SYMPOSIUM · 5 MAY 2026

Centre for Personalised Medicine
University of Oxford

Direct-to-Consumer Medical Testing:

Exploring Opportunities & Challenges

DATE

Tuesday 5 May 2026

09:30 — 18:30

VENUE

St Anne's College

Oxford, OX2 6HS

FORMAT

Day-long symposium

Open to the public

ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM

Direct-to-Consumer Medical Testing: Exploring Opportunities & Challenges

This event will delve into the opportunities and challenges of DTC testing across hormone health and fertility, gut and nutrition, and genetics, and its broader impact on patients and the NHS.

The day will feature presentations and panel discussions, examining how these technologies are influencing, and may continue to shape, patient pathways, clinical practices, and patient-clinician relationships within healthcare. The programme will also engage with the ethical, philosophical, and regulatory implications of DTC medical testing, asking critical questions about evidence, oversight, and responsibility in a rapidly changing health consumer market and its impacts on the NHS.

With contributions from thought leaders across medicine, ethics, philosophy, regulation, and industry, this event provides a timely platform for interdisciplinary dialogue on a topical issue in modern healthcare.

THIS EVENT WILL BE STRUCTURED AROUND THREE KEY THEMES

01 Developments in direct-to-consumer medical testing

02 Implications of direct-to-consumer medical testing for clinical practice and patient pathways

03 Ethical, philosophical, and regulatory considerations of direct-to-consumer medical testing

PROGRAMME

Agenda

Tuesday 5 May 2026 · St Anne's College, Oxford

COMMENCEMENT

9:30am	**Registration and coffee**
10:00am	**Welcome and introduction** Anneke Lucassen (Professor of Genomic Medicine, Clinical Ethics, Law and Society, Nuffield Department of Medicine, University of Oxford; Clinical Geneticist, NHS Genomic Medicine Service; and Director, Centre for Personalised Medicine)

THEME 1

Developments in direct-to-consumer medical testing

Chaired by Sally Sansom (Doctoral Researcher in Health Economics, Health Economics Research Centre, Nuffield Department of Population Health, University of Oxford; and Research Fellow, Centre for Personalised Medicine)

10:15am	**Digital health and personalised medicine** John Powell (Professor of Digital Health, Medical Sociology & Health Experiences Research Group, Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford)
10:30am	**Social media and the rise of direct-to-consumer testing** Deborah Cohen (Author, Journalist, Editor, and Broadcaster; and Senior Visiting Fellow, London School of Economics and Political Science)
10:45am	**Direct-to-consumer hormone health and fertility testing — unlocking the data bottleneck in women's health** Helen O'Neill (CEO and Founder, Hertility Health; and Associate Professor in Reproductive and Molecular Genetics, University College London) Sugha Murugesu (Medical Advisor, Hertility Health; and Obstetrics and Gynaecology Resident, NHS)
11:00am	**Self-Request: Moving beyond direct-to-consumer genomics** Mark Bartlett (CEO, StoreGene)
11:15am	*Panel discussion* All four speakers moderated by the chair
12:30pm	**Lunch**

THEME 2

Implications of direct-to-consumer medical testing for clinical practice and patient pathways

Chaired by Francesca Dakin (Senior Researcher in Digital Health and Qualitative Researcher, Interdisciplinary Research in Health Sciences, Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford; and Research Fellow, Centre for Personalised Medicine)

1:30pm	**A general practice perspective on direct-to-consumer testing** Sharon Dixon (NIHR Doctoral Research Fellow, Medical Sociology & Health Experiences Research Group, Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford; and General Practitioner Partner, NHS)
1:45pm	**A reproductive medicine perspective on direct-to-consumer hormone health and fertility testing** Tim Child (Associate Professor of Reproductive Medicine, Nuffield Department Women's & Reproductive Health, University of Oxford; Board Member, Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA); Chair, HFEA Scientific and Clinical Advances Advisory Committee; and Chair of Trustees, The Fertility Alliance)
2:00pm	**A dietetics perspective on direct-to-consumer gut and nutrition testing** Dimitrios Koutoukidis (Associate Professor; NIHR Advanced Fellow; and NIHR Oxford BRC Senior Research Fellow, Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford)
2:15pm	**A clinical genetics perspective on direct-to-consumer genetic testing** Rachel Horton (Clinical Genetics Registrar, NHS Genomic Medicine Service; and Affiliate Member, Centre for Personalised Medicine)
2:30pm	*Panel discussion* All four speakers moderated by the chair

