

## WELCOME

### From Professor Alastair Buchan, Head of Division and Dean of the Medical School

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *OxfordMedSci News*, the Medical Sciences Division e-newsletter. *OxfordMedSci News* aims to bring together useful and interesting information from across the sixteen departments and many related units of our large, varied and highly active division, and has been designed with you – faculty, students and staff – in mind. You'll find links to seminar listings and current news, regular interviews with colleagues, updates from the divisional board, feature articles from different labs and content suggested by members of the community. If you have any comments about this issue, or suggestions for future issues, please contact [communications@medsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:communications@medsci.ox.ac.uk).



*OxfordMedSci News* will be sent directly to your department or unit email address, initially about every two months. Please let us know if you didn't receive this email directly (but as a forward), or if you have colleagues who have not received it. We are generating comprehensive email lists, but apologise in advance if we've missed you. Additionally, we endeavoured to ensure that you only received one copy of this email directly from us. Please let us know if in fact you received multiple copies and we will amend our mailing list accordingly.

## BOARD BUSINESS

### In this regular feature, Dr David Bryan, Divisional Secretary, provides a summary of the Medical Sciences Board's activity

The Medical Sciences Board agreed earlier this term to recommend a change in its membership. The main effects of this are (1) to cluster the Division's 16 Departments for the purpose of drawing six elected academic staff members into the Board's membership, (2) to reduce the number of Associate Divisional Head members from three to two, and (3) to provide for the election of someone who is not a departmental head or statutory professor.

If agreed by Council, there will be elections to the Board on the new basis next term. Read more ...

## SIXTY SECONDS WITH ...

### Dr Tertia Softley, Divisional REF Officer

In this inaugural edition, we speak to Dr Tertia Softley, Divisional REF Officer, about her job, the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) and the origins of her unusual name!

#### Tell us a little about your role

My role as Divisional REF Officer is to provide support to the four senior academics who have overall responsibility for the REF submission from 16 Clinical and Non-Clinical Departments within the Medical Sciences Division (MSD), plus two Biological Departments in Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division (MPLS). Central coordination across the entire University (and Colleges) is being handled by the Planning and Resource Allocation Section (PRAS) of the central administration in Wellington Square. A major part of my role is to act as a conduit between PRAS and the MSD coordinators, and between the coordinators and Departments, enabling information transfer to occur efficiently, comprehensively, and in a timely fashion. Read more ...



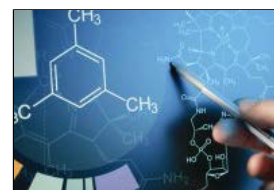
## OPEN ACCESS WEBSITE AND SUPPORT

Did you know that the University now offers researchers more support in fulfilling their Open Access

## TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2013

### Deadline midnight on Monday 1st July 2013

The Teaching Excellence Awards scheme, which recognises and rewards excellence in teaching, the organisation and development of teaching, and support for teaching and learning, within a research-intensive environment, is currently accepting applications and nominations (deadline – midnight on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2013). Read more ...



## LAB TALK

### Professor Kia Nobre, Director of the Oxford Centre for Human Brain Activity (OHBA) and Head of the Brain and Cognition Lab, discusses OHBA's work with *OxfordMedSci News*

The Oxford Centre for Human Brain Activity (OHBA) is a new brain-imaging hub at Oxford. We complement Oxford's world renowned Centre for Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging of the Brain (FMRIB) by specialising in methods to measure brain activity with high temporal resolution. Using these methods we can look at the dynamics of brain activity with millisecond precision. The centrepiece method is magnetoencephalography (MEG), which uses superconductor technology to measure magnetic fields associated with electrical signalling in the human brain. This method achieves the best balance between high temporal and spatial resolution to measure brain activity. We also have ancillary methods to measure electrical signals directly (such as EEG), stimulate the brain, and record various physiological signals and responses during experiments. Read more ...



## FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT DATABASE

In 2012, the University launched the Research Facility and Equipment Online Searchable Database.



requirements?

