Dear Colleagues

First, my sincere apologies for the tardiness of my February update, which I have chosen to combine with the March newsletter. There have been a number of University and College deadlines related to transformation, the response to the College External Review, and the annual planning process that have kept me somewhat occupied! As a consequence, this will be a more prolonged update than normal, but please read, as ultimately there are items that will affect us all; some more than others.

**College Response to the External Review**

I am sure that many of you will have had an opportunity to attend one of the Pro Vice Chancellor and Dean’s Town Hall meetings to outline the College response to the External Review. As some of you will be aware, there continues to be an opportunity to feedback on the response, and I would strongly encourage you to do so. From a Departmental perspective, the Departmental Leadership Team have sent a response, where we shared the vision to be recognised as a world-class, discovery-led, UK biomedical centre; recognised the importance of teaching as a primary function of the University and College, and our willingness to engage with the proposed new Teaching Schools in the delivery of high quality undergraduate and post graduate teaching and training; and strongly supported the initiatives that enhanced our relationship with the NHS, particularly the Honorary appointments and Academic Champions. However, we expressed our serious reservations to form a Glenfield-based Department of Cardiorespiratory Science, and any move that would transfer our Cardiovascular genomics expertise and strength to a Department of Genetics and Genomics. Nonetheless, it is important that we engage more effectively, not just with colleagues in Respiratory Sciences and Genetics, but across the Schools and Departments of the College, and that we are seen to do so. I will discuss potential opportunities for this at forthcoming staff and student meetings.

**Professional Services Reorganisation**

You may also be aware of on-going discussions about the reorganisation of our professional services, which forms part of an on-going College-wide process. The ultimate aim is to provide a responsive high quality professional services function for the entire Department from the Glenfield site; to further enhance the experience of our staff and students; to provide dedicated support to the financial, research and teaching functions of the Department; to increase flexibility and career development opportunities for our professional services staff. However, it is important to recognise that any reorganisation is very unsettling for the staff involved, whom we must all do our very best to support. We should also recognise that we have an excellent, committed and hard-working professional services team, whom we want to support (and they to support us) for the long-term.

**Technical Services Review**

A number of you will have contributed to the on-going College-wide technical services review. We will be receiving initial feedback from this review to representatives of the Departmental Leadership Team on Monday 6th March, and I will update you on what this means as a Department in due course, though the College will also be providing updates to staff as well.

**Academic Workload Model**

I think it is also important to highlight that academic staff are not immune from the many workstreams in the College and wider University. A revised Academic Workload Model that will be simplified, better applicable across the University, and recognises contributions to teaching, research and administration...
both internally and externally was initially discussed at University Executive Board. As I receive further updates, I will bring these to the Academic Staff meeting and individuals, as appropriate.

Engagement with Honorary Staff
I will shortly be putting together a series of meetings specifically for Honorary staff to discuss ways of improving communication, and working together to achieve the research and education ambitions of the Department.

Successes
We continue to enjoy significant grant and other successes, and this is highlighted elsewhere in the newsletter. However, I would like to recognise the contribution that everyone made to Professor Gavin Murphy’s highly successful BHF site visit, and to extend particular congratulations to Dr Liam Heaney, who has been selected to take part in the STEM for Britain 2017 event, where he will be presenting a poster. STEM for Britain 2017 is a competition to allow early career researchers to showcase their research to members of parliament as part of the government’s STEM initiative. It is designed to allow MPs to understand what the UK’s current younger generation of researchers are doing, and how it impacts on society as a whole.

In a recent conversation with Liam, he felt that it would also be a good idea to share publication success to increase knowledge about the research on-going within the Department. Accordingly, he invites you to share a pdf copy of your 'highlight' publications with him, together with a 3 to 4 line 'lay summary', so that he can collate in a termly ‘Research Highlights of CVS’ newsletter.

Meetings and Visits
Professor Paul Boyle, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University, has started a series of informal question and answer breakfasts. These are open to anyone, and the next events are on Tuesdays 7th March and 11th April, from 0830 to 0930, with coffee and pastries available from 0815. Please look out for these.

On a feeding note, the Working Lives Group is initiating a ‘Lunch with……’ from Wednesday 8th March. I will be hosting the inaugural event so please drop in to Café Cardiologique on this day from 12 noon.

Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Scientific Advisor to the Government, will be visiting Leicester on Friday 10th March 2017. As part of his visit, he will be visiting the Department between 1200 and 1330, so he may well be visiting a lab near you!

And Finally...
As I re-read this newsletter, I realise that there is little that is particularly cheery, which is a reflection of the on-going challenges and changes that the University faces. One of the most important things at these times is communication: the opportunity to ask questions and to receive answers. I would like to reiterate that I am happy to meet and talk, to groups or to individuals – as I have said before, I do not promise to always provide an answer, or to always provide the answer that you want to hear, but I will listen and raise your comments and concerns to others. Above all, we should recognise the many strengths of our Department; the most important being you, its staff and students.

With very best wishes
Tom
A Warm Welcome…

... to new staff who have joined the Department recently:

**Anvesha Singh** joins us on 1st March as an NIHR Clinical Lecturer in Cardiology.

Research Assistant **Elvina Chrysanthou** joined Prof Toru Suzuki’s group on 1st February.

**Hardeep Aujla** has commenced his role as Clinical Trials Co-ordinator in Prof Gavin Murphy’s group based in CSW.

PhD student: **Fahad Almutairi** with Dr Emma Chung at RKCSB.