3:15pm **Break**

THEME 3

Ethical, philosophical, and regulatory considerations of direct-to-consumer medical testing

Chaired by Anneke Lucassen (Professor of Genomic Medicine, Clinical Ethics, Law and Society, Nuffield Department of Medicine, University of Oxford; Clinical Geneticist, NHS Genomic Medicine Service; and Director, Centre for Personalised Medicine)

3:30pm **Direct-to-Consumer testing and context: from numbers to ethical, clinical and regulatory narratives**
Anneke Lucassen (Professor of Genomic Medicine, Clinical Ethics, Law and Society, Nuffield Department of Medicine, University of Oxford; Clinical Geneticist, NHS Genomic Medicine Service; and Director, Centre for Personalised Medicine)

3:50pm **Ethical issues in direct-to-consumer medical testing**
Alberto Giubilini (Senior Research Fellow, Medical Humanities Programme, Uehiro Oxford Institute, University of Oxford)

4:10pm **Regulatory considerations for direct-to-consumer medical testing**
Anthony Harnden (Chair, Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency; and Professor of Primary Care, Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford)
Joseph Burt (Head of Diagnostics and General Medical Devices, Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency)

4:30pm *Panel discussion*
All four speakers moderated by the chair

CONCLUSION

5:15pm **Closing remarks**
Sally Sansom, Francesca Dakin, Anneke Lucassen

5:30pm **Drinks reception**

6:30pm **Dinner**
Speakers and CPM staff

MEET THE SPEAKERS

Speaker biographies and presentation descriptions

Meet the contributors shaping the day's conversation across digital health, clinical practice, ethics, and regulation.

THEME 1 Developments in direct-to-consumer medical testing

John Powell	Professor of Digital Health, University of Oxford
Deborah Cohen	Author, Journalist & Broadcaster; LSE Senior Visiting Fellow
Helen O'Neill	CEO & Founder, Hertility Health; Associate Professor, UCL
Sugha Murugesu	Medical Advisor, Hertility Health; Obstetrics & Gynaecology Resident, NHS
Mark Bartlett	CEO, StoreGene

THEME 2 Implications of direct-to-consumer medical testing for clinical practice and patient pathways

Sharon Dixon	NIHR Doctoral Research Fellow, University of Oxford; GP Partner, NHS
Tim Child	Associate Professor of Reproductive Medicine, University of Oxford
Dimitrios Koutoukidis	Associate Professor; NIHR Advanced Fellow, University of Oxford
Rachel Horton	Clinical Genetics Registrar, NHS Genomic Medicine Service

THEME 3 Ethical, philosophical, and regulatory considerations of direct-to-consumer medical testing

Anneke Lucassen	Director, Centre for Personalised Medicine; Professor of Genomic Medicine, University of Oxford
Alberto Giubilini	Senior Research Fellow, Uehiro Oxford Institute, University of Oxford
Anthony Harnden	Chair, MHRA; Professor of Primary Care, University of Oxford
Joseph Burt	Head of Diagnostics & General Medical Devices, MHRA

John Powell

Professor of Digital Health, Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford

BIOGRAPHY

Professor John Powell is a Professor of Digital Health Care at the University of Oxford, a Senior Research Fellow at Jesus College, and a consultant public health physician. He has been working in research and policy roles related to digital health care for more than 25 years.

PRESENTATION

John's talk will look at the intersection of the digital health landscape and direct to consumer testing. He will consider current trends and future directions, in particular new developments in wearables and AI.

Deborah Cohen

Author, Journalist, Editor and Broadcaster; Senior Visiting Fellow, London School of Economics and Political Science

BIOGRAPHY

Dr Deborah Cohen is an award winning medically qualified broadcaster, journalist and editor, who has worked across mainstream and academic print, digital, TV and radio. She is author of the book: "Bad Influence; How the internet hijacked our health" was published in January this year. Having established the investigations unit at The BMJ, one of the world-leading medical and health policy journals, she specialises in complex investigations combing rigorous data analysis with journalism. Dr Cohen was recently Science Editor of ITV News and UK and Health Correspondent for BBC Newsnight leading their Covid-19 coverage. With several major investigations for BBC Panorama, Channel 4 Dispatches, ITV Tonight and BBC's File on Four, Dr Cohen's work has contributed to major changes in health policy and medical practice. It and has led to questions being asked in parliaments around the world. Her work has also garnered international media coverage and has been the basis of Netflix documentaries and global investigations. In addition to her experience working at the interface of the mainstream media and academia, Dr Cohen has substantial experience helping experts develop and present their work in a digestible and accessible way.

