Introduction – Glenn Rodrigo

The CVS Working Lives Group has been in place since 2013, and we exist to improve the working culture, environment and work-life balance for all members of our department. For my part I feel this is extremely important, as I for one wish to work in a successful department that both values and treats its staff well.

Many of the members have been on the group since its start, which has made us a close and trusting group. As a result we are able to openly discuss both easy and difficult issues that affect your work life balance and where appropriate, hold the Departmental Leadership Team (DLT) to account.

Who are we?

WLG membership reflects the makeup of the department, which provides a full range of perspectives to be considered when developing strategies to improve working lives.

New Members

In order to revamp our numbers and bring in fresh ideas, we dispatched our top recruiter aka “puss in boots”, to approach some excellent potential candidates and he didn’t disappoint! Welcome to our new members - **GGH:** Audrey Larrivé, Doug Miller, Gavin Whyman, Muhammad Abdelaziz. **RKCSB:** Emma Chung. **GGH/RKCSB:** David McVey, Angatu Yousuf. (Meet new members on p2-3).

What are we doing for you?

- **Departmental meetings**—we organise two all-staff and student meetings per year (one as an away-day), at which we celebrate staff, let you know what is happening and conduct two-way conversations to identify what makes your working life good or bad
- **Annual departmental surveys**— monitoring of staff and student opinion on your working life
- **WLG Webpages** - a hub for links to University policies and procedures, survey results, details of WLG meetings, FAQ, suggestions box
- **Representation** of WLG ideals and your feedback at Department Leadership Team meetings.
- Development of CVS Dignity at Work Policy, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy, HeForShe Strategy
- **Maintaining the profile of our off-campus sites** on University steering groups (Equalities, Health & Wellbeing)
- **Improved departmental social spaces:** refurbishment to RKCSB lunch area, heating and notice boards in the Café Cardiologique, clothes drying space (cyclists/runners) at Glenfield
- **Introduction of job shadowing** opportunities
- **Programme of events** e.g. ‘Lunch with...’, Resuscitation training (Feb 2018)
- **Flag up important information** e.g. availability of NHS parking permits to staff & students, new policies, events at the University

We are your group and can only work with your help. So please do keep feeding back your views and ideas through our website or directly to one of WLG members.

Existing Members

RKCSB: Lucy Beishon, Lakmini Liyanage, John McDonald.

If you feel that your staff-type is not represented then why not join? (Details on our website)
Newest Members to the WLG

Gavin Whyman

Based at: GGH mostly, but tend to wander around
Committee membership: Many. Not the social committee but possibly most of the others.
Hobbies: Photography and beer (which often produce the best results when combined)
Interesting Fact: According to Untappd as of 24th Jan 2018 I have had 1,422 unique and mostly interesting beers. While the First Friday Socials aren’t designed exclusively to get me to the next ‘badge’ at 2,500 check ins it was a major consideration.

Audrey Larrivé

Based at: GGH, CVRC
Committee Memberships: Dept Working Lives Group (Member)
CVS Research Committee
Interesting Fact: I’ve met Dr Derek Shepherd, aka McDreamy (Grey’s Anatomy) on several occasions round European racetracks.
Hobbies: Motorsports Racing (24hrs of Le Mans in particular), Rugby (attendance only!), Socialising, Travelling, Skiing, Reading, Hill Walking with friends and my gorgeous Cocker Spaniel

Emma Chung

Based at: RKCSB
Committee Memberships: College of Life Sciences Research Ethics Committee, Research Strategy, Athena-Swan SAT, Cerebral Haemodynamics in Aging and Stroke Medicine Group, CVS Imaging theme, University and Colleges Union plus various UHL Trust committees and external societies.
Interesting Fact: Banging your head against a wall burns 150 calories per hour.
Hobbies: I try to delude myself that I get to do my hobby for a living! Other ‘hobbies’ include the usual stuff of everyday life - exploring the world with my 2 year old daughter, ‘making stuff’, and generally ‘doing nothing’. I like a real fire, coffee, sleeping, sunshine, and taking long baths!

Doug Miller

Based at: GGH
Committee Memberships: Working Lives Group
Interesting fact: 90% pizza, 10% Irn Bru
Hobbies: Running, skiing, surgery
Newest Members to the WLG

David McVey
Based at: GGH CVRC & LRI RKCSB
Committee memberships: Dept Working Lives Group
Interesting fact: I was once chased by an angry iguana in the Caribbean – an onlooker was laughing so hard he almost fell into a pond!
Hobbies: Reading, listening to music, gaming, baking the occasional cake and dabbling in 3D printing.

