

## RDM Newsletter

---

June 2018

Dear all,

Welcome to the latest edition of the RDM Newsletter. As always, we have a huge number of successes to celebrate within the department and I hope that you enjoy learning about activities taking place across RDM.

The most notable achievement in the past months was the election of Prof Vincenzo Cerundolo as a Fellow of the Royal Society. This prestigious honour recognises his pioneering work on T cell immunology, particularly his discoveries on how peptides and lipids are processed and presented to T cells. This research has opened new therapeutic avenues. Enzo is Professor of Immunology, Director of the MRC Human Immunology Unit at the MRC WIMM, and Head of the Investigative Medicine Division in RDM.

I also want to highlight the first recipients of the RDM Award for Excellence in Supervision. Prof Graham Ogg and Associate Prof Tatjana Sauka-Spengler were each nominated by multiple members of their teams and were praised for the insight, time and enthusiasm they put into the development of their staff and students. Reading your nominations about excellence in supervision was a wonderful experience and I am proud that we have so many nurturing supervisors in the department.

The RDM Learning and Development Programme continues to be a successful initiative, with overwhelmingly positive feedback. We are currently working on how we can best continue to deliver the programme in 2018/2019 – please do get in touch via [cdc@rdm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:cdc@rdm.ox.ac.uk) if you have any suggestions.

Keep an eye out for the next Staff Survey, which will be disseminated shortly. This anonymous survey is hugely important to us; it allows us to hear your views on a variety of topics and informs our plans to help shape the working culture within the department. Your responses are analysed by the Medical Sciences Division and we have no way of identifying staff members, so please be honest – we can only make changes if we know about concerns. Equally, if you've seen improvements please do say so. Your responses will also feed into our Athena SWAN Silver Award renewal, which will be taking place in 2019. Please help us exceed the 69% response rate that we achieved in 2016 Staff Survey so we can show a good level of involvement and can capture as many views as possible.

We are making changes to the structure of the committees responsible for delivering our Athena SWAN action plan. Until now, we have had committees in each of our divisions, with representation from a variety of staff members. These committees have been a success and were hugely important in securing our Athena SWAN Silver Award. In order to keep-up momentum, we will now move to a 'working group' model, where interested parties will be tasked with tackling various issues. We hope that this will enable more people to get involved with our Athena SWAN action plan and facilitate intra-divisional working. You can find out more within the Newsletter.

I would also like to draw your attention to a celebration of the life of Prof Kevin Gatter on 3 July 2018. Kevin sadly passed away last year and this will be an opportunity to remember his life – both professional and personal. More details are within this Newsletter.

As ever, if you have any feedback on the Newsletter, please get in touch with [communications@rdm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:communications@rdm.ox.ac.uk)

With best wishes,

Hugh Watkins

# Congratulations

## Professor Vincenzo Cerundolo elected a Fellow of the Royal Society



We're delighted to announce that Prof Vincenzo Cerundolo has been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. This is a very prestigious honour and one that recognises Enzo's world leading research on T cell immunology, particularly his discoveries on how peptides and lipids are processed and presented to T cells. This research has opened new therapeutic avenues.

Enzo is Professor of Immunology in our Department, Director of the MRC Human Immunology Unit at the MRC WIMM, and Head of the Investigative Medicine Division of RDM.

The Fellowship of the Royal Society is made up of the most eminent scientists, engineers and technologists from or living and working in the UK and the Commonwealth. Enzo joins an impressive roster of researchers past and present. You can read about Enzo's achievement on the [RDM website](#) and on the [Royal Society website](#). Congratulations to Enzo on this well-deserved achievement.

## British Cardiovascular Society (BCS) Awards to RDM researchers

Congratulations to **Prof Hugh Watkins** who was awarded the Mackenzie Medal by the British Cardiovascular Society in recognition of his outstanding service to British Cardiology. The medal was presented at the recent BCS Conference.

Congratulations also goes to **Laurienne Edgar**, a DPhil student working with Prof Robin Choudhury (CVM), who won the Young Investigator Award and the Best Abstract Award (from over 600 abstracts) at the recent BCS Conference. The title of her abstract was "*Hyperglycaemia-induced trained immunity in macrophages and their precursors promotes atherosclerosis despite glucose normalisation*". Very well deserved Laurienne. The research was funded and enabled by the Novo Nordisk Foundation Consortium and Laurienne is supported by the BHF four year graduate programme in Oxford.



