

July 2010

Lots of news to report this July, starting with the election of the Academy's first woman Honorary Officer: Professor Susan Iversen CBE FMedSci, Emeritus Professor of Psychology at Oxford University, who will take up the post of Academy Treasurer in November 2010. It was great to see so many of you at our New Fellows Admissions Day on 22 June, where four first class presentations from our new Fellows were topped off by a truly exceptional Jean Shanks Lecture from Sir Alec Jeffreys FRS FMedSci.

You will find a flier enclosed for 'First steps: a personal account of the formation of the Academy of Medical Sciences', written by our founder President, Sir Peter Lachmann FRS FMedSci. As informative and entertaining as you would expect – make sure you order a copy today!

We have an extremely busy summer ahead of us, as we hit the final 10 weeks of building works at 41 Portland Place and

prepare to move in on 4 October. As some of you already know, I have conspired to miss the chaos of the move by going on maternity leave at the end of July, returning at the end of the year. Dr Suzanne Candy, Director of Biomedical Grants and Policy, will be Acting Executive Director in my absence (suzanne.candy@acmedsci.ac.uk). I'll therefore be missing our first event in the new building – our FORUM Annual Lecture with Dr Peggy Hamburg of the US FDA on 13 October. However, I will make sure I am able to attend our AGM and Fellows' reception on 18 November, so put the date in your diaries!

There will be a short break in newsletter correspondence over the summer, before we return in September. But feel free to follow us on Twitter at @acmedsci.

Helen Muir

Taking the Academy's messages to Parliament



Fellows may be aware that the emergency budget in June included plans to cut spending in most government departments by 25%, with potentially significant consequences for medical research. The Academy has provided Government with advice on the forthcoming spending review as one of seven organisations formally consulted by Adrian Smith, Director General of the Research Councils, about the allocation of the Science Budget. The President has also held high level meetings with new ministers and parliamentarians.

The Academy will discuss current and upcoming issues in medical research with parliamentarians and key stakeholders at an All Party Parliamentary Group on Medical Research summer reception on 19 July. This event, organised in collaboration with the Association of Medical Research Charities and its members, will include a talk by The Rt Hon David Willets MP, Minister of State for Universities and Science, on his vision for UK Medical Research. It will provide an opportunity for MPs and members of the House of Lords to meet with scientists from throughout the UK including Professor Sir Mark Walport FMedSci, Director of the Wellcome Trust; Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz FRS FMedSci of the Medical Research Council; and Professor Ron Laskey FRS FMedSci, Vice President, Academy of Medical Sciences. Academics from research specialties across the spectrum of basic to translational research have been selected to give poster presentations for the event.

We will also be seeking to engage with the new Chair of the Commons Science & Technology Select Committee, Andrew Miller MP, and the new Chair of the Commons Health Select Committee, Stephen Dorrell MP, following their appointment on 9 June.



AMS/MRS Clinical Research Champion,
Professor David Adams FMedSci

Raising the profile of academic medicine

Through the Academy of Medical Sciences/Medical Research Society Clinical Research Champions scheme, eight Academy Fellows from across the UK are working to promote academic medicine to medical students and foundation year doctors. These Champions develop networks and host events to raise awareness of the possibilities of a career in academic medicine and introduce young doctors to inspiring role models from within medical research. As well as producing their own programme of activities, our Champions play a key role in supporting student societies to promote academic medicine to their peers and utilise external events and local networks to catalyse the promotion of academic medicine.

Our Champions report that the scheme has helped to raise the profile of academic medicine within their regions over the past 4 years. They have seen a marked increase in applications to Academic Foundation Programmes and Academic Clinical Fellowship posts, and medical students are showing a growing interest in undertaking summer research projects. Such positive reports highlight the schemes success in exposing medical students to the benefits of medical research as early as possible in their training.

The Champions scheme also feeds into, and complements, the work of the Academy's Mentoring and Outreach Scheme for clinical academic trainees, which provides regional, tailored support for all trainees who are undertaking academic work - from Academic Foundation Fellows to Clinician Scientist Fellows. Further information can be found at <http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk/champions>, or by contacting sally.lukins@acmedsci.ac.uk.



Review of the regulation and governance of medical research

Since being announced in March, progress on the Academy's review of the regulation and governance of medical research has continued apace. The review follows a recommendation made earlier this year in our report, 'Reaping the rewards: a vision for UK medical sciences' and will take a particular focus on clinical trials. Recent developments include:

- A press briefing to provide background on the review and announce membership of the Academy working group chaired by Sir Michael Rawlins FMedSci.
- The close of the call for written evidence, which has had an exceptional response from organisations and individuals with an interest in the regulatory and governance framework around medical research.
- The second meeting of the working group to identify recommendations to increase the speed of decision-making; reduce complexity; and eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy and cost.

