

BSMS Newsletter

Medical research forum planned for March

Kevin Davies describes how research plans are developing locally

One of the top priorities for any medical school is the development of its research base, and this is high on the agenda for BSMS.

Plans for the school's brand new research facility on the University of Sussex campus have been finalised, and building is scheduled to start in April, enabling investigators to move in early in 2004. Planning of a clinical research facility based at the Royal Sussex County Hospital is also well-advanced.

As well as developing its own research portfolio, one of the key roles of the school will be to catalyse and stimulate collaborative research endeavours between the local NHS providers and the Universities of Brighton and Sussex. There are many active research groups within the Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals Trust (BSUHT), and, of course, highly rated medical research programmes within the School of Pharmacy, and Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Brighton. The University of Sussex has internationally-renowned research groups working in many biomedical areas, notably genetics, biochemistry, psychology and physiology, and medical engineering. With the recent appointment of Professor Helen Smith to the Chair of Primary Care at BSMS, the school is also well-

positioned to develop a community-based research programme.

Kevin Davies (BSMS Chair of Medicine) has recently taken over as director of R & D for BSUHT, a role which will hopefully enable the medical school to bring together these key players and maximise their potential to produce research which will be both internationally competitive, and be of direct benefit to the local health economy. Organising a local medical research forum, scheduled for 31st March 2003, is designed to help 'kick-start' this process.

The one-day conference takes place on the University of Brighton Falmer campus in Westlain House. We anticipate having around 200 attendees, and have invited key representatives from among senior academics and researchers from

both the universities, as well as consultants from the Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals Trust who are research-active. It will also include contributions from the Dean of the Medical School, Professor Jon Cohen, Stuart Welling, the Trust's Chief Executive, Dr Charles Turton, and the Trust's Medical Director. In the morning sessions we are initially focussing on research in the fields of chemical pathology and infection, led by staff from BSUHT, and then moving on to presentations covering key areas of collaboration with a number of schools in the University of Brighton, including the NHS R & D support unit led by Professor Rob Horne.

After lunch we will be welcoming Dr Russell Hamilton, Regional Director of NHS R & D, who will be letting

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*Artist's impression of
BSMS Research Building
on the University of
Sussex campus*



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us share his vision of the regional NHS research strategy over the next few years. Professor Davies will also be describing plans for the Clinical Investigation and Research Unit at the County, and describing the BSUHT Grants Scheme which he has set up in response to the new regional funding initiative described below.

In the afternoon we start with presentations from the Trust, primarily concentrating on national priority areas, including diabetes, cardiology and cancer, before moving on to presentations from Sussex and from Professor Lesley Fallowfield's Psychosocial Oncology Unit, which has recently joined BSMS.

We are inviting Heads of Science and interested pupils from local schools and colleges, and we would be delighted to welcome any prospective BSMS applicant for 2004. If you are keen to attend, and would like further information, please contact Scott.Harfield@bsuh.nhs.uk. A provisional programme is shown below.

New Regional NHS Research Funding

Another exciting initiative which will undoubtedly help us to develop our collaborative research strategy is the injection of a substantial sum of regional R & D funding, designed to stimulate research both in the community and within BSUH. Together with the medical school,

the Trust has launched a competitive grants scheme, with awards ranging from £5000 for smaller projects to £ 25000 for more major programmes of research. Following the first 'call' for applications, we received over twenty submissions, from a wide range of healthcare professionals, covering a range of disciplines from HIV Medicine to paediatric intensive care. Many of these applications came from groups who were relatively new to the world of research, and we have every expectation that the scheme will prove highly effective in 'pump-priming' projects, opening the way for successful researchers to apply for more substantive research funding from national bodies and charities in due course.

Research Forum Programme

31 March 2003, 9.00 – 5.40 Followed by reception

Westlain House, University of Brighton, Falmer

9.15 – 9.30 Introduction & welcome by Prof. Jon Cohen / Stuart Welling

Session 1 9.30 – 10.30 **Research at Brighton & Sussex University Hospitals – Infectious disease & laboratory based work** Chaired by Jon Cohen and Martin Fisher Presenters: Dr Martin Fisher, Dr John Paul, Dr Andrew Iversen

Session 2 - 10.45 – 12.30 **Collaborations with University of Brighton** Chaired by Karen Parsley and Adrian Bone Presenters: Mr Christopher Liu, Prof. Rob Horne, Prof. Carolyn Miller, Prof. Adrian Bone, Prof. Peter Ambrose, Prof. Anne Moore

Session 3 **Department of Health Regional R&D strategy & Infrastructure Developments**