Angatu Yousuf
Based at: GGH (but currently based at LRI)
Committee Memberships: Dept Working Lives Group
Interesting Fact: I think, count, and dream in three separate languages.
Hobbies: Travelling, dancing, eating cake.

Muhammad Abdelaziz
Based at: GGH
Committee Membership: Dept Working Lives Committee
Interesting facts: I hate snakes that I once thought I was OPHIDIOPHOBIC! (Ophidiophobia is the abnormal fear of snakes)
Hobbies: Reading, TV, household tinkering, gardening & sports

Sue Page
Based at: GGH
Committee Membership: Dept Working Lives Group (Secretary)
Interesting fact: I’ve met Guy Martin!
Hobbies: walking, cycling and anything to do with motorsport or aviation.
Staff and Student Away Day 2017
As well as important departmental and University updates, the annual Departmental Away Day saw the return of the very popular bite-size presentations; this year provided by a wide range of staff, focussed on ‘a day in the life of CVS’. Table discussions allowed the opportunity to talk with colleagues you may not have met previously and feedback on the topics of mentoring, well-being and cross-site integration.

After a delicious lunch, we strolled down to the sports centre where the Social Committee provided a great afternoon of pirate-themed team games!

Away Day 2018
This year’s Away Day will take place on Friday 11th May – please save the date in your diaries and if you have any suggestions for the meeting, please feedback to the WLG.

Staff and Student Surveys
A summary of the results of our Departmental Staff and PGR Student Surveys was presented at the Departmental Meeting in October and the full summaries are available to view on our WLG Survey webpages. Key areas for improvement, which will form actions for the Department in the coming year are:

- To continue to address issues around working within a multi-site department
- To support staff workload
- To improve the support for career progression of staff and students
- To continue to promote a culture that supports equality, diversity and inclusion
- To continue to improve communication

Thank you to everyone who participated, your feedback is important to us.

Outcomes from Away Day and Surveys
Feedback from the Away Day and surveys is used to gauge departmental morale and to flag up issues of concern and areas for improvement, which we present to DLT to help formulate policy and initiatives. The WLG also use your to formulate an action plan for the year. For this year the WLG will focus on;

Celebrating Staff Awards
- Acknowledging, valuing and rewarding significant, creative and supportive working practice

Staff moral and well-being
- Rebuild staff trust and confidence
- Have a more “personal” approach to staff support to enhance both staff and user satisfaction
- Photo boards, web based photos
- Embed the University ideals of staff Health & Well-being in the department

Improve department cohesion
- Build on cross-site activities
- Develop more cohesion between basic science researchers, clinical and BRC staff
Mindfulness seems to be everywhere at the moment: the mindful living show, mindful eating, I even saw a mindful colouring book at the supermarket the other day. So why all the fuss about mindfulness, and what’s it all about? The most common and what I feel is the best definition for mindfulness is that provided by Jon Kabat-Zinn, who suggests mindfulness as ‘a moment to moment awareness that is cultivated by purposefully paying attention to the present moment, with a non-judgmental attitude’. We all have a capacity to be mindful, it is something that we do naturally, and just like developing our fitness through exercise to support health, we can cultivate mindfulness through meditation to support health and wellbeing.

Mindfulness has its roots in Buddhism which gives it some real road mileage, about 2,500 years, though it has been the empirical findings of mindfulness interventions that have led to its contemporary popularity. Research studies show the practice of mindfulness, not only to have beneficial effects for treating specific psychiatric conditions, such as recurring depression, but also how the practice of mindfulness is effective for supporting wellbeing through reducing stress, anxiety, and in ameliorating the quality of life of individuals in the general population. Importantly a growing body of evidence is showing that access to mindfulness supports student mental health too.

Such findings have led mindfulness to be a part of the core curriculum that is taught to medical students at the University of Leicester as part of a Health Enhancement Programme. Excitingly for staff and students at the University, various mindfulness programmes are going to be made available as part of the Staff Health and Wellbeing Strategy. There will be a ‘mindful menu’ to choose from including lectures providing information about mindfulness and the evidence supporting it, short workshops that provide experience of mindfulness meditation introducing individuals to the practice, the full 8-week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course, and even the possibility of a mindfulness cafe. The dates for these various events have not yet been finalised but in the near future announcements will be made, and currently 2 hour mindfulness workshop for Postgraduate students is available as part of the College of Life Sciences Postgraduate Research Training Programme.

