News from the Medical Sciences Division

OxfordMedSci News

THE INNOVATION ISSUE

@OxfordMedSci

MESSAGE FROM HEAD OF DIVISION

From Professor Alastair Buchan, Dean of Medicine and Head of Division

This month's newsletter is a special edition focusing on innovation and entrepreneurship. Many of us work on research that has the potential to generate real-world impact. For some it is the focus of our work and for others it may be an indirect consequence of our discoveries. Often the most innovative ideas are generated at the boundaries between disciplines, and collaborative approaches like the Institute of Biomedical Engineering are hugely successful in translating research into real-world applications.

Over the last year the University has conducted a review of innovation activities and although Oxford has been recognised as a leader in commercialisation and innovation, there are opportunities to improve. Professors Matthew Wood and Chas Bountra have been working with colleagues in Medical Sciences Division (MSD) and across the University to inform a series of high level recommendations to improve innovation at Oxford. The Research Excellence Framework 2014 has also put a focus on demonstrating the impact of our research, and this measure will likely become an even more important factor for future exercises.

Regardless of the driver of the REF, there are clear advantages to working in partnership with industry. For many researchers there is huge value in joint working to facilitate a two-way exchange of knowledge, ideas and expertise that can help us de-risk novel concepts and progress our research to real-world impact. Through collaborations we can access proprietary reagents, technologies and tools that can help us reach our research goals. Many of our strategic partnerships with industry are facilitated by the MSD Business Development Team, for example with UCB Pharma. In addition to the direct financial benefits of industrial funding, collaborations with industry partners can also open up new sources of external funding e.g. Local Enterprise Partnership funding.

A closer working relationship between Isis Innovation and researchers has resulted in a record number of new disclosures received in 2014/15 and financial resources available to support commercialisation are growing. Many MSD researchers have had fantastic success commercialising their research, including Professor Robert MacLaren, who talks in this issue about his experiences founding spin out company Nightstar. With Isis Innovation staff now hot-desking on sites across MSD, it is even easier to get in touch with them. We also have a vibrant student entrepreneurship community and in this edition student entrepreneur Mina Bekheet shares his experience as President of Oxford Biotech. As you can see, innovation is flourishing within the Medical Sciences Division and with the Oxford Bioescalator scheduled to start going up on Old Road Campus later this year there hasn't been a better time to get involved.

MINA BEKHEET AND OXFORD BIOTECH

For this special issue, we talk to Mina Bekheet, a 2nd year DPhil (PhD) student in the Department of Oncology and co-founder and President of Oxford Biotech (OB), a student-led biotech communication and transfer platform. OB aims to get academia, industry and government to talk to each other and share ideas and in turn "translate innovative science into disruptive business". Find out how a small group of multi-national young DPhil students have managed to establish a growing and well-connected enterprise and how they ditch their lab coats at the end of the day and replace them with business suits and evenings spent networking with students, academics, senior managers and CEOs of big pharma, Biotech, SMEs, IP and investment firms, and government officials!

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Strong research universities, like Oxford, are full of skilled students and staff, so there's a lot of latent potential here. We want to work with these people, show them how to get started in business and provide support for new biotech companies.

PROFESSOR MACLAREN AND NIGHTSTAR

Professor Robert MacLaren, from the Nuffield Laboratory of Ophthalmology, in the Nuffield Department of Clinical Neurosciences, gives us an insight into his life as an entrepreneurial academic surgeon – a busy life – and one that gave rise to a gene therapy for an inherited form of progressive blindness called choroideremia. Professor MacLaren describes for us how he worked with Isis Innovation (Oxford University's Technology Transfer office) to further develop this research into a therapeutic product for patients through a spin-out company Nightstar.

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I enjoy working with patients and giving someone their sight back is a great privilege. I find eye surgery both relaxing and creative. Even more common operations such as cataract surgery can be challenging to get right 100% of the time. Every day is different.

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IMPACTFEST 2015

Many excellent examples of high impact research from across the Oxford neuroscience community were identified for REF2014*. However, to ensure continued success, it is necessary to develop a sustainable pipeline of developing research impacts. This task is the remit of the Oxford Neuroscience, Psychology and Psychiatry Impact Committee chaired by Professor David Clark in Experimental Psychology. One of the team's key objectives is to create an environment to incubate and foster highly innovative translational research with the potential to deliver broad societal impacts. One of the first steps towards achieving this objective took place on the 5 February when the committee held 'ImpactFest', the first Oxford Impact Festival, at St John's College.

