

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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McClean Hospital Scientist Awarded ACNP-AMP BRAD Fellowship to Expand Public Knowledge About the Critical Role of Animals in Health Research

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Laura Erwin, Ph.D., a post-doctoral research fellow in the Preclinical Pharmacology Program at McLean Hospital, which is affiliated with Harvard Medical School, has been awarded the [2020-2021 ACNP-AMP BRAD Fellowship](#). The fellowship is a partnership between the [American College of Neuropsychopharmacology](#) and the health research advocacy group [Americans for Medical Progress](#). It was created to help raise public awareness about the essential role of animals in health research, specifically for clinical and basic research for brain-behavior-drug interactions and advancements in psychopharmacology. Fellowship winners also help promote careers in the field of neuropsychopharmacology, the study of all forms of mental illness and their treatment.

The primary goal of Dr. Erwin’s fellowship project will be to increase communications between scientists and the public. She will motivate peers to participate in [Biomedical Research Awareness Day](#) (BRAD), an international day of events hosted by research institutions, staff and volunteers to honor the important role of animals in improving both human and veterinary medicine. Dr. Erwin’s efforts will specifically focus on encouraging her fellow brain and behavior scientists to use BRAD as a platform to talk about their research and why animals are integral to the process. The main way this will be accomplished is through brief and engaging videos.

Dr. Erwin received her Ph.D. at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in April 2019. Her thesis focused on the interactive effects of cannabinoids and opioids, utilizing complex behavioral assays. She joined the Preclinical Pharmacology Program under Dr. Carol Paronis in June 2019. Dr. Erwin’s research focuses on elucidating the pharmacological mechanisms and neurobiology that mediate the behavioral effects of drug of abuse. She is currently studying the potential hallucinogenic-like effects of highly potent synthetic cannabinoids. Dr. Erwin recently received the Livingston Fellowship which will allow her to investigate the effects of cannabinoid agonists that vary in affinity and efficacy to induce neurological disruption using noninvasive electroencephalogram (EEG) recordings.

“My objective for the BRAD fellowship is to open-up lines of communication between my peers to discuss the essential role that animals serve in biomedical research,” said Dr. Erwin.

“I look forward to talking not only with clinicians and basic science researchers based at McLean Hospital and Harvard Medical School, but also with the youth of New England about how animals help us better understand and prevent human diseases,” she added. “My hope is that by encouraging science education and advocacy, we can make strides towards reducing any misinformation surrounding animal research; thereby, ensuring the future of scientific progress.”

Note to Editors: A high-resolution image of Dr. Erwin can be [downloaded at this link](#).

More Information About Biomedical Research Awareness Day

Launched in 2016, Biomedical Research Awareness Day (BRAD) is a day to honor, raise awareness of, and pledge support for the animals required for medical progress. It is an initiative committed to educating students and the public about the importance of biomedical research and the humane use of animals. BRAD is typically held every year on the 3rd Thursday in April. Veterinary schools, medical schools, research institutions and others around the globe participate and celebrate with events at each of their respective institutions.

About the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology

The [American College of Neuropsychopharmacology](#), ACNP, founded in 1961, is a professional organization of more than 1,100 leading scientists, including four Nobel Laureates. The mission of ACNP is to further research and education in neuropsychopharmacology and related fields in the following ways: promoting the interaction of a broad range of scientific disciplines of brain and behavior in order to advance the understanding of prevention and treatment of disease of the nervous system including psychiatric, neurological, behavioral and addictive disorders; encouraging scientists to enter research careers in fields related to these disorders and their treatment; and ensuring the dissemination of relevant scientific advances.

About Americans for Medical Progress

[Americans for Medical Progress](#) (AMP) is a nonprofit, health research advocacy group that supports the advancement of human and animal medicine through responsible and highly regulated research in animals. AMP informs the public about animal-based research through outreach events like [Biomedical Research Awareness Day](#), news and opinion articles, social media interactions and various online and printed publications. AMP is a 501(c)3 nonprofit charity supported by the nation's top universities, private research facilities, research-related businesses, scientific and professional societies, as well as by foundation grants and contributions by individuals. AMP's Board of Directors is composed of physicians, researchers, veterinarians and university officials.

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