Find out more about the additional requirements from funders such as MRC and Wellcome Trust (and what happens if we don't comply), how the university can support you and how to get funding for your OA costs, by visiting the recently launched Open Access webpage or by attending the next OA at Oxford workshop on Wednesday 3rd July, 11.00–12.00 at the Radcliffe Science Library. [Book now.](#)



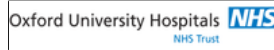
The database provides information about 1,200 pieces of research equipment that cost over £10k, and about all the current Small Research Facilities (SRFs).

The database documents the department and location of the equipment, whether it is shareable or not, the technical specification, availability of equipment and a link to a department's website where available. [Link to database.](#)

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## BE PART OF THE TRUST'S FUTURE

### Oxford University Hospitals wants you to take part in its future



All MSD staff and students are invited to become members of the Trust. By becoming a member, you can help the Trust become a more responsive organisation. [Read more ...](#)

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## USEFUL LINKS

Find out more about what's happening across the Division:

- [In the News](#)
- [Current Seminars and Events](#)

Do you have news or events that you would like to promote? If so, please contact [✉ Alison Brindle](#), Divisional Communications Manager.

## Board Business

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If agreed by Council, there will be elections to the Board on the new basis next term.

The Board's Finance and Physical Capital Committee has also recently changed its membership which now consists of Departmental Heads, chaired by Professor Rodney Phillips (as the relevant Associate Head of Division). In the report of its first meeting in this new form, the committee conditionally agreed to recommend to the Board that a project to accommodate the Department of Primary Care Health Sciences on the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter should be approved to proceed. The conditions were that a feasibility study indicated that the cost of the project would not exceed a given sum and that central university funds could be obtained without prejudice to other divisional priorities.

In other business, the board received reports on progress with Athena SWAN applications, on the inauguration of a Li Ka Shing Centre for Health Information and Discovery and on the annual Survey of Colleges' Support for Research. In addition the Board approved the submission to the central University of a draft Strategic Plan for 2013 to 2018.

**For further information about the board and its committees, please see '[Committee](#)' on the [Medical Sciences Division's intranet](#). Questions should be directed to [Dr David Bryan](#).**

# Teaching Excellence Awards 2013

Deadline midnight on Monday 1st July 2013

The Teaching Excellence Awards scheme recognises and rewards excellence in teaching, the organisation and development of teaching, and support for teaching and learning, within a research-intensive environment. Awards have been made annually since 2006.

## Overview of Main Awards Scheme

The budget for these awards is approximately £20,000. The Division will retain some flexibility in how this is allocated.

This year, there will be **two** types of award under the main scheme:

I. **Project** awards, providing **funding** for proposals to support the development of education.

II. **Individual and/or Team** awards, consisting of three sub-categories:

a) **Major Educator (funded)**: for making an outstanding contribution to the development of education and/or leadership in education and/or other educational initiatives, within the Medical Sciences Division or at institutional level.

b) **Excellent Teacher (titular)**: for individuals providing excellent teaching.

c) **Learning Support (funded)**: for non-teaching staff who have made a contribution to supporting teaching and learning activities significantly beyond that which would normally be expected in their role.

## Divisional Accolades Scheme

This year, the Division will also introduce a **new titular** accolade in recognition of **Lifetime Achievement**: for staff who have demonstrated high quality and sustained commitment to education throughout their career in the service of Oxford (normally a minimum of 15 years or equivalent).

The Selection Panel will also award **titular Commendations** at its discretion: (a) for continued excellent contributions made by previous recipients of Excellent Teacher awards who re-apply or who are re-nominated (b) to reward high quality contributions to teaching.

Do please note, however, that the Selection Panel reserves the right to re-distribute applications / nominations to different categories within and between the Main Awards and Divisional Accolades schemes.