PRESENTATION

Consumers are being sold a new version of "health" – one driven by the assumption that collecting more data is always a good thing in an expanding commercial market of tests and wearables. But what if we're being persuaded that we're unwell in order to be sold more? Deborah will explore how health is being marketed, how normality is being reframed as risk and how many consumer tests are gateways to further interventions.

Helen O’Neill

CEO and Founder, Hertility Health; Associate Professor in Reproductive and Molecular Genetics, University College London

BIOGRAPHY

Dr Helen O’Neill is a Tenured Associate Professor in Reproductive and Molecular Genetics in the Department of Maternal and Fetal Medicine at the Institute for Women’s Health, University College London (UCL), and Founder and CEO of Hertility Health, a pioneering women’s health platform redefining precision medicine for half the global population. She holds an honours degree in Genetics, an MSc in Prenatal Genetics and Fetal Medicine from UCL, and completed her PhD and postdoctoral research in stem cell and developmental genetics at the National Institute for Medical Research, London, focusing on ovarian development. Her work spans stem cell genetics, CRISPR-based genome editing, and early human development, with a focus on how reproductive biology shapes lifelong health, ageing, and disease risk. She lectures medical and postgraduate students, has authored over 50 peer-reviewed publications and academic book chapters, and presents internationally, including at the National Academy of Medicine, the Royal Society, and the Royal Society of Medicine. She is also a member of the RCOG Genomics Taskforce. Through Hertility, she has built one of the largest and most deeply phenotyped datasets in women’s health globally, delivering end-to-end gynaecology care from testing to treatment. She leads the development of GYN-AI™, an advanced clinical decision platform and foundational model for women’s health, enabling earlier diagnosis, predictive care, and population-level health optimisation. Hertility has been recognised by Forbes as one of ten companies with world-changing potential. A recognised global thought leader, she is a TEDx speaker, has been featured on BBC, BBC World News, Sky News and The Guardian, and was named among the Top Twenty Women in Data and Top 50 Women in European Tech by the Financial Times.

PRESENTATION

Women’s health has long been defined by delayed diagnoses, fragmented care pathways, and a critical lack of high-quality data. In this talk, Dr Helen O’Neill explores how artificial intelligence is fundamentally reshaping this landscape. By integrating multimodal diagnostic data, AI can uncover patterns invisible to traditional clinical approaches, dramatically shortening time to diagnosis and enabling earlier, more precise intervention. Moving beyond theory, this session will demonstrate how AI-driven diagnostic testing is overcoming systemic healthcare bottlenecks, reducing clinician burden, and scaling access to care. From accelerating detection of complex conditions to enabling personalised treatment pathways, AI is not just improving efficiency, it is redefining how women are diagnosed and treated. Ultimately, this shift is creating something far more powerful: a continuously learning data infrastructure that fuels the next generation of medicine in women’s health. The result is faster diagnoses, better outcomes, and a new paradigm of preventative, data-driven care at scale.

Sugha Murugesu

Medical Advisor, Hertility Health; Obstetrics and Gynaecology Resident, NHS

BIOGRAPHY

Dr Sugha Murugesu is an Obstetrics and Gynaecology resident doctor in North West London and recently completed a PhD at Imperial College London. Her doctoral research focused on machine learning and technology applications in early pregnancy care and miscarriage management, with broader interests in reproductive medicine, ultrasound, and digital health innovation. Alongside her NHS and academic work, she has worked clinically with Hertility Health for the past four years and has served as a Medical Advisor for the last year, supporting the clinical interpretation and development of direct-to-consumer hormone and fertility testing pathways.

PRESENTATION

Sugha will represent Hertility Health in the panel discussion.