The half day event told the story of the high impact case studies returned in REF2014. Talks by the Knowledge Exchange and Impact Team and Isis Innovation also provided information on the resources available to researchers to help develop future impacts. Breakout sessions provided an opportunity for more in depth discussions of specific areas and the busy schedule ended in a networking reception. The event was supported by funding from MSD, Social Sciences Division and Isis Innovation.

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UCB-OXFORD ALLIANCE

Inspired by patients. Driven by science.

The UCB-Oxford Alliance was launched in 2012 with the aim of supporting innovative biomedical research that would help deliver transformative new therapies for patients with high unmet clinical needs. The scientific focus for the Alliance is in immunology and neuroscience and has adopted a collaborative approach to progressing research through joint working and staff exchanges. Together UCB and Oxford Researchers have uncovered a wide range of mutual research interests and the alliance now supports projects across 9 University departments across MSD and MPLS Divisions.

The Alliance's success is based on common scientific interests and complementary skills and resources. Led by strong leadership from both institutions a joint steering committee helps set a clear long term agenda for the scientific direction of the Alliance, while multi-layered connections throughout the two institutions cement this fruitful relationship.

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INNOVATION INITIATIVES AND RESOURCES

Innovation Initiatives and Resources

Support for Researchers Using your research to engage. As you can see from this newsletter support for innovation is available from a wide range of sources across the University. Links to this support, training, funding and external resources are brought together on the Support for Researchers webpages.

Innovation and Industry webpage Divisionally supported webpages provide information, FAQs, and support for staff and external parties wishing to engage in research, innovation and industry.

Isis Innovation You may know that Isis has an experienced team available to discuss intellectual property, technology transfer, software commercialisation and academic consultancy services with Oxford researchers, students and support staff. But did you know that we can also help with translational funding applications, business plan competition entries and even provide incubation support for new digital ventures in the Isis Software Incubator?

Enterprising Oxford Enterprising Oxford is online and ready to help inspire, demystify and signpost! What does it mean to be enterprising? Why should someone focussed on a career in research and academia be interested? What is 'impact' and how is it related to enterprise? How do scientific ideas get to market? Are there any events or training courses that can help me? What about social and cultural enterprises? These are all questions to which Enterprising Oxford can help you find answers.

Conflict of Interest in Innovation Information relating to the University's Conflict of Interest policy.

Oxford Academic Health Science Network (AHSN) Building a culture of innovation and knowledge exchange. The Oxford Academic Health Science Network (AHSN) brings together universities, industry and the health service to improve health and prosperity through rapid adoption of clinical innovation. It is one of 15 AHSN regions licensed by NHS England in 2013.

The Oxford BioEscalator After a programme of development the Old Road Campus now houses one of the largest concentrations of biomedical expertise in the world. Part of the next phase of exciting capital projects will be the new Oxford BioEscalator, which will be a hub for the commercialisation of bioscience and medical research and innovation in Oxford. The aim is to help more innovative ideas to move out of the lab and into the clinic and in doing so to realise the potential of the world-class research and expertise in Oxford. It will be a key meeting point for entrepreneurial researchers, clinicians, medical entrepreneurs and a wide range of bioscience companies.

Regional Innovation Although Oxford is a University with a global presence, the importance of the local has never been so great. The newly instituted Local Enterprise Partnership (OXLEP) supports businesses in Oxfordshire, acts a channel for government funding to the region, and convenes regional stakeholders, such as the Universities, leading businesses and local councils. The Strategic Economic Plan puts innovation at the heart of economic growth for Oxfordshire, and acknowledges the University as a key player in local aspirations to improve the knowledge based economy.

EIT Health A new impact funding vehicle with industry from the European Institute of Technology. EIT Health is one of the largest public-private healthcare initiatives and Oxford University is one of its core partners.

Oxford Launchpad A new(ish) space in the University focused on helping students with innovative ideas bring them to reality, without taking any stake in the business.

Events

Isis Innovation & Oxford AHSN Technology Showcase 2015 eHealth & Big Data – Innovation with Impact. June 30, 10am-6pm, Mathematical Institute, Woodstock Road, Oxford University. Hear about the latest exciting projects and views from industry leaders, experience our technologies in the exhibition demonstrations, meet and network with leading academics and industry innovators.

