

**February 2012**

**Vacancy for PhD project 'Modulation of contextual anxiety – a translational approach'**

*Faculty of Social Sciences and Faculty of Science, Utrecht University*

Preclinical data have demonstrated convincingly that the corticotropin-releasing factor (CRF) system is involved in the acquisition of conditioned fear, and the cannabinoid (CB) system in the extinction of conditioned fear. Both processes are crucial in determining levels of contextual anxiety, which models generalised anxiety in human anxiety disorders. However, the translation of these exciting preclinical findings to humans has lagged considerably. In this collaborative project between the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Science, we aim to study the roles of these systems in an integrated animal and human approach. First, recent findings from a human genetic study on the role of these systems in acquisition and extinction will be replicated and extended in the human experimental laboratory at the Faculty of Social Sciences. Then, potential pharmacological manipulations to interrogate the role of these systems more directly will be studied in the animal laboratory at the Faculty of Science. Finally, the pharmacological manipulations that have proven most promising in the animal studies will be administered in a series of human pharmacological studies. This integrated approach will facilitate the translation of basic findings about the neuropharmacology underlying fear learning processes towards application in humans.

More information can be requested by contacting the project leaders:

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Deadline: March, 31, 2012