HeForShe in CVS – Gina Barnett

The CVS HeForShe Strategy outlines our department’s commitment to supporting the UN HeForShe Campaign, which aims to encourage men and boys to take action against gender inequality. CVS has a series of events planned, some of which will be run jointly with the Department of Infection, Immunity and Inflammation. The first of these was a seminar on 29th November 2017, at the George Davies Centre; ‘Standing Together Against Gender-based Violence’, which was attended by around 60 staff and students from across the University.

‘Standing Together Against Gender-based Violence’: Key facts from this seminar:

Harriet Smailes (Standing Together Project officer, Student Welfare Service) and Mollie Henstock (SU Student welfare officer) presented an overview of the results of the recent Universities UK Taskforce report examining violence and harassment affecting UK students, the national statistics, those for Leicester and what is in place for students here at Leicester, including the ‘Standing Together’ campaign. Future directions include improved reporting and support, policies and procedures expansion of ‘Standing Together’ (to include anti-bullying) - a clear message that there is zero tolerance of such behaviour at our University.

Dr Clare Gunby (Dept of Criminology) and Dr Anna Carline (Dept of Law) presented joint research investigating female students’ experiences and responses to unwanted sexual attention in bar and club spaces. They discussed what ‘unwanted sexual attention’ includes and identified the strategies implemented by young women to manage such behaviour. Unwanted sexual attention has now become a normalised part of a night out amongst young people in bars and clubs, and although women often develop a number of strategies to cope with this, e.g. informal buddy systems, leaving or avoiding certain venues, there is a lack of lack of parity for women to be able to enjoy a night out.
The speakers discussed how there must be a multi-pronged approach to prevention: venues must take active role in responding to incidents seriously; identification of ‘safe’ venues; we must name this activity as not tolerable, support continuous and reinforced prevention campaigns, and challenge sexist structures and norms. The seminar was recorded: https://leicester.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=e3df3eff-f010-4d7a-a020-6ee2729741df. The next CVS/3I HeForShe event will be at Glenfield: Quiet Earthquakes, a Theatre Production, details to follow.

As a department, it is important that we support University of Leicester campaigns such as Standing Together and ensure that we provide a safe working environment and culture for all of our staff and students.

Staff Health and Wellbeing
On behalf of the WLG, Glenn Rodrigo attends the Staff Health and Wellbeing steering group where he actively promote the department’s needs, resulting from its off-main site accommodation.

The H&WB steering group have highlighted a number of areas that will hopefully impact positively on your working lives;

- Active Travel policy
- Menopause policy, Men’s Health
- Emotional wellbeing is a major focus of H&WB (Mindfulness program)
- University wide Anti-bullying policy
- Staff volunteering policy

For further details of events and important dates, visit their website: https://www2.le.ac.uk/projects/staff-hwb.

WLG ‘Lunch with’ events
Our ‘Lunch with’ events aim to provide an opportunity for staff and students to hear about University initiatives and to hear about work not directly related to our research.

In October, Nicola Junkin, University Staff Health and Wellbeing Lead, discussed the establishment of a comprehensive strategy for Health and Wellbeing. Her talk covered how this would eventually look and gave a summary of the types of events and activities to expect in the coming year and left a notice board highlighting the 6 pillars of this strategy, with an invitation for suggestions.

In January, Dr William Toff spoke about cardiac arrest in the community and the Heartwize Resuscitation Training Programme that runs in schools and community groups and aims to increase bystander CPR confidence and patient survival. BOOK YOUR PLACE ON OUR CPR & DEFIBRILLATOR TRAINING SESSIONS IN FEBRUARY! (See ‘Events box)

Upcoming WLG Events
Heartwize Resuscitation Training Sessions – free 1 hour session on CPR and use of community defibrillators, open to all staff and students on 21st or 28th February. Contact Gina Barnett (gb183@le.ac.uk) to book your place.

CVS International Women’s Day Event
Thursday 8th March 2018

Lunch With...Dr John MacDonald - Mindfulness
Spring 2018, Date TBA

Lunch with...CVS Outreach Steering Group
Spring/Summer 2018, Date TBA

Menopause Policy Workshop
19th March 2018, Venue TBA

Staff and Student Away Day
Friday 11th May 2018

General comments
To have your say on anything that impacts on you work-life balance, and which you think we can help, drop us a suggestion in our post box on a web page or talk to one of the members www.le.ac.uk/cardiovascular-sciences/working-lives