Register ASAP – Drug Discovery: An Oxford-Industry Conversation Friday 31 July 2015, Mathematical Institute, Andrew Wiles Building. This symposium will showcase a broad range of Oxford chemical biology research to industry groups. Are you are a PI working on any aspect of early-stage drug discovery? This event is a must-attend.

Biotechnology YES (Young Entrepreneurs Scheme) competition Now open for applications. A competition that provides training via presentations from

leading figures in the biotechnology industry on all aspects of technology transfer and the commercialisation of bioscience ideas.

Essentials of Drug Discovery - Pfizer insights lecture series Pharmaceutical drug research and development is a costly, complex and time-consuming business. The average time from target to market is around 15 years, the approximate costs range from $500 million to $1 billion and it is estimated that of the 5000 new molecular entities developed only 5 will make it into the clinic and only 1 of the 5 will ever make an approved drug. The objective of these three introductory lectures are to outline the basic principles of drug discovery and development in three key phases (target identification, lead optimisation and early clinical development) and highlight how the industry is focussed on reducing attrition and timelines whilst improving clinical success.

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In addition to the projects supported through the Alliance Oxford and UCB have recently launched a joint Prize Fellowship in Biomedical Research (SSO required). This scheme will support outstanding researchers in their early scientific career at the University of Oxford. It aims to promote the development of a new generation of exceptional young scientists and clinicians who will become future leaders in their field, while further developing scientific excellence within their field and ultimately improving the lives of patients.

The MSD Business Development team provide ongoing management and support for the alliance. If you would like to find out more about the Alliance or would like an introduction to UCB please contact Oliver Voss in the divisional Business Development Office for further details.

To hear some or our researches discussing the Alliance please visit the Business Development website.

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What does this mean for us? It means that the University has received almost £20m for several projects to develop innovation infrastructure, including the BioEscalator (of which more elsewhere in this newsletter), a new incubator building for the Begbroke Science Park, and an Applied Superconductivity Centre in the Science Area. Over £750K has been channelled alongside university investments into Oxford startups, social enterprises and spinouts like Run3D Ltd which emerged from the IBME and the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre. Colleagues from Isis, OSEM, and the Said Business School have facilitated this. Regional funding has also paid for Oxfordshire businesses to be given vouchers to pay for access to training and facilities offered by Oxfordshire institutions, including the University.

It also means that the things we need to grow science and innovation at the University are being shared with regional partners, including better infrastructure around our sites and improved transport links for scientists that collaborate with colleagues at Harwell and Culham. The scale of the biocluster in Oxfordshire is better appreciated by regional partners, as is the importance of the University, and the Medical Sciences Division in particular, in seeding and stimulating its growth. The materials used by Oxfordshire and the UKTI to promote us to global companies will have a better appreciation of what the University has to offer, and our regional colleagues are committed to helping research-focused companies move to the region, the better to collaborate with us.

Research Services, through the Knowledge Exchange and Impact Team, is working with divisions and other teams in the University to strengthen links with regional partners, and would welcome opportunities to hear more of the needs and ideas of colleagues in the division.

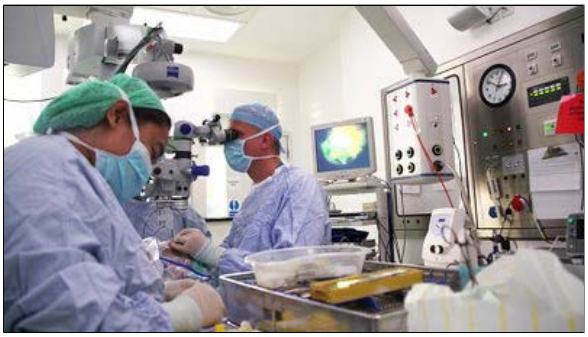
Read more about the OxLEP's Strategic Economic Plan

Professor MacLaren and Nightstar

Professor Robert MacLaren, from the Nuffield Laboratory of Ophthalmology, in the Nuffield Department of Clinical Neurosciences, gives us an insight into his life as an entrepreneurial academic surgeon – a busy life – and one that gave rise to a gene therapy for an inherited form of progressive blindness called choroideremia. Professor MacLaren describes for us how he worked with Isis Innovation (Oxford University's Technology Transfer office) to further develop this research into a therapeutic product for patients through a spin-out company Nightstar.

