

Will Lawn

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Winner of the Robert Kerwin International Conference Bursary

I completed my undergraduate degree at the University of Cambridge in natural sciences. After two years of loathing physics and chemistry, I did my final year in experimental psychology. I absolutely loved it and I have never looked back. I then completed a PhD with Professors Val Curran and Celia Morgan at the Clinical Psychopharmacology Unit at University College London. My PhD was entitled 'Drug and non-drug reward processing in nicotine and cannabis users' and it examined putative reward processing deficits, such as impaired reward learning and amotivation, in people addicted to nicotine and cannabis.



Since completing my PhD I have worked as a post-doctoral research associate on two separate projects. Firstly, the KARE clinical trial led by Professor Morgan which is investigating whether ketamine in combination with cognitive behavioural therapy can help treat people with alcohol dependence who want to stop drinking. Since then, I have worked on CannTeen – which is a large project examining how the short and long-term effects of cannabis differ in teenagers and adults. I am specifically interested in cannabis addiction, why teenagers are more vulnerable to the addictive potential of drugs and whether neuroimaging can help us understand this.

Separately, I've worked closely with Dr Adam Winstock on his Global Drug Survey data and have enjoyed publishing on a wide range of topics including: how drugs affect sex, ayahuasca and novel psychoactive substances. In 2015 I was given a Bogue Scholarship, which I spent working with Dr Gill Bedi at Columbia's Psychiatric Institute on drug-related neuroeconomics. I've previously been awarded the CINP's Rafaelsen Young Investigator Award and last year won a small grant from UCL to qualitatively investigate self-identity in teenage cannabis users.

I am very grateful to the BAP for awarding me a Robert Kerwin bursary. I love attending the BAP conferences and I've been to every meeting since I began my PhD in 2013, so it is a pleasure to receive a prize! I will be attending the SOBP's annual meeting in 2020 in New York. I will be presenting baseline data from our CannTeen project on differences between teenage and adult cannabis users on addiction and mental health related measures. These results may well be significant as the world changes its laws regarding cannabis. I hope one day to work in the US or Canada, so this trip will allow me to show off our fascinating results as well as do some important networking!