



Probiotics and menopause PhD Scholar at the University of Oxford

We are pleased to invite applications for a doctoral degree in the Department of Psychiatry, in association with St Cross College of the University of Oxford. The 3-year doctoral degree will start in October 2024.

The research will focus on the emotional and cognitive effects of a commercial probiotic in perimenopausal women, and the involvement of gut microbes. Women are 2-5 times more likely to experience a depressive episode during the menopause period compared to the pre-menopausal period, and a decline in cognitive function, particularly memory, is also common during this period. We and others have provided compelling evidence for the psychotropic effects of probiotics in humans, and recent studies have demonstrated that probiotics can ameliorate some symptoms of menopause in female volunteers. The study will be a two-arm double-blind design with perimenopausal women randomised to receive either a probiotic or placebo for six weeks. Analysis of emotional processing, cognitive function, subjective mood ratings and faecal microbiome will be performed before and after the probiotic or placebo intervention.

The PhD (DPhil) programme will be supervised by Professors Philip Burnet and Susannah Murphy and their teams in the Department of Psychiatry, with support of allied Oxford institutions specializing in the analysis of the human gut microbiome, and women's health. The DPhil will provide the student with multidisciplinary skills training in the design and ethics of experimental medicine studies, day-to-day management, co-ordination and running of a trial, application and analysis of clinical assessments, computer-based psychological testing, microbiology and molecular approaches including DNA extraction, sequencing and analysis.

The scholarship will fund course fees up to the value of home fees*, a tax-free stipend of no less than £19,740 per annum), plus additional support for research expenses, conference attendance, and consumables. This is supported by ADM Protexin Ltd.

*Students with overseas fee status should be advised that they would need to fund the remainder of their fees from alternative sources

Applicants should have, or expect to gain, at least an upper second-class honours degree in a field relevant to medical science. Interests should include dementia research, epidemiological data analyses and experimental medicine studies.

To apply for this studentship, please submit an application for admission to the DPhil in Psychiatry through the formal University procedure. On the application form, in the section headed "Departmental Studentship Applications", you must indicate that you are applying for a studentship and enter the reference code for this studentship "24PSYC03WEB"

Deadline for submission of applications: 12.00 midday UK time on Friday 26th July 2024

Interview date: w/c 29th July 2024

Studentship Code: 24PSYCH03WEB