## Want to know more?

Full details of the Division's scheme, including eligibility criteria, can be downloaded from the Oxford Learning Institute (OLI) website: <http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/support/teaching/resources/awards/>

Application and Nomination Forms can also be found under the Medical Sciences section of the Teaching Awards page on the Oxford Learning Institute (OLI) website: <http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/support/teaching/resources/awards/>

## Deadline:

Completed application / nomination forms – including supporting materials – should be submitted to [shelley.mann@medsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:shelley.mann@medsci.ox.ac.uk) by **midnight on Monday 1st July 2013** at the latest. (Applications / nominations received after this deadline will not be considered.) Please direct queries to Mrs Shelley Mann ([shelley.mann@medsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:shelley.mann@medsci.ox.ac.uk); 01865 222 131).

## Sixty Seconds with ...

Dr Tertia Softley, Divisional REF Officer



In this inaugural edition, we speak to Dr Tertia Softley, Divisional REF Officer, about her job, the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) and the origins of her unusual name!

### **Tell us a little about your role**

My role as Divisional REF Officer is to provide support to the four senior academics who have overall responsibility for the REF submission from 16 Clinical and Non-Clinical Departments within the Medical Sciences Division (MSD), plus two Biological Departments in Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division (MPLS). Central coordination across the entire University (and Colleges) is being handled by the Planning and Resource Allocation Section (PRAS) of the central administration in Wellington Square. A major part of my role is to act as a conduit between PRAS and the MSD coordinators, and between the coordinators and Departments, enabling information transfer to occur efficiently,

comprehensively, and in a timely fashion.

### **But what is the REF? And why is it important?**

It is a process to assess the quality of research carried out at Oxford, and at other Universities across the UK. Oxford's performance in the REF is important for two reasons – Reputational and Financial.

1. **Reputational** – Oxford's aim is to maintain its current top position in the league table for clinical, pre-clinical and health subjects in the Times Higher Education University Rankings.

<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/2012-13/subject-ranking/subject/clinical-pre-clinical-health>

1. **Financial** – in 2009/10 the value of the relevant HEFCE allocation to Oxford was about £100M, of which about £30M went directly to the Medical Sciences Departments. This income is essential for the financial viability of Departments.

More information on the REF can be found at the following websites: <http://www.ref.ac.uk/> or <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/pras/research/ref/>

### **What's currently at the top of your To Do list?**

Currently the focus of my work is three-fold:

1. To make sure we have identified all staff members who are potentially eligible to be entered in the REF.
2. To ensure these staff select their strongest publications, and collect information on any circumstances that may entitle a person to be entered with fewer than four outputs.
3. To encourage and support the coordinators in drafting the narrative elements of the submission – the Impact Case Studies and the Environment statements.

I am fully committed to my job and am proud of the role I am playing in supporting and coordinating the strongest possible submission to the REF, the deadline for which is November 2013.

### **And finally, what keeps you busy outside work?**

Outside of work I like to think of myself as a loving, devoted, supportive wife, and mother of two. Secondary to that, my time is spent playing tennis (in a small but friendly club if anyone is interested), gentle jogging (when I'm not injured), rambling, reading this month's book club choice and, more recently, cycling at weekends. I'm a member of the Headington hand bell ringers who perform around Christmas.

And for those who haven't worked it out already – my name is Latin for 'third'. I was the third (and last) daughter. I'll leave you to guess what Number 1 and Number 2 were called.

# Lab Talk

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The Oxford Centre for Human Brain Activity (OHBA) is a new brain-imaging hub at Oxford. We complement Oxford's world renowned Centre for Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging of the Brain (FMRIB) by specialising in methods to measure brain activity with high temporal resolution. Using these methods we can look at the dynamics of brain activity with millisecond precision. The centrepiece method is magnetoencephalography (MEG), which uses superconductor technology to measure magnetic fields associated with electrical signalling in the human brain. This method achieves the best balance between high temporal and spatial resolution to measure brain activity. We also have ancillary methods to measure electrical signals directly (such as EEG), stimulate the brain, and record various physiological signals and responses during experiments.



Experimenters from many departments use OHBA to conduct their own lines of research with translational, fundamental, or methodological foci.

There are about 25 core members at OHBA. We are a mixed bag. We bring together neuroscientists, experimental psychologists, psychiatrists, engineers, physicists ... We spend time understanding one another's perspectives, languages, and tools.