Chaired by Jon Cohen and Charles Turton

1.30 – 2.00 **R&D Funding and regional research strategy** Dr Russell Hamilton

2.00 – 2.15 **Clinical Research & Investigation Unit** Prof. Kevin Davies

Session 4 2.15 – 3.45 **Research at Brighton & Sussex University Hospitals – National Priority Areas** Chaired by David Bloomfield Presenters: Dr David Bloomfield Prof. Richard Vincent, Dr Nick Vaughan, Dr Paul Seddon, Dr Steve Holt

Session 5 4.00 – 5.30 **Collaborations with the University of Sussex** Chaired by Kevin Davies and Lesley Fallowfield Presenters: Mr Giles Critchley, Dr Lionel Ripley, Prof. Lesley Fallowfield, Prof. Ian Russell, Prof. Terry Clark

5.30 – 5.40 Closing remarks Prof. Kevin Davies

Buildings update

Progress is being made on five new buildings planned for the medical school.

Full planning permission has been granted for the Education Centre, which is to be built next to the Sussex Eye Hospital. This will be called the Audrey Emerton Building and is due for completion in October 2004.

Construction on the University of Sussex site has fallen two weeks behind schedule due to inclement weather but the estimated completion date of May 2003 is still well within reach.

The teaching facility on the University of Brighton site is due for completion in September 2003.

Plans for the research building on the University of Sussex campus are progressing well. Planning permission has been granted and work is expected to start in March 2003 and to finish in March 2004.

Significant progress has been made on the proposed Clinical Investigation Research Unit at the Royal Sussex County Hospital with much of the building now planned in outline.

BSMS Admissions: our first UCAS cycle

In its first year BSMS has matched the national average of applications per place for all UK medical schools.

Over 970 UCAS applications were received by BSMS admissions administrator Julie Virgo in time for consideration in our first admissions cycle. This represents more than eight applications for each available BSMS place, and was 50% more than had been predicted on the basis of the experience of the two new medical schools that opened last year.

In line with national trends, 60% of BSMS applicants are female. Almost 30% are mature students, a proportion well above average, and these include half the 60 students currently studying on the pioneering Access to Medicine course at West Anglia College. Applications were received from all over the UK and Europe, but a good number are from the local region.

Just over 500 BSMS applicants were selected for interview at the

eleven Admissions Days held at Falmer in November and February and 60% of these were chosen to receive conditional or unconditional offers. Interview panels included, in addition to BSMS faculty, local GPs and consultants whose practices and wards will provide clinical training for BSMS students and representatives of the health professionals that they will work alongside, such as junior doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and pharmacists. According to BSMS Admissions Tutor John Kay the high calibre of the applicants made the selection process very difficult, with far more well qualified and enthusiastic candidates than BSMS could possibly accept. The atmosphere at the Admissions Days was very positive, and BSMS is looking forward to admitting an extremely promising group of students as its first cohort.

New faces at Brighton and Sussex Medical School

BSMS continues to recruit administrative staff to assist module, discipline, and phase leaders in their development of the BM BS curriculum.

Tom Roper has been appointed as Information Resources Coordinator and is responsible for coordinating the delivery of information resources to staff and students across all BSMS sites. In order for this to work effectively, existing electronic communication and records systems in the two Universities and their NHS partner institutions must be able to talk to one another and linking these up will be the responsibility of **Mark Packer**, ICT

Project Manager, who takes up his post in February 2003.

In March 2003 **Clare Alverson** will join BSMS as Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Support). Clare will manage the administration of curriculum development including its approval, monitoring, and review as well as having oversight of students' placements, assessment, examination and progress.

In addition, **Mary Gray** has been appointed as Personal Assistant to Jon Cohen. Similarly, **Joan North** has been appointed as Personal Assistant to Peter Dennis and Julie Tyrrell. **Liz Showler** was appointed

as Personal Assistant to the BSMS Medical Education Unit in December 2002. The Medical Education Unit supports tutors in their contribution to undergraduate teaching by providing expert advice and training.

The next key role to be recruited within the BSMS administrative team will be the Assistant Secretary (Student Support) who will be responsible for developing and managing systems to support students throughout their time at BSMS. This will involve, among other responsibilities, anticipating and responding to students' information needs from pre-arrival through to graduation.

Who's Who at BSMS

Mary Gray joined the BSMS staff in January as Professor Jon Cohen's Executive Assistant. She has worked for the University of Brighton for five and a half years as secretary to the Deans of the Faculty of Business and Faculty of Management and Information Sciences.

Previous work experience includes nineteen years in various roles with British Gas and four with the Lord Chancellor's Department. However she feels that she has found her niche in life' "I really enjoy working in higher education and I feel very privileged to be involved in an exciting new project like the Brighton and Sussex Medical School."

