

UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD: UPDATE FOR THE STH BOARD JULY 2017

Professor Pam Shaw

1. New Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor

Following the appointment of the University's Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Shearer West, to the post of Vice-Chancellor at the University of Nottingham, the University has put in place interim arrangements. Professor Gill Valentine, Vice President and Head of Faculty of Social Sciences, has been appointed as interim **Provost/Deputy Vice-Chancellor** from Autumn 2017. Professor Valentine will hold this position until the appointment of a permanent Deputy Vice-Chancellor, to be advertised later in the year.

2. Yorkshire Cancer Research Senior Fellowships

There has been a strong response to the advertisement for YCR Connects Cancer Research Senior Fellowships. Up to 10 posts were advertised for Senior Clinical and Non-Clinical research fellowships. The following research themes were highlighted in the advert: Lung cancer; Improving clinical outcomes in common malignancies; Improved health and wellbeing with and beyond cancer; and Early diagnosis and access to treatment. Interviews are taking place on 21st July for the non-clinical fellows with 3 candidates being interviewed and interviews for the senior clinical fellows will take place on 27th July. 3 candidates are being interviewed for clinical positions with specialties in Medical Oncology, Palliative Medicine and Cardiothoracic Surgery.

3. NIHR Clinical Academic Training: Academic Clinical Fellows and Clinical Lecturer Awards

The Sheffield Clinical Academic Training programme has achieved outstanding success in a recent NIHR funding competition. Sheffield has a standard NIHR allocation each year of 7 Academic Clinical Fellows and 3 Clinical Lecturers. NIHR have reduced annual allocations for some Schools, but Sheffield was successful in retaining its standard allocation. In addition, there was a further opportunity to bid for additional positions for 2018. Against a tight deadline, a Sheffield bid was submitted that responded to each of 6 priority NIHR research themes: **i. Platform Science and Bioinformatics; ii. Therapeutics or Clinical Pharmacology; iii. Older People and Complex Health Needs; iv. Dementia; v. Medical Education and vi. Acute Care.** The competitive process assessed the strength of the Sheffield training programme, recruitment track record, the success of past trainees and research strength in each theme. The Sheffield CAT training programme is run by: Professor Dily Anumba, Director; Dr Lynsey Grieveson, Manager; and Dr Tim Chico, Dr Nigel Hoggard and Dr Caroline Mitchell, Deputy Directors. The Sheffield bid was successful in winning an additional 6 Academic Clinical Fellowship and 3 Clinical Lecturer posts, almost doubling the normal allocation. The total NIHR Clinical Academic Training funding package for 2018 totals £3.5 million.

4. Prestigious Awards

(i) **Dr Alex Rothman** from the Medical School Department of Infection Immunity and Cardiovascular Disease (IICD) has been awarded a prestigious Wellcome Trust Clinical Career Development Fellowship to pursue his aim to establish SMURF-1 inhibition as a novel anti-proliferative therapy for pulmonary arterial hypertension. He will spend time undertaking research in Sheffield, Cambridge and at Novartis in Boston, USA. This award builds on the excellent reputation in Sheffield for research into **pulmonary arterial hypertension**. Alex has been awarded a prestigious Wellcome Trust Clinical Career Development Fellowship to pursue his aim to establish SMURF-1 inhibition as a novel anti-proliferative therapy for pulmonary arterial hypertension. He will spend time undertaking research in Sheffield, Cambridge and at Novartis in Boston, USA and will be working with the top mentors in the world in basic science, clinical research and pharmaceutical development.

(ii) **Dr Johnathan Cooper-Knock** from the Department of Neuroscience has received the ENCALS (European Consortium for the Cure of ALS/MND) 2017 Young Investigator Award. John was appointed in 2016 to an NIHR Clinical Lectureship in Neurology to combine post-doctoral research with completion of his clinical training. The award has been made for his work on the commonest genetic subtype of motor neuron disease (ALS/MND) caused by an intronic hexanucleotide expansion in the C9orf72 gene. He has integrated clinical and neuropathological observations with in-vitro studies and genetics approaches leading to a number of important discoveries. He described the broad clinical and pathological phenotype of C9orf72-MND which has paved the way for the identification of disease modifiers and therapeutic targets. His work characterising the CNS molecular pathology of C9orf72-patient tissue has been significantly impactful in the field. He identified pathognomonic extra-motor pathology and described interactions between RNA-repeat molecules and RNA-binding proteins in CNS tissue and in vitro.

5. BRC update

The Biomedical Research Centre commenced on 1st April as part of a five year funded programme. Plans are well advanced for procurement and installation of an MRI-PET scanner as part of this research advancement. The scanner will also be available for clinical use. A fund raising “Big Walk” took place on 30th June 2017 with almost 300 people walking up to 50 miles in <24hours. So far the charitable event has raised ~£100,000 of philanthropic donations.

The governance structure for the BRC has been set up with Executive and Operations groups now established. Interviews are being held on 20th July for a BRC Manager (STH employed). Discussions around a PPI strategy are ongoing with the Clinical Research Facility and the Clinical Research Office. A draft training strategy has been prepared and is being reviewed by the Executive. Recruitment has begun for the clinical fellows and postgraduate research students supported by the BRC and multiple experimental medicine programmes in clinical neuroscience are underway.