## NIHR Senior Investigator Awards

Congratulations to **Prof Graham Ogg** (MRC HIU, MRC WIMM, IMD) and **Prof Paresh Vyas** (MRC MHU, MRC WIMM, NDCLS) who have been named National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) Senior Investigators in recognition of their "outstanding contribution to clinical and applied health and social care research". In addition, **Prof Mark McCarthy** (OCDEM) had his NIHR Senior Investigator award renewed. This is a tremendous achievement for all of them as these are highly competitive and prestigious awards.

## The Blaxter Award

**Keith Frayn**, Emeritus Professor of Human Metabolism, has been awarded [The Blaxter Award](#) by the Nutrition Society. This new award from the Society recognises the achievements of scientists working within the area of Whole Body Metabolism and Animal Nutrition. During his career, Keith made major contributions to our understanding of fat metabolism, which was the focus of his research for many years while at OCDEM.

## In the News

### Premature hearts less able to cope with exercise

The hearts of people born prematurely are less able to cope with the pressures of exercise in adulthood, according to a new study published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* and part-funded by the British Heart Foundation and the NIHR Oxford Biomedical Research Centre. The research was led by **Dr Adam Lewandowski** in the Cardiovascular Clinical Research Facility. [Read the full story here.](#)



### Not all fat is equal: Gene that contributes to female body shape may increase risk of type 2 diabetes by altering the development of fat cells

Researchers have identified a gene that in women is linked to the creation and location of new fat cells and in turn contributes to an increased risk of type 2 diabetes. The work was led by **Prof Mark McCarthy** and published in *Nature Genetics*. [Read the full story here.](#)

### New guidelines to monitor blood cancer in babies with Down syndrome

Research in recent years has revealed that babies with Down Syndrome usually have abnormalities in their blood when they are born. Many of these problems rapidly disappear, but a small number go on to develop either transient Leukaemia of Down Syndrome (1 in 10 babies) or Myeloid Leukaemia of Down Syndrome (between 1 in 100 and 1 in 50 babies). The new British Society for Haematology have published [guidelines](#) in the British Journal of Haematology, led by a group including **Prof Paresh Vyas** (MRC MHU, MRC WIMM, NDCLS) and Prof Irene Roberts (Department of Paediatrics) recommending that all babies with Down Syndrome should have a blood count and blood film in the first few days of life. The recommendations result from research by Prof Paresh Vyas and Prof Irene Roberts. [Read the full story here.](#)

## Research highlights

[Prof Cerundolo](#) and his team (MRC HIU, MRC WIMM, IMD) have defined the temporal and spatial dynamics of Mucosal-associated invariant T (MAIT) cells in humans, in response to *Salmonella Paratyphi A* infection. The work demonstrated how MAIT cells sit at the interface of innate and adaptive immunity and highlights that MAIT cells could be the subject of specific vaccination strategies. Read the paper '[MAIT cell clonal expansion and TCR repertoire shaping in human volunteers challenged with Salmonella Paratyphi A](#)' in *Nature Communications*.

[Associate Prof Tatjana Sauka-Spengler](#) (MRC WIMM, NDCLS) and her team have developed an adaptable CRISPR/Cas9 toolkit to enable genome and epigenome engineering in the chicken embryo. The platform allowed the team to probe gene regulatory interactions in the neural crest. The research was published in *Development*. [Read the paper.](#)

[Dr Liz Ormondroyd](#) (CVM) has published new insights into reporting on findings from genetic sequencing. There is still debate about whether people undergoing genetic sequencing should be informed of secondary findings – variants associated with health conditions other than the disease being investigated. In a series of interviews, Dr Ormondroyd conducted interviews in order to understand the views of those going through the process. The research was published in the [European Journal of Human Genetics](#).

A team from OCDEM, led by former Novo Nordisk Research Fellow [Dr Martijn van Bunt](#) have defined the differential gene expression in developing islets. The research was published in [Diabetologia](#) and gives new insights into how islet development impacts on type 2 diabetes risk.

# Highlights from the RDM Annual Symposium

Thank you to everyone who made our annual symposium on 19 March such a success. The Symposium was a wonderful chance to hear about the latest developments across the department, and we hope you found it a useful opportunity to look for synergies between different research programmes. Our keynote speaker, Prof Fiona Powrie (Director of the Kennedy Institute), set the scene for the day with her work on inflammation; it is clear that aberrant immune system responses underpin many of the diseases we work on in the department.



Credit: Bob Mahoney

Speaker highlights included the short talks from our Graduate Prize Winners – three talented young researchers who recently won awards for their scientific excellence and collaborative working. Learn more about the work of Huw Colin York, Quentin Ferry and Thomas Riffelmacher [online here](#).

