

PhD Scholarship Opportunity

The School of Psychology at the University of Wollongong (UOW) is currently inviting Expressions of Interest from suitable domestic candidates for an exciting PhD project based at the UOW, Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute (IHMRI) and Australian Centre for Cannabinoid Clinical and Research Excellence (ACRE).

“Cannabidiol: treatment for brain changes and depression in early-stage dementia”

This is an empirical research project to be undertaken with the Australian Centre for Cannabinoid Clinical and Research Excellence (ACRE), through the University of Wollongong (UOW).

There has been a rapid increase in interest in and demand for cannabidiol (CBD), a constituent of *Cannabis sativa*, across the Australian population; including the elderly. Older individuals are increasingly turning to alternative treatments to help with various ailments, including cognitive decline. However, the clinical implementation of CBD as a therapeutic for early-stage dementia has been challenged by various factors including limited awareness and access, stigmas, and concerns regarding its efficacy. The focus of this PhD scholarship may include areas related to:

1. Examining the efficacy of daily CBD administration on neurobiological and psychotherapeutic outcomes in individuals diagnosed with early-stage dementia, as indexed by magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and neuropsychological testing; and
2. Identifying specific consumer barriers, including stigma, to the use of CBD as a potential therapeutic for early-stage dementia.

Role of the PhD Candidate:

The student will be expected to contribute to the management of and data collection for both the clinical trial and supporting psychosocial study, undertake data analyses related to MRI, neuropsychological, and psychosocial data, and lead research manuscripts consistent with the requirements of a thesis by publication.

The successful applicant must have a Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) degree or equivalent. The successful applicant must also have a keen interest in the research areas of CBD, dementia, cognitive neuroscience, and social psychology. Experience with magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and/or neuropsychological testing is preferred but not essential.

Funding:

\$28 597 per annum indexed annually. The scholarship is for 2.5 years, with the scope for extension via grant applications or teaching opportunities to supplement. The PhD must commence by June 30, 2022.

Supervisors:

Dr Mark Schira, Dr Jessica Bartschi, and Dr Lisa-Marie Greenwood.

Additional Support and Funding Opportunities:

The successful candidate will be situated within the School of Psychology at UOW, and be an affiliate member of ACRE, a National Health and Medical Research Council Centre of Research Excellence,

and the first federally-funded centre for medicinal cannabis research. The student will benefit from the opportunity to work alongside and engage with other students, clinical and academic researchers from different areas and institutions, and a supportive network of world-class researchers. The student will have access to administration support, statistical support, and IT services. The student will be encouraged to join in staff development, meetings, and other capacity building opportunities.

Further Information:

For further information, please contact Dr Mark Schira (mschira@uow.edu.au) or Dr Jessica Bartschi (jmills@uow.edu.au).