Mark Bartlett

CEO and Co-Founder, StoreGene

BIOGRAPHY

Mark Bartlett is CEO and Co-Founder of StoreGene, where he is building the data infrastructure to make genomics affordable, accessible, and actionable at population scale. With more than 20 years' experience across genomics, the NHS, and digital health, he has focused on translating genomic science into usable, scalable health data that can support prevention, diagnosis, and treatment across the life course. He studied Human Genetics at UCL, worked in the NHS, and later helped scale digital health company DrDoctor, where he founded the Customer Success department. At StoreGene, he leads the development of a Clinical Genomic Operating System designed to move healthcare beyond one-off genetic tests towards reusable whole-genome data, partially delivered through a self-request model.

PRESENTATION

Direct-to-consumer (DTC) genetics continues to scale, with over 53 million DNA kits processed across the four largest consumer databases by March 2025. Yet most national genomics programmes cannot currently harness this participant-generated data within clinically governed pathways, which leads to duplicated costs and resources. This talk will explore how we move beyond DTC to Self-Request: a patient-initiated but clinically governed model that bridges consumer demand with responsible genomic medicine. It outlines how Self-Request can make genomics affordable, accessible, and clinically actionable without extra resources or compromising public safety.

Sharon Dixon

NIHR Doctoral Research Fellow, Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford; General Practitioner Partner, NHS

BIOGRAPHY

Dr Sharon Dixon is a GP partner and NIHR Doctoral Research Fellow, NDPHCS, Oxford. Her DPhil is developing knowledge and resources to improve care for teenagers experiencing period pain. Sharon's qualitative research includes exploring primary care perspectives on supporting care for communities affected by female genital mutilation, domestic violence, safeguarding, endometriosis, and women's health. She has undertaken research into experiences of uro-gynaecology, using foetal Doppler devices outside medical settings, and research equity. She conducted a priority-setting partnership project exploring areas where better technology could enable women's health. She is interested in experiences of delivering and receiving care in general practice.

PRESENTATION

In this session, Sharon will reflect on what the collective term 'direct to consumer tests (DTC)' might include and encompass – and on how, when (and why) these might be encountered in NHS general practice. Drawing on her experience as a GP, Sharon will use fictional vignettes to illustrate examples of this interface, and consider potential impacts for individuals and services. Sharon will explore the potential for DTC testing, for example in empowering individuals, supporting conversations with clinicians, and informing next steps and care pathways. Alongside this, she will draw out potential pitfalls and harms, including gaps in evidence and the potential for adverse impacts on health inequities. Throughout, Sharon will consider what evidence and resources might be needed (or could help) smooth this journey, to optimise potential and minimise risks.

Tim Child

Associate Professor of Reproductive Medicine, University of Oxford; Board Member, HFEA; Chair of Trustees, The Fertility Alliance

BIOGRAPHY

Tim Child is Associate Professor of Reproductive Medicine at the University of Oxford. He is a board member of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, where he chairs the Scientific and Clinical Advances Advisory Committee. His clinical and academic work focuses on fertility, IVF and reproductive healthcare, with particular interests in evidence-based practice, regulation and patient information. He is Chair of Trustees of The Fertility Alliance charity and also shares myth-busting, patient-focused fertility content on Instagram at @drtimchild.

PRESENTATION

As direct-to-consumer fertility testing rapidly expands, people can now access home sperm and hormone tests, book pelvic ultrasound scans at independent centres, and make major reproductive decisions without ever consulting a healthcare professional, let alone a fertility specialist. At the same time, Instagram and TikTok are crowded with self-appointed 'experts' offering advice and paid recommendations, often outside established clinical and regulatory frameworks, including that of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority. Tim's talk will explore the opportunities, risks and unanswered questions created by this fast-moving shift in reproductive healthcare, from a reproductive medicine perspective.

Dimitrios Koutoukidis

Associate Professor; NIHR Advanced Fellow; NIHR Oxford BRC Senior Research Fellow, Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford

BIOGRAPHY

Dimitrios is an academic dietitian and Associate Professor at the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences. His research focuses on intentional weight loss as a therapeutic and preventive strategy for diseases related to obesity, such as fatty liver disease and cancer.

PRESENTATION

Dimitrios' talk will explore how changes in the diet are associated with changes in the gut microbiota alongside the pros and cons of using continuous glucose monitoring for assessing the effects of food intake on blood glucose.

Rachel Horton

Clinical Genetics Registrar, NHS Genomic Medicine Service; Affiliate Member, Centre for Personalised Medicine

BIOGRAPHY

Dr Rachel Horton is a clinical genetics registrar in Southampton. She is doing a PhD with the Clinical Ethics, Law and Society group at Oxford, examining the construction of 'results' from a starting point of the entire genetic code.