## RDM Awards for Excellent Supervision

Congratulations to Professor Graham Ogg and Associate Professor Tatjana Sauka-Spengler – the first recipients of the RDM Awards for Excellent Supervision.

[Professor Ogg](#) has supervised a large number of DPhil students and postdocs in recent years. Despite having a large group, he was recognised as always having time to meet people and provide prompt and excellent feedback. He helps members of his team to prepare for talks, seminars and assessments, generously devoting his time, despite being busy. More than one member of his team commented on his incredible enthusiasm and optimism. Even when lab members are struggling with their projects, they can go into a meeting with Graham feeling despondent about their research and come out beaming, feeling inspired and encouraged to continue.



Credit: Bob Mahoney

[Professor Sauka-Spengler](#), Associate Professor of Genome Biology, inspires her group with her passion for science. She pushes her team hard, with several team members commenting that they have achieved more than they thought they were capable of. In addition, she is able to adjust her supervision style to the needs of the student/postdoc and the stage of the project. Tatjana offers additional guidance in the early stages, before standing back a bit more to allow people to achieve independence in their research. She is highly driven by the science, and combines this with a genuine interest in the careers and lives of members of her group.

As well as the two awards, [Associate Professor Leanne Hodson](#) (OCDEM) and [Associate Professor Jan Rehwinkel](#) (MRC HIU, MRC WIMM, Investigative Medicine Division) were commended for their excellent work in supervising their students and postdocs. There were a number of other strong nominations and the panel were very pleased to read accounts of excellent supervision occurring in each of RDM's divisions.

## Poster Prize Winners

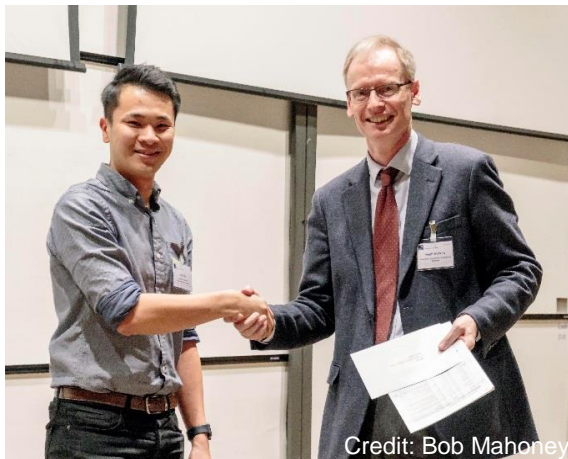
Congratulations to all the poster prize winners.

[Henry Laurensen-Schafer](#) is a DPhil student working with [Prof Tao Dong](#) (MRC HIU, MRC WIMM, IMD). His poster, 'The *IFITM3* SNP rs12252 Differentially Affects the Blood Transcriptional Signatures in Influenza Patients' won the prize for best student poster. Henry's work focuses on *IFITM3*, a gene involved in innate antiviral immunity that plays a key role in defence against the H1N1 flu virus. He investigates single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) that modulate the human response to viral infection and is collaborating with Beijing You'An Hospital to study samples from people who were ill during the 2009 H1N1 pandemic.



Credit: Bob Mahoney

A very close runner up was [Toni Baumlér](#), DPhil student with [Associate Prof Tudor Fulga](#) (MRC WIMM, NDCLS). Toni presented his work on 'Engineering synthetic signalling pathways with programmable dCas9-based chimeric receptors'.



Credit: Bob Mahoney

[Dr Tiong Tan \(Jack\)](#) (Gill and Hyde lab, NDCLS) won this year's non-student poster prize for his work on 'Reporter influenza viruses for *in vivo* testing of neutralising antibodies against pandemic strains without requiring high-level containment facilities'. Jack has been developing a Fluciferase assay for testing neutralising antibodies against contagious viruses in lower containment level animal facilities that usually required.

[Dr Jill Brown](#) (Buckle lab, MRC MHU, MRC WIMM, NDCLS) was a very close runner-up for her poster entitled 'Tissue-specific self-interacting chromatin domains form early in erythroid differentiation and create a permissive environment for gene expression'.

## Successes

### Congratulations to the following students who recently passed their DPhil vivas

**Florian Bonkhofer** worked on 'Identification of Novel Runx1 Targets involved in HSC Development' and was supervised by **Prof Roger Patient** and **Prof Marella De Bruijn**.

