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Winner of the Undergraduate Award

I am currently an undergraduate Cognitive & Clinical Neuroscience Student at the University of Westminster, heading into my final year. As part of my degree, I decided to undertake a placement year at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology, and Neuroscience (IoPPN) at King's College London as an honorary research assistant.



During my time at the IoPPN, under the supervision of Dr Valeria Mondelli and Professor Carmine Pariante, I have been working within the Stress, Psychiatry, and Immunology Laboratory (SPI Lab) research team on various studies. Primarily, this is the minocycline and depression study (MINDEP study) and the bariatric surgery and depression (BARIDEP) study. These studies aim to investigate the role of inflammation in patients with major depressive disorder – while MINDEP is a clinical drug trial, BARIDEP is a longitudinal study looking at how depressed patients may experience changes in depressive symptoms following bariatric surgery. It was through working within these studies and this team that I became interested in the important role played by inflammation in psychiatric disorders.

Alongside my work at the lab, I am also a regular writer for the 'InSPIre the Mind' publication, on the blog platform Medium. The publication aims to communicate current scientific research, ideas, and theory in a way that is accessible to wider, lay-audiences. For example, I have used my blogs as an opportunity to merge my passion in film and writing with my work in psychiatry – critiquing the way in which stigmatising portrayals and tropes may be harmful to those living with mental disorders.

I am honoured to be awarded the Undergraduate Award for my poster entitled, "*The Role of Inflammatory Biomarkers in Predicting Treatment Response in Patients with Psychosis: A Systematic Review*". It was certainly exciting and encouraging to be able to discuss my work with others at such an expansive and distinguished meeting – one which I hope to attend with a poster again in 2020! The next steps for me are working to evolve the findings in my poster into a review for publication, and to successfully finish my final year.