PRESENTATION

Rachel's talk will look at some of the key differences between NHS-provided genetic testing, and various direct-to-consumer genetic tests. She will highlight how a genetic result might have different meaning depending on the clinical context that led to having testing, and the testing approach used. She will explore some of the consequences that this can create for people buying direct-to-consumer genetic tests, and for the NHS.

Anneke Lucassen

Professor of Genomic Medicine, Clinical Ethics, Law and Society, Nuffield Department of Medicine, University of Oxford; Clinical Geneticist, NHS Genomic Medicine Service; Director, Centre for Personalised Medicine

BIOGRAPHY

Professor Anneke Lucassen was appointed Director of the CPM in August 2021. Anneke trained in Medicine and specialised in Clinical Genetics. After a DPhil identifying genetic factors in diabetes, she set up an interdisciplinary research programme exploring the ethical, legal and social aspects of integrating advances in genetics (and other forms of big data) into healthcare and society. She is consultant in the Oxford Clinical Genetics Service. Anneke established and remains on the Steering Committee for the Genethics Forum, a national initiative for health professionals and colleagues from the social sciences, law, and the humanities who work with – or are interested in – the practical ethical and legal issues that arise in day-to-day clinical and research practice in genetics and genomics.

PRESENTATION

Anneke's talk will briefly explore what happens when direct-to-consumer test results move from commercial platforms into real clinical encounters, focusing on how context, equity and data provenance shape what a 'number' means for a particular patient and service. Drawing on her roles as clinician, researcher and ethicist, Anneke will consider how tools trained on health-engaged early adopters may not translate well to all populations, and how techno-optimistic discourses can obscure uncertainty, overdiagnosis and opportunity costs for the NHS. Can we find a realistic, responsible and fair way to integrate DTC tests within a publicly funded health system?

Alberto Giubilini

Senior Research Fellow, Medical Humanities Programme, Uehiro Oxford Institute, University of Oxford

BIOGRAPHY

Alberto Giubilini is a philosopher and bioethicist at the Uehiro Oxford Institute, as well as the Academic Lead of TORCH Medical Humanities at Oxford. He works mainly in public health ethics and medical ethics, including ethical issues raised by new medical technologies.

PRESENTATION

Alberto's presentation will provide an overview of the main ethical issues raised by DTC medical testing. He will focus in particular 1) on the relationship and tension between autonomy and risk of harm and 2) on the potential changing role of the medical profession and relative ethical obligations. Alberto will raise, and try to answer, the question of what ethical costs can be addressed through regulation, which ones (if any) are acceptable costs given the potential benefits of DTC medical testing, and which costs are too large to be acceptable.

Anthony Harnden

Chair, Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency; Professor of Primary Care, Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford

BIOGRAPHY

Professor Anthony Harnden is the chair of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). He is professor of primary care at the University of Oxford and until December 2024, was a registrant council member of the General Medical Council and Chair of the Remuneration Committee. He was also deputy chair of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), playing a key role in ensuring public trust and patient safety during the distribution of the Covid vaccine. Anthony has over 40 years of experience working for NHS, mostly as a general practitioner in Wheatley, Oxfordshire. He is particularly focused on protecting patient safety through robust surveillance and embracing risk-proportionate regulation to maintain the UK as a global regulator of excellence.

PRESENTATION

Regulatory considerations for direct-to-consumer medical testing – a joint presentation with Joseph Burt.

Joseph Burt

Head of Diagnostics and General Medical Devices, Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency

BIOGRAPHY

Joseph is an experienced Quality and Regulatory professional who is enthusiastic about delivering innovative, safe and groundbreaking medical devices to the benefit of patients and for use by healthcare practitioners. With over 25 years of experience working in small to global medical device companies, he has developed several in vitro diagnostic medical devices, including the approval of developed devices with multiple regulatory jurisdictions. He is passionate about bringing positive outcomes through though the use of innovative medical technologies and a champion for early diagnosis for preventative healthcare. Joseph is the Head of IVD and General Medical Devices with the MHRA.

PRESENTATION

Regulatory considerations for direct-to-consumer medical testing – a joint presentation with Anthony Harnden.

Centre for Personalised Medicine

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