What gets you out of bed in the morning, why did you become an ophthalmic surgeon?
I enjoy working with patients and giving someone their sight back is a great privilege. I find eye surgery both relaxing and creative. Even more common operations such as cataract surgery can be challenging to get right 100% of the time. Every day is different.

When did you realise you had a great invention/technology that could help people. What was your plan at this stage?
I began work on gene therapy in Oxford during my DPhil over 20 years ago. At the end of this I wrote a grant application to try retinal gene therapy on a mouse model with a view to gaining data for a future clinical trial. The reviewers panned it and commented that it was impossible and would never work. I think this is a familiar course for any new idea or invention! Of course, I just kept going and 20 years later we have probably one of the best examples of how gene therapy can benefit humans.



How did it feel to get those first patient trial results?
This was a nervous but also exciting time. I was afraid of complications as I got to know my patients well and I did not want them to lose what little sight they had if something unexpected happened. Of course I was delighted when our first patient gained 4 lines on reading the eye chart.

Why did you first get in touch with Isis?
Isis Innovation Technology Transfer Manager Dr Brijesh Roy helped me with the original I.P. which we needed for the clinical trial funding agreement. This was back in 2009.

Had you filed any patents, secured any translational funding or worked with Isis or another Technology Transfer Office before?
No, this is my first experience.

What expertise and contacts did you find you needed to take this idea to the next stage? What did Isis bring?
Brijesh helped me to understand the I.P. issues around the vector and he introduced me to the Syncona team who were keen to fund the follow on work for choroideremia.

Syncona, the Wellcome Trust's venture capital arm invested £12 million in Nightstar, how did they find out about the technology? What was the investment process like? What were the highs and lows of this process?
I asked Brijesh to leave me out of all the negotiations around the founding of Nightstar as I did not want to get distracted from the gene therapy trial which was still ongoing. Thankfully if there were any lows then Brijesh was able to keep them from me!

Has this process helped you organise your own research and record keeping?
Yes, without a doubt. We have switched over to an electronic system of record keeping with all our data in the lab. This enables us to generate information that could be submitted directly to the regulatory authorities at any stage in future. I think I now have a much better understanding of how science is viewed by the regulators who ultimately guide us along the path to getting new treatments for patients.

How does your innovation work support your research aspirations?
I have in my clinic hundreds of patients who are going blind but for whom we could inject a potential gene therapy cure available upstairs in our lab. The route from laboratory to clinic is long but meeting these patients every week provides a tremendous incentive for me.

Looking back, what do you know now that you wished you'd known 5 years ago before going through this process? What advice would you give colleagues?

Don't get too distracted by people who tell you that you can't do something. Listen to the people that tell you what you can do.

You're a busy surgeon, run a research group, and you're a consultant and on the board of your spinout, Nightstar. How do you manage to prioritise?

Not very well, but I can get through from day-to-day. Fortunately I have some expert help from three wonderful secretaries.

What is the potential impact for patients of your work if the company is successful?
We would have a licenced gene therapy treatment for choroideremia, but this is just the first step in a variety of retinal diseases.

Would you like to develop other gene therapy applications commercially?
Of course I would! This is the only way to get our exciting new laboratory discoveries into the clinic to the benefit of patients.

Many thanks to Professor MacLaren for his time is giving us this interview.

Related links:

Read about the initial launch of the Nightstar

Learn more about the company Nightstar Isis Innovation
Professor Robert MacLaren's webpage

Images:

Top: Professor Robert MacLaren

Middle: Professor Robert MacLaren and his team in surgery

Isis Innovation

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It's now easier than ever to discuss your new projects with us, with Isis MSD hot desks in locations including the Cairns Library, the Kennedy Institute and the Le Gros Clark Building. See http://tiny.cc/spokes for details of the location of new and existing hot-desks and when Isis staff will be in attendance, and visit http://isis-innovation.com/university-members/isis-medical-sciences/ for more details on how Isis can help maximise the impact of your research

Mina Bekheet and Oxford Biotech

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What's behind Oxford Biotech?

Strong research universities, like Oxford, are full of skilled students and staff, so there's a lot of latent potential here. We want to work with these people, show them how to get started in business and provide support for new biotech companies.