**Chris Booth** worked on the 'Collaboration of Ezh2 and Runx1 Inactivating Mutations in Malignant Haematopoiesis'. He was supervised by **Prof Sten Eirik Jacobsen** and **Associate Prof Adam Mead**.

**Tom Cahill** investigated 'Macrophages in cardiac development, repair and regeneration' and was supervised by **Prof Robin Choudhury** and **Prof Paul Riley**.

**Nathan Denton** delved into 'Depot-specific mechanisms determining human fat distribution' and was supervised by **Dr Katherine Pinnick** and **Prof Fredrik Karpe**.



*Vanessa Chong celebrating with her supervisor Tatjana.*

**Vanessa Chong** worked on 'Biotagging, a genetically encoded toolkit in the zebrafish, reveals novel non-coding RNA players during neural crest and myocardium development' and was supervised by **Associate Prof Tatjana Sauka-Spengler**.

**Michael Desborough** investigated 'Desmopressin for the treatment of thrombocytopenia or platelet dysfunction' and was supervised by **Dr Simon Stanworth** and **Dr Lise Estcourt**.

**Gregorio Dias Junior** worked on the 'Characterisation of the Innate Immune Sensor MDA5' and was supervised by **Associate Prof Jan Rehwinkel** and **Prof Christian Eggeling**.

**Tomasz Dobrzycki** investigated 'Molecular Regulation and Function of GATA2 in the Programming of Haemogenic Endothelium' and was supervised by **Prof Roger Patient** and **Dr Rui Monteiro**.

**Laura Godfrey** investigated 'The Role of DOT1L in MLL-AF4 Leukaemia' and was supervised by **Associate Prof Thomas Milne** and **Prof Irene Roberts**.

**Lauren Howson** explored 'MAIT cells in Sterile and Non-sterile Inflammation' and was supervised by **Prof Vincenzo Cerundolo**.

**Graeme Keith** worked on 'An Arterial Spin Labelling Method for the Measurement of Myocardial Perfusion in Humans at 3 Tesla' and was supervised by **Associate Prof Matthew Robson**.

**Pei jin Lim** interrogated 'Interactions between the Nrf2 antioxidant response and mammalian iron homeostasis', supervised by **Associate Prof Hal Drakesmith**.

**Nikolaos Nikolaou** unravelled 'the Role of AKR1D1 in Human Hepatocytes' and was supervised by **Associate Prof Leanne Hodson** and **Prof Jeremy Tomlinson**.



*Lauren Howson celebrating with the Cerundolo lab.*

**Thomas Riffelmacher** investigated 'Autophagy-dependent generation of free fatty acids is essential for normal neutrophil differentiation by guiding an energy-metabolic switch' and was supervised by **Prof Sten Eirik Jacobsen** and **Prof Katja Simon**. Thomas was one of our Graduate Studies Prize winners in 2017.

**Pauline Robbe** worked on 'Addressing challenges of molecular precision diagnostics for cancer patients in the genomics era' and was supervised by **Prof Francesca Buffa** and **Prof Anna Schuh**.

**Tess Stanly** looked into the 'Role of the actin cytoskeleton in regulating LYVE-1 lateral diffusion and function' and was supervised by **Prof Christian Eggeling** and **Prof David Jackson**.

**Tiong Kit (Jack) Tan** worked on the 'Development of Viral Vectors for Passive Immunisation against Influenza' and was supervised by **Associate Prof Steve Hyde** and **Prof Deborah Gill**.

**Ross Thorne** completed his thesis on the 'Definition and Analysis of an MLL-AF4 Gene Regulatory Network' and was supervised by **Associate Prof Thomas Milne**.

**Rohan Wijesurendra** completed his thesis on 'Potential Mechanisms Underlying Impaired Left Ventricular Function in Atrial Fibrillation: Insights from Multi-Parametric Cardiac Magnetic Resonance'

and was supervised by **Prof Barbara Casadei**, **Associate Prof Vanessa Ferreira** and **Prof Stefan Neubauer**.

Congratulations to all of you on your fantastic achievements! We wish you every success in your next steps.

## Outstanding Graduate Supervisor Award

Congratulations to Prof Charalambos Antoniadis (CVM) who won an Oxford SU Student Led Teaching Award - [Outstanding Graduate Supervisor Award](#). The award is a real sign of appreciation from Oxford University's student body and recognises the recipient's enormous talent and hard work. It is a very impressive achievement.



## British Science Association Media Fellowship 2018



Loyal Liverpool, a third year DPhil student working with Associate Professor Jan Rehwinkel, has been awarded a prestigious British Science Association (BSA) media fellowship, funded by the Society for Applied Microbiology. This is an extremely competitive and prestigious fellowship, so many congratulations to Layal.

