

Press Release

Nick Turner
Communications Manager, MDC
07917 022179
nick.turner@md.catapult.org.uk

Psychiatry medicines discovery champion wins prestigious industry award

- *ELRIG's Impact Award, supported by SelectScience, is presented to an Early Career Professional who has made a significant impact in the drug discovery community.*
- *This year's recipient, Dr Laura Ajram of Medicines Discovery Catapult, will give a podium presentation titled "**Mind the gap... making a career out of building bridges**" at Drug Discovery 2021, ELRIG's face-to-face flagship meeting.*

Dr. Laura Ajram, Psychiatry Consortium Programme Manager at [Medicines Discovery Catapult \(MDC\)](#) has landed the prestigious ELRIG Early Career Impact Award 2021.

The [ELRIG](#) (European Laboratory Research and Innovation Group) Early Career Professional Impact Award, recognises and celebrates the achievements of early-career professionals (ECP) who have made a clear, demonstrable impact on the wider scientific community.

Dr Laura Ajram was awarded the accolade due to her outstanding work in the inception and management of MDC's [Psychiatry Consortium](#); a pioneering collaboration between medical charities, pharma and healthcare organisations, focusing on novel drug discovery in mental health.

Laura, who holds a PhD in Translational Neuropharmacology from King's College London, has used her expertise in the field to implement a highly engaging and innovative framework which has led to the funding of collaborative psychiatric drug discovery projects, an area which has historically suffered from limited effective treatments and high patient need.

After joining MDC in 2019, Laura set about raising awareness of the Psychiatry Consortium on a global level engaging with industry leaders and delivering webinars to over 1,000 delegates worldwide. Since then, Laura has gone on to lead the development of the Psychiatry Consortium's first-ever project, a collaboration between the University of Oxford, the Earlham Institute and global pharma companies Biogen Inc and Boehringer Ingelheim. The project investigates a new drug target for the treatment of schizophrenia and has generated significant data so far.

Dr. Laura Ajram, Psychiatry Consortium Programme Manager at MDC, said: "I am very proud to win the ELRIG Early Career Impact Award as it is the culmination of a lot of hard work and a reflection of the great strides the Psychiatry Consortium has taken since its inception 2 years ago. My role as Psychiatry Consortium Programme Manager at MDC sees me work with scientists to make exciting mental health focussed research happen, and it is incredibly encouraging to see leadership and facilitation of collaborations within the drug discovery space being recognised in this way.

"I am driven by a desire to bring people together in collaboration to offer different perspectives and make research even stronger. Through the Psychiatry Consortium, we are seeing the benefits of this approach. It is great that ELRIG acknowledge all the roles that play a part in delivering exciting

science, and I hope that by winning this award I inspire others to actively engage in meaningful research collaborations that could lead to the drug discovery breakthroughs of tomorrow.”

Dr Nicola Heron, Chief Business Officer at MDC, said: “It is wonderful that Laura has been recognised by the ELRIG awards for all of her hard work, dedication and expertise in establishing the Psychiatry Consortium at MDC. Laura is exactly the kind of vibrant and passionate talent we strive to attract and nurture at MDC. I absolutely applaud her commitment to collaboration and passion for translating much-needed mental health treatments from research to the clinic.

“I am delighted for Laura, and on behalf of MDC would like to congratulate her on this much-deserved accolade.”

Dr Del Trezise, ELRIG’s Early Career Professional Workgroup Chair and Board Director added: “ELRIG’s ECP Impact Award has become a highly regarded and prestigious prize. We are delighted to add Laura to our list of impressive previous winners. The impact of her work on the Psychiatry drug discovery community has been tremendous and is exactly the type of contribution we are looking to recognise.”

As well as receiving the award, Laura will be invited to give a 20-minute presentation of her work on Wednesday 20th October at 9:50AM (UK time) at ELRIG’s flagship Drug Discovery 2021 face-to-face meeting.

The Psychiatry Consortium is currently seeking project proposals which focus on the validation of novel molecular drug-targets for mental health conditions. The deadline for applications is 13.00 (BST) on 8th October 2021. For more information and to apply, visit the Psychiatry Consortium website: www.psychiatryconsortium.org.



PSYCHIATRY MEDICINES
DISCOVERY CHAMPION WINS
PRESTIGIOUS INDUSTRY AWARD