Britain.



The sick sense

SAT 7 FEB 2026
10.30AM

DR CLAIRE TURNER
DR VICTORIA BATES

Can you smell cancer? What does it taste like? What does it feel like? Travel back 300 years to learn how surgeons and physicians used the five senses to understand experiences of cancer. In a time when it was largely incurable, terminal cases were often recognised by patients' large, foul-smelling ulcers. Dr Claire Turner explores how these accounts of 'foetid tumours', and 'rotten bodies' can teach us about the disease's relationship with our sense of self.

The colour of hospitals impact both patients and staff, affecting mood and wellbeing, as well as recovery and rehabilitation. With the growing influence of germ theory, white walls became the standard for hospital design. Walls were no longer designed to hide dirt but to show dirt – or rather the absence thereof. However, we now associate these colours with the bleak and mundane. Dr Victoria Bates looks at the ways colour can help us understand our relationship with modern hospitals for the better.

Dr Claire Turner is a historian of medicine and the senses. She is a Bridging Fellow in Medical Humanities at Durham University.

Dr Victoria Bates is an Associate Professor in Modern Medical History at the University of Bristol. She is the author of 'Feeling Blue' – the first book-length history of colour in modern hospitals.

Religion and medicine

SAT 7 MAR 2026
10.30AM

DR SOPHIE MANN
PROF GHAZALA MIR

Should medicine treat the mind, body and soul? In the early modern period, there was a belief in that a human being was made of a physical body and an immortal soul, and to heal an ill body required care of both. Join Dr Sophie Mann as she explores the body and the being, and how religion was a fundamental part of curing the sick.

Professor Mir's research explores the challenges that people from minority ethnic and faith backgrounds, women, and disabled people face in healthcare. Do health services understand the needs of these groups? This talk lays bare the inequalities faced by Muslim communities in healthcare, asking how society and policymakers can work towards a more inclusive practice.

Dr Sophie Mann is an Assistant Professor in the History of Medicine at the University of Warwick. She completed her PhD 'Religion, Medicine and Confessional Identity in Early Modern England' at King's College London.

Professor Ghazala Mir is a Professor of Health Equity and Inclusion at the University of Leeds. She is the founder and Chair of the Inequalities Research Network and Research Lead at the Nuffield Centre for Health and International Development.





The science of song

SAT 11 APR 2026
10.30AM

DR ROSEMARY GOLDING
PROF CATHERINE
LOVEDAY

From asylum bands to chapel choirs, smoking concerts to orchestras, there was a rich and misunderstood musical tradition in 19th century asylums. Music was a source of entertainment and occupation, and a means of solace, self-control and for contact with the outside world. Dr Rosemary Golding's talk explores the place of music in the dangerous and overcrowded world of Victorian Asylums.

Why are we often drawn back to the music we heard as teenagers? The nostalgia from hearing our favourite songs isn't just a recollection of old memories, but the result of a deeper and more complex neural response. Join Professor Catherine Loveday for a smash hit talk on the link between music, memory and the brain.

Dr Rosemary Golding is a senior lecturer in Music at the Open University. She is the author of 'Music and Moral Management in the Nineteenth-Century English Lunatic Asylum' and is co-editor of the journal 'Nineteenth Century Music Review'.

Professor Catherine Loveday is a principal lecturer on Cognitive Neuroscience and Cognitive Rehabilitation at the University of Westminster. She is author of 'The Secret World of the Brain' and has appeared as an expert psychologist on BBC Radio 4's 'All in the Mind'.

Behind the scenes: store tours

SAT 11 OCT 2025
SAT 13 DEC 2025
SUN 8 FEB 2026
SAT 25 APR 2026
SAT 13 JUN 2026
SAT 15 AUG 2026

11.30AM & 2.30PM

Where else could you uncover a hearing aid crafted from real human hair, a handwritten recipe book from the 1600s or a surgical kit from the Napoleonic Wars?

At any given time, only 4% of our collection is on display. With over 81,000 artefacts in our care, Thackray Museum holds one of the UK's most unique and intriguing collections.

Join our dedicated Collections team for a behind the scenes store tour, exploring rare objects, books, and archives seldom seen by the public.

This ticket includes free admission to the museum galleries on the day of your tour.

Due to the narrow layout of our stores, tours are limited to eight people so pre-booking is recommended.

The tour is wheelchair accessible, but please let us know in advance if you have access requirements so we can make additional preparations.

Recommended age: 12+

Enjoy priority booking for Thackray Insights

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Thackray Museum of Medicine is the UK's largest independent medical museum. We inspire people with the passion and purpose of medicine and healthcare of the past, present and future.

Insights forms a core element of our Talks and Lates programme designed to explore unusual topics and untold stories with the help of special guests, hands-on experiences, medical experiments, performances and more.

GETTING HERE

Onsite parking is available, pay and display charges apply – see our website for details.

You can get to us on the major bus routes from Leeds city centre. 16, 42, 49, 50 and 50A stop outside our gates.

ADDRESS

Thackray Museum of Medicine
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SOCIALS

   @thackraymuseum

WEBSITE

thackraymuseum.co.uk

Thackray Museum of Medicine is a registered charity (no. 1016169). Every ticket bought means we can continue to tell the stories of our health heroes, spark debate and inspire the next generation of big thinkers.



THACKRAY LATES

EVENING EVENTS AT THACKRAY MUSEUM OF MEDICINE