The [BSA Media Fellowship](#) funds scientists to spend two to six weeks working at a well-known media outlet during the summer of 2018. BSA Media Fellows are mentored by professional journalists and learn how the media operates and reports on science, how to communicate with the media and to engage the wider public with science through the media.

Following their media placement, Fellows attend the British Science Festival in September, where they have the opportunity to gain valuable experience working in the BSA Press Centre alongside a range of media organisations from all over the UK.

## Article on Athena SWAN chosen as 'One to Change the World'

The 2017 article "[Advancing gender equality through the Athena SWAN Charter for Women in Science: an exploratory study of women's and men's perceptions](#)" by Pavel Ovseiko (RDM), Alison Chapple (Primary Care), Laurel Edmunds (RDM), and Sue Ziebland (Primary Care) has been chosen by Editors-in-Chief across Springer Nature as 'one they believe will change the world'. Now in its third year, the "[Change the World – one article at a time](#)" initiative asks the Editors-in-Chief of Springer Nature journals to select the scientific findings published in the past year that they believe could have the greatest impact on society's most pressing problems. The research and publication were supported by the BRC and the data collected with support from the Vice-Chancellor's Diversity Fund.

## Research funding

We received four applications for RDM pump priming and made one award:

**Dr Mariolina Salio** (Cerundolo group, MRC HIU, MRC WIMM, IMD) and **Associate Prof Adam Mead** (MRC MHU, MRC WIMM, NDCLS) were awarded funding for their project entitled “The single cell immunological landscape of Juvenile Myelomonocytic Leukaemia”.

**Prof Shoumo Bhattacharya** (CVM) has received funding from both Lab282 and the British Heart Foundation to develop evasins as a therapeutic tool in myocarditis and other heart conditions. This work began as an RDM Pump Priming Award between Shoumo and Associate Prof Adam Mead and has now leveraged £1.8m in investments. Read more about the project and his latest publication [online here](#).



Congratulations to **Prof Jackie Boulwood** and **Dr Andrea Pellagatti** (NDCLS), who have been awarded a project grant from Leuka – a leading leukaemia research charity. Their work will focus on Chronic myelomonocytic leukaemia (CMML), a blood cancer with a poor prognosis and limited treatment options.

**Dr Linford Briant** (Rorsman Group, OCDEM) has received funding from the Medical Sciences Internal Pump Priming Fund for his project ‘Characterising the transcriptomic profile of responsive beta-cells’.

**Prof Keith Channon** (CVM) has secured funding from the British Heart Foundation and the Department of Health to create a ‘NIHR-BHF Cardiovascular Partnership’.

Congratulations to **Prof Graham Ogg** who has been awarded a Wellcome Trust Collaborative Award to investigate aspects of the immune response in skin diseases such as eczema, with the hope of identifying new treatment options. [Read more](#).

Congratulations to **Dr James Davies** and **Dr Lynn Quek** (both from MRC MHU, MRC WIMM, NDCLS), who have both been awarded MRC Clinician Scientist Fellowships. James, who works with Prof Doug Higgs will work on the ‘Development of highly sensitive methods for defining off target mutations to enable safe gene editing of haematopoietic cells for transplantation’ while Lynn, who works with Prof Paresh Vyas will investigate will study the ‘Epigenomic Mechanisms of Action of Novel Mutant Isocitrate Dehydrogenase Inhibitors in Acute Myeloid Leukaemia’. [Read more](#).

**Prof Christian Eggeling** has been awarded a British Council Institutional Links Award for the ‘Investigation of Wnt/ $\beta$ -catenin signalling at the plasma membrane in health and disease’. [Read more](#).

**Associate Prof Anne Goriely** and **Prof Andrew Wilkie** (NDCLS/WIMM) have been awarded funding from Newlife to investigate ‘Precision Genetic Counselling via Personalised Evaluation of Recurrence risk’

**Prof Doug Higgs** (MRC MHU, MRC WIMM, NDCLS) and **Dr Sachith Mettananda** (based in Sri Lanka) have secured support from the Academy of Medical Sciences Global Challenges Research Fund to establish a collaborative network of clinicians and scientists working on novel genetic-based therapies for beta-thalassaemia. [Read more](#).

**Prof Higgs** also secured funding from the John Fell Fund for ‘Establishing an Imaging Mass Cytometry platform for the analysis of single cells within their uninterrupted histological environment’.



