

Short Biography

Dr Marta Di Forti is a Professor of Drugs, Genes and Psychosis at the Dept of Social, Developmental and Genetic Research, KCL. She leads the first Cannabis Clinic for patients with Psychotic disorders in UK. In 2021 she awarded the Royal College of Psychiatrist Researcher of the year prize. In 2020 she was granted a MRC Senior Research Fellowship to expand her research in the role of cannabis use in psychosis and its underlying biology. Her MRC SRF employs technologies like Virtual Reality, genetic data, DNA Methylation data and peripheral levels of endocannabinoids from human participants in parallel to running an animal model experiment of pubertal exposure to cannabinoids to investigate biological markers of susceptibility to psychosis among heavy cannabis users.



My group has provided the first evidence showing the impact of frequent use of high potent strains of cannabis on risk for psychotic disorder and its earlier age of onset, as well as contributed to show its impact on the illness outcome.

This work has led to the development of the Cannabis Clinic for Psychosis (CCP). The CCP, is the first and only UK NHS service that offers adults with psychotic disorders who use cannabis a flexible intervention to cannabis use reduction/cessation.

Methods

The CCP model of care includes : 1) *one-to-one sessions* using evidence-based Addiction psychosocial interventions tailored to each patient's needs whilst considering their psychosis co-morbidity, 2) a *weekly online PEER group*, which offers to the patients attending, the opportunity to hear from world leading expert on cannabis use and psychosis, and/or cannabis dependence and ask questions and share experience.

We recently completed a proof of concept review of the outcome data from the first 46 patients who completed their intervention with the CCP.

Results:

74% of the patients stopped using cannabis and the remaining 26% reduced their frequency of use and the potency of the type used. These changes explained a significant proportion of improvements in all clinical and functional outcomes measured, and lead to 90.70% of the patients returning work or education.

Conclusions:

These data support the feasibility of tailoring existing Addiction tools to the needs of adults suffering from a psychotic disorder with co-morbid cannabis use. Therefore, it is important to implement the existing research and clinical knowledge, to develop services like the CCP that offer an important tertiary prevention strategy providing young adults with psychosis the knowledge and support needed to prevent and/or reverse the negative impact that cannabis use can have on their illness course and family, as well as mental health services.