We are currently preparing to run large-scale competitions and intakes, where, in the future, top-notch ideas enter our Innovation Centres. Our plan is to partner with winning teams and provide them with free lab and office space and mentoring from industry, research and venture capital professionals. The plan involves operating four seed funds for start-ups: Small Molecules; Rare Diseases & Orphan Drugs; Diagnostics & Novel Health Technologies; Genomics & Digital Health.

We are also establishing ourselves as a biotech communication platform by running events and teaching bio-entrepreneurship with high profile university and industry professionals, and placing PhD students and postdocs in industry consulting projects. These activities aim to bridge the gap between academia, industry and government.

One of the standout features of OB is that postgraduate students are leading all of its divisions: Networking, Editorial, Education and Consulting, as well as Business Development and associated investment.

Where did the idea for Oxford Biotech come from? Did you sense a gap in the market?

There are definitely gaps at different levels, whether from a translational perspective wherein only a few ideas are taken from the lab into the clinic; from an economical perspective where limited funding and support is available for early-stage start-ups and from a cultural and organisational perspective, where there's increasing pressure on students to produce to publish, leaving them with limited space to explore potential commercial use of their ideas.

Europe's infrastructure to support the student entrepreneurs is still fragmented, which simply leads students to act on their own. While this may reflect reality in the business world it also means that we lose talent and good ideas if students don't have the support they need.

A recent study by a faculty in the USA estimated that all active companies worldwide formed by faculty's graduates exceeded $2 trillion a year – which is more than the GDP of all but the 10 largest nations. There is definitely an opportunity for us here!

OB leadership team and project managers are all students. What's you're thinking behind such a student led group?

University-age entrepreneurs are quite adaptable, willing to innovate and be elastic in their approach; they are strong-willed but open-minded, and most importantly, they have the relevant hands-on technical insight as part of their research. It has allowed us to establish a team that tolerates failure, accepts calculated risks and acknowledges mistakes and is willing to learn from them and become stronger.

Putting the team together has been challenging, as our research places significant demands on our time, which has necessitated a very professional approach to the work from all of us.

The team have to counter balance the risk of jumping out of the mainstream and commit to some sleepless nights, whilst also delivering their best academically and for OB. We are trying to build an environment where this extra effort is tempting and rewarding. This culture is not exclusive for the team; we are radiating it upon everyone within our network, and will extend to those entrepreneurs who we collaborate with.

What's the plan when you all graduate?

I like to think about OB as the prequalifying round, where the winners will join the premier league. OB will always be led by students running all the complimentary activities, and those who excel in OB later on, will join the more advanced level through "OB ventures" after graduation.

You're also studying a DPhil right now, how do manage to juggle both OB and your studies? What are the potential benefits to your

studies/research from being involved in OB?

No holidays, less social life, lunch on the move, few hours of rest and sleep, but much more rewarding momentum in life.

The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand. I'm convinced that what really makes successful entrepreneurs is pure persistence.

OB adds an entire new dimension to the understanding of my research, which is focused on Personalised Cancer Therapy. I'm particularly interested in developing a detailed understanding of the key epigenetic pathways that regulate tumour cell death, and thereafter use this knowledge to devise strategies for delivering more effective cancer treatments within an applied clinical setting. I'm always thinking about how each experiment will fit within the route of developing a final clinical product. I also have to say that the connections I make through OB helps a lot with my daily lab work.

Why innovation? What got you interested?

It's simply part of investigating this question of how good ideas arise, a problem I think all of us are fundamentally interested in. We want to come up with superior ideas and be more innovative and we want our environments to be more creative.

There is no certain single formula for finding the next big thing, yet we think our simple two-step approach can help. Firstly, networking, communication, and establishing a dialogue where all players talk the same language is really important. These informal situations are where most good ideas form. Secondly, there's a need to identify and select the most lucrative ideas at their very conception – "the scientific seed of innovation" as some OB team members like to call it. This model of start-up identification is designed to boost commercial output that matches our world-leading science output.

What does innovation mean to you?

Humans are innovative by default; we just have different perceptions about innovation. For me, innovation has to be disruptive, a process that brings together various novel ideas in a way that they have an impact on society, creating high value for both stakeholders and end-users. Our ability to promote our quality of life for centuries to come is fundamental concern, innovation is the answer.