Joan North joined BSMS in December 2002, coming to us from the Institute of Nursing and Midwifery where she held the post of Examinations Officer. Joan provides a PA/reception service to Peter Dennis, Medical School Secretary and Julie Tyrrell, Finance Officer, as well as organisational support for BSMS working groups and committees.



Pictured (from left to right) Liz Showler, Mary Gray and Joan North

Mark Packer took up the post of ICT Project Manager on 3rd February 2003. Mark graduated in Information Science from Leeds Polytechnic in 1984 and worked as an Information Manager for a number of years in the City. His career in IT began when he joined King's College School of Medicine and Dentistry in 1991, where, apart from developing a campus-wide hardware and software technical support service, he taught some of the undergraduate medical statistics modules.



Mark moved into network infrastructure in 1996 and as part of the core network team, was responsible for some of the College's large network infrastructure projects. A further part of Mark's work was managing the network links between King's College Hospital Trust and KCSMD and fostering a good working relationship with the NHS Trust and various medical charities. He was also part of the Multimedia Working Party, which initiated a number of projects using multimedia in medical and dental education.

Mark says; "I am very excited by the opportunities and challenges presented by my post at BSMS. It's always good to join something at the beginning and I'm pleased to be a part of the team involved in defining and realising the new and distinctive medical school which is BSMS."

Tom Roper joined BSMS on 2nd January as Information Resources

Development Co-ordinator. Tom's job is to co-ordinate library and information resources for BSMS staff and students across all partner institutions. He is based in the University of Sussex Library and can be contacted on x3424 or by e-mail to C.T.Roper@sussex.ac.uk.

Educated at the Perse School and the University of Kent, for the past six years Tom has been Head of Library and Information Services at



the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons; before that he worked in NHS medical libraries at local and regional level, with the British Council, Hawker-Siddeley Group PLC and in public libraries, where he started his career.

After providing administrative support to the team since August 2002, **Liz Showler** has now formally joined the Brighton and Sussex Medical School as Personal Assistant to the Medical Education Unit.

Liz has gained broad experience through previously working at American Express, City College – Brighton & Hove and the University of Sussex, and during her extensive travel in Australia.

Research in BSMS

It is still very early days, but scientific papers are starting to appear under the BSMS by-line. Research is an important part of the BSMS project, although inevitably will take a little while to really get into its stride: preparing the curriculum for our first students is top of the agenda.

We present here a list of publications and grants won by BSMS faculty since they joined the school. We will publish and update of this information every six months.

Publications

Fallowfield LJ; Jenkins VA; Beveridge HA. Truth may hurt but deceit hurts more: communication in palliative care. *Palliative Medicine* 2002; 16: 297-303

Jenkins V; Leach L; Fallowfield L; Nicholls K; Newsham. Describing randomisation: patients' and the public's preferences compared with clinicians' practice. *British Journal of Cancer* 2002; 87 854-858

Fallowfield L; Gagnon D; Zagari M; Cella D; Bresnahan B; Littlewood TJ; McNulty P; Gorzegno G; Freund M. Multivariate regression analyses of data from a randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled study confirm quality of life benefit of epoetin alfa in patients receiving non-platinum chemotherapy. *British Journal of Cancer* 2002; 87 1341-1351

Fallowfield L. Quality of life: a new perspective for cancer patients. *Nature Reviews* 2002; 2:873-879

Fallowfield L. Talking about difficult things in cancer: do we achieve what patients need? *Drugs of Today* 2002; 38(Suppl A): 79-87

Fallowfield L; Jenkins VA. Acronymic trials: the good, the bad and the coercive. *Lancet* 2002; 360: 1622

Cohen J. The immunopathogenesis of sepsis. *Nature* 2002; 420: 885-891

Agyekum S; Church A; Sohail M; Krausz T; Van Noorden S; Polak J; Cohen J. Expression of lymphotoxin-beta in chronic inflammatory conditions. *Journal of Pathology* 2003; 199: 115-121

Fenwick P; Ryan C; Sriskandan S; Cohen J. Application of a rat model of streptococcal shock to evaluate on-line hemoperfusion and removal of circulating superantigens. *Critical Care Medicine* 2003; 31: 171-178

van Laar PJ; Cohen J. A prospective study of fever in the accident and emergency department. *Clinical Microbiology and Infection* 2003; 9: in press

Wong PS; Davidsson GK; Timeyin J; Warren A; Watson DJ; Vincent R; Davidson C. Heart failure in patients admitted to hospital: mortality is still high. *European Journal of Internal Medicine* 2002; 13: 304-310

Vincent R. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation. *Medicine* 2002; 30: 198-201

Vincent R. Resuscitation. *Heart* 2003; in press

Tarzi RM; Davies KA; Robson MG; Fossati-Jimack L; Saito T; Walport MJ; Cook HT. Nephrotoxic nephritis is mediated by Fcγ receptors on circulating leukocytes and not intrinsic renal cells. *Kidney International* 2002; 62: 2087-2096

Grants

Cohen J. International Journal of Infectious Diseases. *International Society for Infectious Diseases*. 2002-2007.