*Prof Doug Higgs and Dr Sachith Mettananda*



**Prof Sten Eirik Jacobsen** (MRC MHU, MRC WIMM, NDCLS) has been awarded a project grant from Bloodwise to unravel 'the molecular and therapeutic targets in single del(5q) MDS stem and progenitor cells'.

**Dr Samuel Lockhart** joins **Prof Charalambos Antoniades** as a BHF Intermediate Clinical Research Fellow. He will be 'Examining the direct vascular actions of the Glucagon-like Peptide-1 Analogue Liraglutide in obese patients with coronary atherosclerosis'.

Congratulations to **Dr Mira Kassouf** (Higgs Group, MRC MHU, MRC WIMM, NDCLS) who has been awarded a grant from the Knowledge Exchange Seed Fund to run a series of Awareness Connectivity Exchange workshops to bring together academics, industry experts, innovators, entrepreneurs, charities, and investors, to develop research-partnered solutions and approaches to real life challenges. Mira is President of the Innovation Forum Oxford – take a look at [their website](#) for upcoming events.

**Dr Adam Lewandowski** (CVM) has been awarded a BHF Intermediate Basic Science Research Fellowship to study 'Cardiac remodelling in preterm-born offspring: defining the importance of early postnatal changes and potential for neonatal dietary interventions to reduce long-term risk'.

**Dr Geoffrey Maher** (Goriely Group, MRC WIMM, NDCLS) has received funding from the Medical Sciences Internal Pump Priming Fund for his project 'Investigating the impact of cancer treatment on mutation levels in sperm'.

**Dr Shveta Monga** joins **Dr Masliza Mahmood** (CVM) as a BHF Intermediate Clinical Research Fellow, to study 'The effect of altering myocardial lipid content on cardiac physiology in patients with aortic stenosis'.

Congratulations to **Dr Reshma Ramracheya** (OCDEM) who has received funding from the Africa Oxford Initiative in the form of a travel grant for her project 'Exploring the molecular and pharmacological identity of GLP-1 signalling on pancreatic islet hormone secretion and in type 2 diabetes'.

**Dr Svetlana Reilly** (CVM) has secured a grant from the Oxfordshire Health Services Researches Committee to research 'Pro-calcitonin and calcitonin as novel biomarkers in atrial fibrillation'.

**Associate Prof Christopher Rodgers** (CVM) is conducting a clinical trial with OUH NHS Trust, supported by Amgen Ltd on the 'Development and pilot testing of a new magnetic resonance (MR) imaging protocol to quantify both myeloma disease burden and associated bone loss.'

Congratulations to **Dr Katharine Pinnick** and **Associate Professor Leanne Hodson** (OCDEM) who have been awarded funding from the Humane Research Trust for their project 'Developing New In Vitro Cellular Models To Culture Human Lipid-Laden Cells'. Leanne has also been awarded funding from the Novo Nordisk Oxford Pump Priming fund for her work 'Integrating metabolic tracer methods with CRISPR editing in human in vitro cellular models to study the genetics of liver metabolism.'

Congratulations to **Dr Quan Zhang** (OCDEM) who has received funding from EFSD for his project 'Investigation of the role of ER Ca<sup>2+</sup> in the glucose regulation of glucagon secretion'.

Dr Andrew Armitage (Drakesmith group, MRC HIU, MRC WIMM, IMD) received a grant from the [IMPRINT network](#), a GCRF (Global Challenge Research Fund) funded network funding research in maternal and neonatal immunisation/immunity for his project entitled "How does iron influence infant immune development? A systems immunology RCT sub-study in Bangladeshi infants".

Don't forget to visit the '[Find Funding](#)' section of the website for the support that we can provide for your grant applications, including internal deadlines. For any funding related queries, please contact Ruth McCaffrey ([ruth.mccaffrey@rdm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ruth.mccaffrey@rdm.ox.ac.uk)).

## Staff news

Dr Serena Briant, Assistant Research Facilitator, is now on maternity leave until late January 2019. She welcomed her beautiful baby Miriam into the world in March. We have been joined by Dr Kathleen Dolan ([kathleen.dolan@rdm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:kathleen.dolan@rdm.ox.ac.uk)) as maternity cover – please join us in welcoming her to RDM. Kathleen will support Dr Ruth McCaffrey in running the Novo Nordisk Fellowship Programme and providing support with funding.