What is your vision behind OB?

Darwinian innovation within a well-defined position in the ecosystem. Our aim is to start by investigating disciplines through which pioneering new companies can provide extraordinary returns, new technologies that can solve universal problems and renovate global markets in health and life sciences. Sets of opportunities that are intact are created thereafter. We then work together to pinpoint breakthrough technologies in these intersections. The result is high-impact start-ups that are of unprecedented quality.

What is your biggest success to date & what have you learned from that? What was your biggest mistake & what did you learn from that failure?

Putting OB's current central team together. I have found that monetary rewards don't lead to better performance when it involves creative conceptual thinking. It's more important to provide sovereignty and purpose if you want to create an outstanding team. I am simply lucky to be working with each and every one of them.

My biggest mistake is that I didn't start OB earlier. Maybe this was because there was social pressure to follow the traditional path, or maybe because I simply didn't think that I was ready yet, or maybe I just wasn't in the right place at the right time with the right people.

So I advise, try or you'll regret it. Start as soon as you have an idea, and even if it doesn't work out, you will have learnt something. The critical element is standing up and doing something. It's as simple as that. A lot of people have ideas, but there are few who decide to do something about them now. Not tomorrow, not today, but now. The true entrepreneur is a do-er, not a dreamer.

In real life, no one has a hassle-free path to success. Failure is part of that path. And those who fail the most seem to experience the most simply because they attempted the most. If we are not failing, we are not trying.

What has surprised you the most since you have started OB?

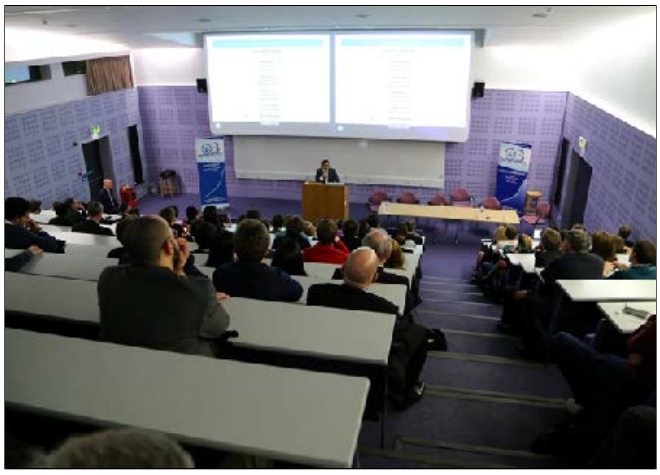
People have been very generous giving us advice, sparing so much effort and time, and expecting nothing in return, but really believing in what we are doing. Personally, I've been incredibly fortunate to have received advice and counsel from people considered the best in their field. Hats off also to the university, MSD, MPLS, SBS, ISIS Innovation, academics, administrators, Business Development teams and industry professionals – so many that I cannot name each.

Where do you see OB in the future?

The App store of Biotech Startups, only better!

Translating Innovative Science into Disruptive Business. Thinking really big and re-shaping the ecosystem and industry around us, building the next generation of high-impact start-ups and a novel generation of bio-entrepreneurs.

What are OB's near future activities?



Quite a lot actually. To name a few, we have started operating new divisions in London, Cambridge, Nottingham and Edinburgh this week, expanding into Asia & Europe this Summer, running our BioStars business plan competition in collaboration with the Structural Genomics Consortium later this year, first intake of start ups Q2 2016, running OB's 360° start-up building vehicle in collaboration with Said Business School in parallel. That is in addition to our outstanding regular activities, an Ebola Summit in July, CRISPR conference in August, NGS conference in October, and a Consulting workshop in September! So many other initiatives are still in the pipeline.

What is your future challenge?

Entrepreneurs tend to change the way we think about what is conceivable, they have a good concept of how life can be improved, for all of us, even when the wave is high. This, I can claim, is even more influential upon our lives from the biotech and life science perspective.

The real challenge remains; what opportunities will we go after, how and why? We know ourselves; we know that the risk is not the actual reward. The rewards are changing people's lives, creating jobs, driving innovations, and making a better world. I love stories, watching innovations from conception until completion. We are here to do this.

