

Using fMRI to investigate the effects of psilocybin on brain activation and blood flow: rationale, hypotheses and progress (CME)

Biography of Presenter:

Robin Carhart-Harris, Ph.D., after completing a Masters in Psychoanalysis in 2005, applied to the Psychopharmacology Unit, University of Bristol, UK, headed by Professor David Nutt, to study for a Ph.D. on the topic of fMRI, psychedelic drugs and Freudian theory. Carhart-Harris was advised by David Nutt that this project was too ambitious at this stage but that he could instead study for a Ph.D. on the topic of MDMA, serotonin and sleep EEG. While completing his Ph.D. in 2008, he obtained the necessary approvals and some initial funding to carry out the fMRI work, and in 2009 his team completed a small scale pilot study, in which they administered intravenous psilocybin to nine volunteers in a mock-fMRI setting. They are currently on course to begin the fMRI scanning in the coming weeks, and this talk will report on their progress and the wider theoretical aims of the project. This work has the collaborative support of the Beckley Foundation, the Neuropsychology Foundation, Prof. Karl Friston of University College London, Prof. Richard Wise of Cardiff University and Prof. David Nutt of Imperial College London – for whom Carhart-Harris continues to work.

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