Jenkins VA. An exploratory pilot study to investigate whether hormonal therapy for prostate cancer has an adverse effect on cognition. *BUPA Foundation*. 2002-2004.

Fallowfield LJ; Jenkins VA. A longitudinal study of the effects of anastrozole on cognition in post-menopausal women at risk of developing breast cancer. *Cancer Research UK*. 2003-2006.

Fallowfield LJ. United Kingdom Collaborative Trial of Ovarian Cancer Screening. MRC. 2000-2010.

Fallowfield LJ. RCT of Exemestane v Tamoxifen. *Pharmacia and Upjohn*. 2001-2005.

Fallowfield LJ. Development and evaluation of communication interventions in oncology. *Cancer Research UK*. 2001 – 2006

Fallowfield LJ. Support five multi-disciplinary team meetings. *Bristol-Myers Squibb Pharmaceuticals Ltd*. 2002 –2004.

Jenkins VA. An observational study of the effect of adjuvant chemotherapy on cognition of women with breast cancer. *Cancer Research UK*. 2002-2005.

New Chairs of Anatomy and Primary Care

Professor Helen Smith has recently been appointed to the Chair of Primary Care and will take up her post in April. She is currently Reader in the Primary Medical Care group at the University of Southampton where her major area of responsibility has been to direct the Wessex Research Network. This was one of the first primary care networks to be established in the UK and has proved to be highly successful in increasing the research awareness and activity of primary care teams throughout Wessex. Nationally she has contributed to the development of the academic discipline of General Practice and has developed a number of initiatives to strengthen research capacity in NHS Primary Care.



Helen's clinical interests are musculoskeletal disorders and allergic diseases, and her research expertise is in the design of pragmatic, community-based trials of new interventions. She is an examiner for the Faculty of Public Health Medicine's membership exam and has been active in setting up the Health Sciences Graduate School in Southampton.

Professor Smith says "I am very much looking forward to taking up

my new post at BSMS and joining the team that are putting together an exciting and distinctive undergraduate medical course. There is lots of scope for involving primary care practitioners in the teaching of our students and I hope that my department will be able to develop strong and productive links with many of the local general practices."

Professor Di Watt has taken up her post as Chair of Anatomy.

Graduating from the University of Aberdeen in 1974 in Developmental Biology she undertook an SRC PhD studentship investigating the aetiology of Spina Bifida. She moved in 1977 to a post doc position in the department of Experimental Pathology, Charing Cross Medical School, investigating the possible use of donor muscle precursor cells to alleviate primary myopathic conditions. In 1984 she was offered a Lectureship in Anatomy when Charing Cross merged with Westminster Medical School to become Charing Cross and Westminster Medical School. She established her own research group studying the possible use of cell-based therapies to alleviate muscle fibre breakdown in patients with muscular dystrophy, and taught all aspects of anatomy, histology and embryology to medical students. In 1994 Di became Reader in Anatomy and later was made Deputy Head Division (Teaching) of the Neuroscience and Psychological Medicine Division of the new Faculty of Medicine of Imperial College. She was heavily involved in the design of the new curriculum and whilst in charge of running the Dissection Facility was also course co-ordinator for the Human Life Cycle. She also started courses in anatomy for

physiotherapists and sports medicine students and surgical anatomy courses for surgeons



taking their RCS membership examinations.

Her research work has taken her into the area of stem cells and her group discovered that a certain multipotent cell in the skin had the ability to convert into muscle which could have immense implications in developing autologous cell based therapies for the muscular dystrophies. In addition, the group also isolated the factor responsible for the ability of these cells to transdifferentiate into a different lineage, a lectin called galectin-1. Research in this field is ongoing and will be continued in her new post at BSMS.

Professor Watt says, "Being in at the start of a new medical school is a very exciting prospect and I am very much looking forward to contributing to the innovative BSMS undergraduate course. The focus of Anatomy at BSMS will be on functional and clinical aspects, taught through a multidisciplinary approach and it is also my intention to develop strong postgraduate links for the subject."