The Oxford BioEscalator

After a programme of development the Old Road Campus now houses one of the largest concentrations of biomedical expertise in the world. Part of the next phase of exciting capital projects will be the new Oxford BioEscalator, which will be a hub for the commercialisation of bioscience and medical research and innovation in Oxford. The aim is to help more innovative ideas to move out of the lab and into the clinic and in doing so to realise the potential of the world-class research and expertise in Oxford. It will be a key meeting point for entrepreneurial researchers, clinicians, medical entrepreneurs and a wide range of bioscience companies.

The BioEscalator will be purpose-built on the Old Road Campus, housed within the new amenities building. There will be communal space for networking, meetings, hot-desking and shared laboratory space for anyone interested in the commercialisation of medical and bioscience research. For University researchers, the BioEscalator will be a focal point for interacting with bioscience industry and to form contacts and collaborations. The BioEscalator staff will be available to University researchers for facilitation and advice.

For start-up companies there will be a range of services as well as laboratory and office space. Priority will be given to companies that have an overlap in interest with the University's research and it is expected that some of the University's own spin-outs will be particularly attracted to the BioEscalator.

The BioEscalator was initiated in response to needs expressed by academic researchers and bioscience companies wanting to engage with the University. £11m of funding has been provided by central government via the City Deal and there will also be a contribution from the University. It will be one of four new innovation centres in Oxfordshire (two in Oxford: the BioEscalator and the Begbroke Accelerator, and one each at Harwell and Culham); the City Deal is also providing funding for road improvements, business support and skills.

We are currently working with future BioEscalator stakeholders, including researchers on and off Old Road Campus, and would value your input and opinions, especially on what services you would like to be made available.

Do get in contact, whether it's just to express an interest in being kept up to date or if you have specific comments or questions: Dr Stuart Wilkinson, Head, Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Team, Research Services: stuart.wilkinson@admin.ox.ac.uk or Dr Maxine Allen, Head, Business Development and Partnering, Medical Sciences Division: Maxine.allen@medsci.ox.ac.uk.

ImpactFEST, the first Oxford Impact Festival

Many excellent examples of high impact research from across the Oxford neuroscience community were identified for REF2014*. However, to ensure continued success, it is necessary to develop a sustainable pipeline of developing research impacts. This task is the remit of the Oxford Neuroscience, Psychology and Psychiatry Impact Committee chaired by Professor David Clark in Experimental Psychology. One of the team's key objectives is to create an environment to incubate and foster highly innovative translational research with the potential to deliver broad societal impacts. One of the first steps towards achieving this objective took place on the 5 February when the committee held 'ImpactFest', the first Oxford Impact Festival, at St John's College.

The half day event told the story of the high impact case studies returned in REF2014. Talks by the Knowledge Exchange and Impact Team and Isis Innovation also provided information on the resources available to researchers to help develop future impacts. Breakout sessions provided an opportunity for more in depth discussions of specific areas and the busy schedule ended in a networking reception. The event was supported by funding from MSD, Social Sciences Division and Isis Innovation.

The take home messages from the day included the need for researchers to engage with key stakeholders, and to gather impact metrics, throughout the duration of their research projects. The meeting served as an excellent starting point to raise awareness of the importance of research impact and to give examples of how it can be achieved. However, in order to manage our impact pipeline it is necessary to reach out to researchers with developing impacts and provide them with the support to facilitate translating these into results. For this reason, the committee is currently organising a roadshow which will visit each of the key neuroscience departments and review potential developing impacts. Meetings are already planned for Experimental Psychology on the 12 May and Psychiatry on the 11 June. In Michaelmas term the committee will visit the Nuffield Department of Clinical Neurosciences, Pharmacology and Physiology Anatomy and Genetics.

Further information:

The Oxford Neuroscience community includes researchers in various departments in South Parks Road and at the John Radcliffe and Warneford Hospitals.

In the REF2014 Oxford came top out of the whole country in Unit of Assessment 4 'Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience'. 93% of the research output was rated world leading (4) or internationally excellent (3*). In addition, 100% of the 11 impact case studies submitted were rated as outstanding impacts (4*) or very considerable impacts (3*). Additional examples of neuroscience research were returned under Unit of Assessment 5 'Biological Sciences' and these were also highly commended.

Research Impact contributed to 20% of the overall REF2014 assessment. As a result, higher education institutions which performed well in research output but did not perform well for impact lost out. This is reflected both in their overall ranking and in the level of UK higher education funding received for 2015/16.