Ysgoloriaethau Sgiliau Economi Gwybodaeth
Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships

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Project Title: **KESS2 *PhD* Scholarship: Psychological factors in obesity associated with antipsychotic medication.**

Project Team:
Dr Paul Hewlett (Academic Lead Supervisor)
Dr Heidi Seage (academic Supervisor)
Dr Ruth Bagshaw (Lead Company Supervisor)
Dr Andrew Watt (Technical Advisor)

Project Outline:

Weight gain is a significant side effect of psychotropic medication, which stimulates hormones and neurotransmitters related to appetite control. However, the contribution that psychological factors make towards weight gain cannot be overlooked. Current understanding of overeating emphasises that an important behavioural factor in obesity is an individual's responsiveness to seeing food and related cues. Attentional processes normally underpin an individual's motivation to consume highly palatable foods (typical foods which are high in sugar and fat). Individuals who are heavily influenced by the 'pull' of food cues are at increased risk of overeating. The degree to which an individual allocates attention to food cues in their environment is a useful predictor of their propensity to overeat. Psychotropic drugs often have therapeutic effects that reduce florid psychotic symptoms by restoring some regulation of attentional. It is plausible that antipsychotic weight gain may be attributed in part to the cognitive effects of these medications on focused attention.

Attention for emotionally salient cues is known to be commonly disrupted in schizophrenia. These emotional deficits are driven by disruption within brain areas which are integral to attentional processing. Psychotropic medication reduces attentional deficits in schizophrenia, which in turn restores the individual's ability to pay focused attention. It is therefore highly plausible that interplay between psychotropic medication, attentional processing and obesogenic clinical environment is contributing to weight gain seen in psychiatric settings. The proposed research will examine that relationship.

Application Deadline: 30th July 2017

The student will design and conduct experiments examining attentional processes relating to food cues. The target population is adults detained under the Mental Health Act (1983) in medium and secure settings. Candidates should have some experience working in mental health or criminal justice settings.

The scholarship offers all eligible participants (student):

- KESS PhD Scholarship holders do not pay fees;
- A monthly stipend in line with RCUK rates: 3 years of funding @ £14,198 per year for PhD
- An additional budget to support your research of £3,000 for travel, conference attendance, minor equipment, consumables and training
- An opportunity to access a suite of higher level skills training & attendance at a residential KESS Grad School
- A minimum of 30 days a year working with the company partner on their allocated project
- Students must complete & submit their thesis within 3.5 years for PhD
- All participants must complete the KESS Postgraduate Skills Development Award

To be eligible for the scholarship, applicants should have a 2:1 or above first degree in Psychology, and post graduate experience working in mental health or criminal justice settings. Evidence of ability to study at a post graduate level, e.g. Masters or post graduate diploma level qualification is desirable. Applicants must have UK or

EU Citizenship, and be resident in the convergence area of Wales on appointment (or be studying in or working in the convergence area immediately prior to starting the project), and should have the right to work in the region on qualification. Residence confirmed by providing documents such as driver's licence, tenancy agreement or recent statement from bank or building society.

The map for the eligible can be found here. NB: The map also illustrates other assisted areas in the UK, however only the West Wales and the Valleys (in blue/grey: noted as 'a' areas) is eligible in this project.

To obtain further information regarding KESS2 at Cardiff Metropolitan and the application form, Please click here

To apply, please submit your completed application form to Dr Paul Hewlett, **Email: phewlett@cardiffmet.ac.uk.**

Interviews for this post will take place in the week beginning the **17/08/17**, with a proposed commencement date of **25/09/17.**

Funding Notes:
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