



Cambridge Psychiatry Society

25 November 2012

Dear Drs Sule and Inkster,

I am writing in my capacity as President of Cambridge Psychiatry Society, the student society for medical students at the University of Cambridge interested in psychiatry. On behalf of the society, I would like to thank you for giving a fascinating talk entitled Hip Hop Psych: the portrayal of mental health in hip-hop lyrics on 13 November 2012.

This interactive talk explored how lyrics in hip-hop can be used to demonstrate issues of mental health and reflect the cultural environment in which the lyrics were written. The talk began with a brief exposition of hip-hop culture, then used several sets of lyrics to explore issues of mental health, including descriptions of psychiatric symptoms, risk factors and health behaviours detrimental to mental health. The talk was attended by over forty students and academics, constituting one of the most well-attended Cambridge Psychiatry Society talks in recent memory. Feedback was extremely positive, citing the unique and innovative nature of the topic, as well as the intellectually stimulating cross-disciplinary approach of the speakers.

By wielding the medium of music and the culture of hip-hop, you have created a unique phenomenon that will foster a greater awareness of mental health, especially amongst young people whose playlists are populated by the lyrics of hip-hop. I truly believe that Hip Hop Psych has the potential to be a driving force in releasing mental illness from the shackles of stigma amongst young people; when they realise that their hip-hop heroes are able to speak about issues of mental health so openly, they too will be inspired to explore and confront such issues. Amongst medical students, your approach has proved to be a potent tool for teaching psychiatry that will no doubt inspire recruitment to the specialty. Hip Hop Psych is a hugely exciting phenomenon that needs to continue to grow, and I hope that you will receive much support in the future to develop your vision.

Yours sincerely,

Timothy Leung

President, Cambridge Psychiatry Society