Dr Emma O'Brien, Public Engagement and Communications Officer, has now left the department and moved to work with Public Health England. We are pleased to announce that we have appointed Dr Charvy Narain to the post of Communications and Public Engagement Manager in RDM. She will begin this role in mid-September 2018 and brings a wealth of experience with her. In the interim, please direct any communications and public engagement queries to Ruth ([ruth.mccaffrey@rdm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ruth.mccaffrey@rdm.ox.ac.uk)) and any website queries should be sent to [website@rdm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:website@rdm.ox.ac.uk).

## Retirements

The following staff have retired recently. Many thanks for all their work over the years – they will be missed.

Keith Bourne  
Linda Roberts  
Phil North  
Allan Hayle

Roger Patient (he now holds the title of Visiting Professor of Developmental Genetics in the Department, so you will still see him around).

## Celebrating the life of Prof Kevin Gatter

On 3 July 2018 St John's College will host an event in celebration of Prof Kevin Gatter, who sadly passed away in July last year. Kevin was Head of the Nuffield Division of Clinical Laboratory Sciences (1999-2014) and before that, Head of the Department of Cellular Science (1994-1999). Through these roles, Kevin made major contributions to academic pathology in Oxford, which we continue to build on.

It will be an occasion for friends, colleagues and pupils to share their memories. There will be panel discussions, reflecting the many different things Kevin loved. This will be an informal occasion, with contributions from everybody whose life was touched by Kevin.

The event is being organised by Francesco Pezzella. Please get in touch with Francesco via [francesco.pezzella@ndcls.ox.ac.uk](mailto:francesco.pezzella@ndcls.ox.ac.uk) to let him know if you are able to attend and if you would like to take part in the panel to share your memories of Kevin.



## Athena SWAN

The governance of the Athena SWAN (AS) teams across RDM is undergoing a review. Over the last few months the existing Athena SWAN divisional teams, along with the RDM Self-Assessment Team (ASSG) have discussed how we ensure we operate an effective Athena SWAN structure across RDM. This review included divisional AS teams remit, effectiveness and levels of interest. We also asked the teams to consider cross-divisional activities, sharing of best practice, how to maintain momentum and cultivate enthusiasm. The outcome of this review is with the ASSG for comments; over the next few months the updated working model will be completed and the details will be

circulated for wider comment via the RDM Bulletin. We hope that the new working model will increase the opportunities for individuals across RDM to work together in a variety of roles and responsibilities. If you are interested in finding out more please read the RDM Weekly Bulletin or contact [charlotte.Smith@rdm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:charlotte.Smith@rdm.ox.ac.uk).

The biennial staff and student surveys will be circulated shortly. For information on previous surveys please see the [website here](#). Our surveys are a critical barometer of opinions and help us understand where activities and plans have worked, and where future actions need to be prioritised. When the surveys are distributed we hope you will take the opportunity to contribute to the results by completing the survey.

## RDM seminar on International Gender Equality Initiatives

On Tuesday 5th June 2018 Dr Pavel Ovseiko (IMD) introduced talks by Dr Megan Osmond and Kerry Elliott from the [Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation](#) (CSIRO). CSIRO is an independent Australian federal government research agency participating in two key Government funded initiatives: the [Science in Australia Gender Equity \(SAGE\) program](#), and the [Male Champions of Change](#) (MCC) STEM. SAGE is based upon the Athena SWAN programme and CSIRO recently submitted its application for a SAGE Bronze Award. Dr Megan Osmond described the approach CSIRO took in developing its application and SAGE Action Plan. The Male Champions of Change (MCC) strategy is a global coalition of men advocating for gender equality. Kerry Elliott described the actions, achievements and impact of the MCC STEM group and CSIRO's approach to supporting males to step up and lead gender initiatives. The audience was made up of equality and diversity practitioners from within Oxford and external institutions. If anyone is interested in being sent the presentations please contact [Charlotte Smith](#).

## Anti-Bullying and Harassment

We have been running face-to-face Anti-Bullying and Harassment workshops since January and will continue until to do so until June when the schedule will be re-assessed. Learning outcomes and feedback have been very positive including "Reporting bullying as a bystander is just as important as reporting as a victim...there are many informal ways to solve problems before anything formal needs to happen" and "Trainers were fab and were informative without making the whole thing too prescribed or formal". For more information about forthcoming courses please see the [website here](#).

## Mentoring

In its fourth year, the RDM Mentoring Scheme continues to be a successful programme with over 150 matches made so far.

In a bid to further enhance the experience of our mentees and mentors and guarantee the sustainability of the scheme, RDM has recently invested with the Oxford Learning Institute in an online mentoring platform, sfG MentorNet, which will be launched in the coming months. More information will follow in due course.

