

Thursday, April 3, 2025 at 09:29:42 Central Daylight Time

Subject: EM: Neuroscience Speaker Series: Dr. Ghahremani UCLA
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From: Tom Borowski

NEUROSCIENCE SPEAKER SERIES



Dara Ghahremani

**Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human
Behavior**

University of California, Los Angeles

The Adolescent Brain on Cannabis Marketing: Neurobehavioral Evidence for Ad Features that Appeal to Youth

**Thursday, April 3rd
4:30 PM**

**Burns Lecture Hall
Department of Natural Science**

Abstract: Adolescent cannabis use has long-term consequences, including cognitive challenges and a higher likelihood of cannabis use disorder. Exposure to marketing media for legal substances has a significant impact on subsequent substance use, with under-age youth especially susceptible to influence. Evidence-based guidelines for regulating cannabis advertising are needed to protect under-age youth in states where cannabis is legal. Identifying key features of cannabis ads that appeal to youth is an important step in specifying guidelines and informing policy. Using both behavioral and fMRI experiments, we aimed to determine ad features that appeal to youth and are linked with their desire to use cannabis. We examined responses from both adolescents and young adults, most of whom hadn't initiated cannabis use. Behavioral experiments resulted in a "Content Appealing to Youth" index that we used to quantify each ad based on the number of features appealing to youth. Ads with high appeal included features,

such as food/flavor references and psychoactive appeal. We categorized fMRI data by this index with the hypothesis that ads with high vs. low youth appeal would elicit greater responses in reward- and emotional arousal-related neural circuitry (e.g., ventral striatum, amygdala, respectively). Effects were observed in both brain circuits, with some predicting the desire to use cannabis only in adolescents. Further results will be discussed along with their potential implications for informing policy for marketing.