Honorary Visiting Fellows: **Dr Yanwei Hu** and **Dr Xin Ma** will be hosted by Prof Shu Ye and will be based in CVRC 3.03.

Research Fellows: **Mr Andrew Batchelder** and **Mr Andrew Duncan** have joined Prof Matt Bown’s research group.

Congratulations!

**Bradley Toghill** who has had a first author paper accepted for publication in Cardiovascular Pathology (27:71-75) entitled “**Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm – an independent disease to atherosclerosis?**”

**Dimitra Aravani** who has successfully gained her PhD on 2nd February 2017.

**University Professor receives Lifetime Achievement award**

Professor Tony Gershlick has been awarded the inaugural British Cardiovascular Intervention Society (BCIS) Lifetime Achievement Career Award for his contribution to the field.

Heartwize Programme Shortlisted for BMJ Award

The Heartwize Resuscitation Training Programme, led by Drs William Toff and Doug Skehan, has received further national recognition, having been shortlisted in the Education category of the BMJ Awards 2017 ([http://thebmjawards.bmj.com](http://thebmjawards.bmj.com)). The team will be making a presentation to the judges on 8th March, with the winners being announced at an awards ceremony on 4th May. The Heartwize Programme, which was originally focused on training secondary school pupils in CPR and defibrillator awareness, is continuing to expand to provide training in the wider community. Last month saw the launch of ‘**Heart Aware Cricket**’, a collaboration with the Leicestershire County Cricket Club and the Joe Humphries Memorial Trust that will raise further awareness of the problem of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest and provide resuscitation skills training for every cricket club in the county.

Outreach

**CVS at the Big Bang Science Fair**

On Saturday 25th February a group of CVS staff/students represented the department at the Big Bang Science Fair at Leicester Grammar School.

Numerous children and parents came over to our stand, and participated in displays and activities to learn about the heart, such as a modelling blood flow activity. The Big Bang Science Fair was a great event with impressive crowds, and our participation was well-received. It was thoroughly enjoyable, to watch young people engaging with and enjoying science!

If you are interested in participating in future events please contact the Outreach group; Meeta Patel, Jodie Sandhu, Matthew Denniff, Gina Barnett, Sukhvir Rai, Angatu Yousuf, Meeta Solanki.
Research News

A research study led by Anvesha Singh and Gerry McCann has been extensively covered in the media. The PRIMID AS study was published in the European Heart J (10.1093/eurheartj/ehx001) and showed that exercise testing, which is recommended to determine whether patients with aortic stenosis are likely to develop symptoms or not has an accuracy of less than 60%. Almost double the number of patients who had a positive test (35/55) did not develop symptoms within 12 months. If the International guidelines were followed, this would suggest many asymptomatic patients may be sent for aortic valve replacement prematurely. Further randomised controlled trials are needed to determine whether operating on asymptomatic patients with severe AS is beneficial in the medium-term (Gerry McCann and Gavin Murphy along with colleagues in the UK and Australia have submitted a grant to the BHF to address this question). The study was covered in 10 news outlets including the Daily Mirror and Mail as well as by BBC East Midlands on 28 Feb who came to film in the BRU.

Research suggests being overweight protects heart surgery patients

Researchers funded by the British Heart Foundation (BHF), collected data about 401,227 adults in the UK and Ireland who had undergone cardiac surgery between 1st April 2002 and 31st March 2013.

First Friday

Even though I can’t pronounce it, it is fyraftensbajer time again. As usual we’ll be leaving the office at round 3 o’clock* and heading for the Brewdog. Don’t forget your NUS card (yes staff can get one too), as there is a 15% discount before 5pm! (*Don’t forget the usual disclaimer that this isn’t additional time off, but needs to be built into your working month).

Grants Awarded

Professor P Baker, Dr R Barber (Molecular and Cell Biology), Dr A Gaw (Cancer Studies)
Developing translational science capabilities to support the delivery of precision medicine at the University of Leicester
£560,000 MRC of which 10% reported to CVS

Professor A Gershlick, Professor G McCann, Dr G Barton (University of East Anglia)
RAPID NSTEMI – Revascularisation in ACS patients: Immediate versus delayed intervention. A study assessing the impact of very early intervention on outcomes in NSTEMI-ACS patients.
£1,573,061 British Heart Foundation

Professor G Murphy
Minimally invasive thoracoscopically-guided right minithoracotomy versus conventional sternotomy for mitral valve repair: a multicentre randomised controlled trial (UK Mini Mitral).
£9,552 NIHR via South Tees NHS Foundation

Professor GA Ng
Minimally invasive thoracoscopically-guided right minithoracotomy versus conventional sternotomy for mitral valve repair: a multicentre randomised controlled trial (UK Mini Mitral).
£1,573,061 British Heart Foundation

Professor T Suzuki
Comparative analysis of heart failure biomarkers between Japanese and Europeans.
£240,883 Japan Heart Foundation

Working Lives Group

Date for your diary - 8th March from 12pm, location is Café Cardiologique.
For our “Lunch with…” series – this month it will be with Professor Tom Robinson (don’t forget to bring your lunch!)

There will also be an International Women’s Day celebration of female researchers in the department (poster presentations with refreshments available from 12pm).

Our latest newsletter is due out soon – don’t forget to add your comments or leave feedback on our website.