

Exploring dementia through research: Amaani Al-Azzawi's journey to transform care



Amaani Al-Azzawi is a PhD student funded by NIHR ARC Kent, Surrey and Sussex. Her research, *The OASIS Research Series*, undertaken in collaboration with Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, explores hallucinations in dementia and aims to develop non-pharmacological support for individuals and carers. Now entering her final year, Amaani has led a clinical feasibility trial, national survey, and scoping review. She plans to pursue a postdoctoral fellowship and train as a Clinical Psychologist, embedding research into clinical practice.

Tell us about your research project

I am studying hallucinations in the context of dementia and developing non-pharmacological ways to support people with dementia and their carers. I am conducting a clinical feasibility trial, a national survey and a narrative scoping review.

What inspired you to undertake a PhD? How long will it take you to complete? And, how did you fund your studies?

I am a fully funded PhD student, funded by the NIHR ARC and my PhD is for 3 years, and I am about to start my final year. I have always loved academia, and the PhD felt like the perfect opportunity to spend dedicated time exploring a topic in more depth.

How would you describe your journey so far as a PhD student? The highs? The challenges?

I have found the PhD enjoyable, and I feel like I've grown so much in this time. There have been unexpected challenges, and I've had to learn to be adaptable and creative in my thinking.

What are the highlights of your PhD project?

Working directly with families has been a real highlight and I've really enjoyed immersing myself into research environments.

What advice / tips would you give someone thinking about undertaking taking a PhD?

Speak to someone that is or has completed a PhD. Reading online is nothing like speaking to someone with real life experience. Supervisory relationships are really important, so be sure to nurture them.

What's next? What are your plans for the future?

I want to do a post-doc fellowship that extends the work I am doing now and then train as a Clinical Psychologist. My ideal career for the future would be embedding research into my own clinical work.