RDM is keen to promote mentoring across the University and have been involved in assisting other departments with the launch of their own schemes. On 6<sup>th</sup> November 2017, two of our mentors kindly volunteered to take part in the launch of GEMS (a new mentoring scheme in the School of Geography and the Environment). Associate Professors Jan Rehwinkel and Anne Goriely gave talks both practical and inspiring, with helpful advice and insights to new mentors and mentees. The School of Geography and the Environment is very grateful to RDM for providing a model for their own mentoring scheme.

Lastly we are delighted to welcome Rosie Munday as the student representative on the RDM Mentoring Committee. Rosie will replace Zahra Aboukhalil whose contribution was greatly appreciated. We wish Zahra all the best in her future career.

## Public Engagement with Research

We have had lots of public engagement activity taking place across the department in the last few months. Many thanks to all who are involved.

### British Science Week - Strawberries, detectives and virtual reality

Our researchers were sparking curiosity in Oxfordshire and beyond for British Science Week – a national festival of all things research. Researchers from the MRC WIMM visited a number of different schools, and welcomed students into the institute, engaging children with research on blood and the immune system. From DNA extractions and immune system detectives through to virtual reality, our activities generated all kinds of questions – from the **feasibility of brain transplants to the possible colour of alien blood!** Read more about what our scientists got up to [here](#).

### Science online

Max Jamilly, a DPhil student in the Fulga lab, also used technology to connect with students. Max participated in [‘I’m a Scientist, Get Me Out of Here’](#), where school students have the chance to chat online with different scientists and ask them questions about their research and life as a scientist. Max had to answer a variety of questions, from ‘what is the most important part of the immune system’ to ‘do you think it is possible to bring back to life extinct animals?’ Max was clearly not deterred by the difficult questions, and was voted by the students as the winner of the ‘Immune System’ zone. His prize was £500 towards further public engagement projects. Congratulations Max!



### International Women’s Day – inspiring women about science

International Women’s Day on 8 March was an opportunity for our researchers to be role models to girls and women with a passion for science. A team of six researchers visited The Oxford Academy and spoke to over 200 students about their work, covering topics from viral infections, broken hearts, fighting cancer, animal research, super expensive equipment and using fat from liposuction to study allergies!

Meanwhile, [Prof Anna Gloyn](#) and [her team](#) spent the day at Headington Prep School, taking students through the wonders of genetics – from strawberry DNA extraction through to gene regulation in virtual reality, the girls had a wonderful time getting to grips with genetics. The day included asking the girls to draw a scientist and it was wonderful to see how many female scientists they drew. The girls thoroughly enjoyed the day and several parents have said their children couldn’t stop talking about DNA when they got home.



Read more about what our researchers got up to for International Women’s Day [online here](#).

Drawings of scientists from girls at Headington Preparatory School

## Cheltenham Science Festival



Researchers from the MRC WIMM and from OCDEM took their science to the Cheltenham Science Festival. In 'DNA Origami: How to fold a genome' they took visitors on a 3D tour of DNA and discussed the importance of DNA folding for human health. A variety of fun activities and the chance to experience some Virtual Reality were on offer. The event was a huge success and thanks to all who took part.

## MRC Festival of Medical Research

Researchers from our two MRC units based in the WIMM, the Molecular Haematology Unit (MHU) and the Human Immunology Unit (HIU), took part in the MRC Festival of Research, bringing their science to the supermarket. They introduced shoppers to genome editing and discussed how our researchers are using it to address important biomedical questions.



## Coming Up

In the autumn, we will be taking part in the new Oxfordshire Science Festival, now called IF. Further details about how to get involved will be circulated in the Weekly Bulletin.

## And finally!

### RDM Researcher Association

The RDM Researcher Association is a new association in RDM, led by researchers, for researchers. It is open to everyone involved in research in the department (postdocs, research assistants, clinical trial managers, nurses, statisticians, students etc.). It aims to provide a forum for people involved in research to come together to share knowledge, discuss challenges, discuss career needs and meet new people. The Association is being led by a small group of researchers: Dr Daniel Beard (IMD), Dr Dr Naveed Akbar (CVM), Dr Lorna Fiedler (CVM), Dr Dannielle Wellington (MRC HIU, MRC WIMM, IMD), Dr Manu Verma (OCDEM), Dr Edit Gara (CVM), and Dr Sion Parry (OCDEM).



They held their inaugural event earlier this week and had over 40 attendees.

Details on further events will follow in due course. You can contact the Researcher Association via email:

[researcherassociation@rdm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:researcherassociation@rdm.ox.ac.uk)