## ▫ **And, what about your own research? Why is it important?**

In my own research, I am interested in understanding how our perception and cognition are continually and dynamically regulated by a variety of signals related to our goals, expectations, and memories. These regulatory mechanisms require communication and orchestration of activity throughout many brain areas. They are essential to healthy cognition, and are highly susceptible to disruption in neuropsychiatric and neurodegenerative conditions. Having contributed to understanding the general principles of these mechanisms in the healthy human brain, we are now investigating how these systems are affected during healthy ageing and in neuropsychiatric and neurodegenerative diseases.

It will be important to understand how the regulation of brain activity is compromised in these different conditions in order to identify targets for treatments – be these pharmacological, cognitive, or lifestyle interventions. It should be possible to ameliorate cognitive functions both by mending vulnerable control mechanisms and by relying on alternative, residual functions to compensate for deficits.

## **What's a typical day like at OHBA?**

On Tuesdays, we start the day by filling the MEG scanner with liquid Helium. This requires careful managing of delicate equipment, as well as a serious leg workout to operate a pumping device. A few hours later, we're back to business as usual. In a typical day, we can scan 3–5 participants using MEG. These can be healthy young volunteers performing highly demanding perceptual tasks, elderly participants involved in cognitive training regimes, young adults with psychosis being scanned at rest, individuals with motor–neurone or Parkinson's disease performing simple actions, and much more. We also use a 'mock' MEG scanner to accustom participants to the experimental set-up and to run behavioural and eye-tracking experiments. In addition, we have behavioural, EEG, and TMS experiments running in the labs. In parallel to the bustle of data acquisition, a lot of effort is spent in quiet concentration. We have large open spaces for analysing our data and for developing new data-analysis methods. MEG data are notoriously challenging to analyse, and the methods are still formative. The analysis group, headed by Mark Woolrich, are major players in developing new tools for localising brain activity recorded using MEG, for studying communication among brain areas, and for integrating MEG and fMRI analysis methods.

## **And what's next for OHBA?**

We have big and exciting plans over the next years. We will be growing the physical space of OHBA and adding an MRI scanner in order to create an imaging hub for clinical and translational neuroscience. This facility will play an instrumental role in aligning research activities with clinical services. Important foci will be research on ageing and neurodegeneration, and on neuropsychiatric conditions.

## **How has being at Oxford helped the work of the centre?**

Oxford is the perfect place to develop a centre like OHBA. We have a large and thriving neuroscience community interested in understanding the human brain and its disorders. We can bring together people from different theoretical, clinical, and methodological backgrounds and expertise and benefit from a boundless stream of fantastic research fellows and students at all stages. Additionally, we can count on FMRIB to help steer our development.

## **Useful links:**

[Oxford Centre for Human Brain Activity \(OHBA\)](#)

[Oxford Cognitive Health in Ageing](#)

[Oxford Dementia and Ageing Research \(OxDARE\)](#)

[Brain and Cognition Lab, Department of Experimental Psychology](#)

[Professor Nobre's Wikipedia page](#)

## **Follow on Twitter:**

[@OHBA\\_Oxford](#)

[@oxcoghealth](#)

[@OxDARE](#)

[@KiaNobre](#)

Would you like your lab/centre/unit to feature in a future issue of Lab Talk? For further information, please contact [communications@medsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:communications@medsci.ox.ac.uk).

## Be part of the Trust's future

Oxford University Hospitals wants you to take part in its future



*Do you have an interest in health and healthcare?*

*Would you like to have a say in how our health services develop?*

*Would you like to be able to elect members to OUH's Council of Governors (or stand to be one)?*

*Would you like to be invited to events about local developments in healthcare?*

If you answer 'Yes' to any of the above, **we want you to be part of our future.**

If you have a contract of employment with the **University of Oxford in a department within the Medical Sciences Division** or **hold an honorary contract award with OUH for at least 12 months**, you can join our staff constituency.

University of Oxford staff belonging to other departments can join us as public members.

To join us visit [www.ouh.nhs.uk/ft](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/ft) or call 01865 743491 for a membership form.

**Membership is free!**