As well as offering a forum to update a selection of journalists on the review, the press briefing on Thursday 20 May provided an opportunity to demonstrate the new Government's support. Rt Hon David Willetts MP, Minister for Universities and Science, used the press statement to offer his backing for the independent review, saying:

'In the current fiscal climate, throwing money at a problem is simply not an option. Creating a better, smarter operating environment for our leading science-based sectors is essential. I look forward to hearing the recommendations of this distinguished group.'

Members of the working group met for the second time in late June and were provided with an initial analysis of over 200 written evidence submissions. The evidence received will inform the Academy's recommendations, with a final report due to be published at the end of 2010.

For further information on the review, please contact robert.frost@acmedsci.ac.uk or see <http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk/p47prid80.html>

Exploring the boundaries: public dialogue on animals containing human material

Gathering evidence from a broad range of stakeholders is an important part of every Academy study. One of the Academy's current working groups, convened to consider the use of 'animals containing human material' in medical research has been seeking information from a typically wide range of sources. Throughout early summer, the group received opinion from experts, representatives of animal welfare bodies and members of relevant UK regulatory committees.

May and June also saw the first stages of a programme of public dialogue, commissioned by the Academy to ensure that the working group could take into account the views of the public on this potentially emotive area of research. The programme, delivered by a consortium led by Ipsos MORI, began with a series of public workshops and focus groups in Newcastle and London. Public participants were able to



Participants at the Newcastle workshop

discuss the issues with scientists, deliberate their views, and voice their opinions. Findings from the deliberative research will inform questions on a wider public poll later this month, before the overall findings are reported to the working group.

Professor Martin Bobrow CBE FRS FMedSci, Chair of the working group said, *'The study is challenging us to think hard about the unique features which define us as human. The publics' views will help shape our deliberations. This dialogue will reveal how different groups view the boundary between human and animal, and what informs their hopes and concerns around this research.'*

Further information on the project can be viewed at <http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk/p47prid77.html>

41 Portland Place: last chance for Fellows to give

The refurbishment works to create our own headquarters at 41 Portland Place are progressing extremely well. The building contractors have been working from the top of the building down so the offices on the upper floors are really taking shape. On the lower floors work continues on the restoration of the Georgian features, the installation of the new lift and the reconfiguration of areas to suit all of the Academy's needs. Work remains on target for completion at the end of August. Following this there will be a period of fit out and furnishing before the Academy moves in on 4 October.

We are doing fantastically well with the appeal to reach our £5 million fundraising target before the builders finish onsite at the end of August. We have raised £4.78 million to date and we are extremely grateful to the 280 Fellows who have contributed over £380,000 to the appeal.

However, we do still need to raise £220,000 to complete the project and we would be most grateful for additional support for the Fellows' Appeal at this stage in the campaign.



Academy office space nearing completion

Donors of £1,000 will be recognised on the permanent donor board in the reception at 41 Portland Place and we would like to include as many Fellows as possible on this.

To make a donation visit <http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk/p211.html> or contact sarah.porter@acmedsci.ac.uk.

Nominations and candidate update for 2011 election



New Fellows elected in 2010

We warmly welcomed the 40 individuals elected into the Academy Fellowship in 2010 at our Admission's Ceremony on 22 June at the Royal Society. As usual, it was a fantastic day where our new admissions were celebrated by existing Fellows and guests and were treated to an excellent Jean Shanks Lecture by Sir Alec Jeffreys FRS FMedSci.

With barely pause for breath, the 2011 Fellowship election cycle is already well underway. We rely totally on the efforts of our Fellows to ensure the quality of candidates in the election pool, both in proposing new candidates and updating the papers of existing nominations. Nomination papers were sent to Fellows last month and can be downloaded at

<http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk/p60.html>

All candidates are assessed on merit, however, with an aim to be fully representative of the UK as a whole, we ask that you consider worthy candidates from across the board (gender, geography, ethnicity, specialty) and beyond your institution.

Principal Nominators who have candidates in the pool are strongly encouraged to update their papers. This is especially important this year following some restructuring of the Sectional Committees in order to spread the work load. Principal Nominators will need to review the most appropriate Sectional Committee for their candidate. If you have any queries, please contact clare.brown@acmedsci.ac.uk

Dates for your diary

4 October

Academy moves to 41 Portland Place

13 October

FORUM Annual Lecture to be given by Dr Margaret Hamburg, Commissioner, US Food and Drugs Administration

18 November

AGM and 41 Portland Place Fellows opening event

Fellows choice of other events this autumn

Sir Peter Morris AC FRS FMedSci chooses the 2010 Lister oration.

'This is the most distinguished award in surgery in the UK and is awarded approximately every three years. The 2010 recipient of the Lister Medal, Professor Graeme Clerk FRS FRCS is internationally renowned for his pioneering research and development of the multi-channel cochlear ear implant which has provided an understanding of speech to profoundly deaf people, and to deaf born children.'

The 2010 Lister oration 'What can electrical stimulation with a cochlear implant tell us about brain function and human consciousness' takes place at 17.30 on 4 November, Royal College of Surgeons, London WC2A 3PE lgray@rcseng.ac.uk to book.