Awards

Centre member appointed to New Chair in Geriatric Medicine
Professor Alasdair MacLullich, Centre scientist and currently an MRC Clinician Scientist Fellow, has been appointed to the Chair in Geriatric Medicine at the University of Edinburgh. Alasdair's research interests include the pathophysiology of delirium and the mechanisms of age-related cognitive decline, especially the role of glucocorticoids.

Alasdair said, “I am delighted to have been given this great opportunity to continue working on delirium and cognitive ageing at the University of Edinburgh. With the establishment of the new Centre for Cognitive Ageing and Cognitive Epidemiology and the many other relevant centres here we are in an excellent position to do novel mechanistic and translational work on these very important but under-researched areas. In particular, this post will enable me to strengthen links between laboratory and clinical research on normal and pathological cognitive ageing.”

Centre member wins Tam Dalyell prize
Professor Sergio Della Sala was awarded the Tam Dalyell Prize for Excellence in Engaging the Public with Science. Sergio was acknowledged for his engagement with the media and his involvement in the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and the Edinburgh Book Festival. Sergio will give the first University of Edinburgh Christmas lecture entitled ‘Tall Tales about the Mind and Brain’, which will be held in George Square Theatre on 10th December at 6pm.

Sergio said, “It is a privilege to be the first winner of the Tam Dalyell prize and to deliver the first University of Edinburgh Christmas lecture, and I hope my work in engaging the public has helped people understand the relevance of science and the benefits it can bring to society.”

Clinical Research Fellowship
Dr Rosanna Hall, a specialist registrar in geriatric medicine, has been awarded £250,000 for a Clinical Research Fellowship from Research Into Ageing/British Geriatrics Society. Roanna’s project is entitled “Elevated cortisol, delirium and cognitive decline in older patients with hip fracture” and will be supervised by Professors Alasdair MacLullich and Jonathan Seckl. Roanna will work closely with our Centre.

New Appointments

The Centre welcomes six new core members of staff. We now have two full time administrative staff (a researcher/scientific administrator and a secretary), a data manager, a bioinformatician, a statistician and a human testing technician. These core staff can provide a range of services for Centre members, so do use their skills. Summaries of their remit and policies for requesting their time can be found on page 4.

Pictured left to right: Anna Sim, Dave Liewald, Sarah Harris, Jack Nissan, Beverly Roberts, Mike Allerhand.
Centre research meetings
Cross-Centre meeting in Bristol
The Centre is organising its first cross-Centre meeting with Professor George Davey-Smith’s MRC Centre for Causal Analyses in Translational Epidemiology in Bristol. The meeting will be held on 29th January 2009 at the Department for Social Medicine at Bristol University and will be entitled ‘Genes, Brain Imaging, and Cognition and Cognitive Ageing’. This will be an exciting cross-Centre meeting where researchers of all levels can discuss ideas on genetics and cognitive ageing. There are still a couple of places left, so if you would like to attend please contact Anna Sim for more details. Funds are available for research meetings and dissemination activities so suggestions for future cross-Centre ageing meetings are welcomed.

Centre conference planned on cognition and dementia, and a series of meetings on imaging
The Centre is also contributing to two Edinburgh based research meetings. Firstly, John Starr and Beverly Roberts are assisting in the organisation of a one day conference entitled ‘Advancing years: current research in cognitive aging and dementia – a multi-disciplinary approach’ which will be held on 25th February 2009 in the Informatics Forum. The meeting will consist of talks from both internal and external speakers on two main themes: ‘Cognitive ageing: epidemiology and imaging’, and ‘Dementia: Problems and solutions in diagnosis and finding new treatments’. Attendance is free and registration will open in the coming weeks. For more information please contact Beverly Roberts. Secondly, Joanna Wardlaw, Beverly Roberts, Mark Bastin, Ian Marshall and Alexa Morcom are organising a series of imaging seminar meetings run primarily by the Imaging Development Group. The talks will cover varying aspects of human and animal imaging, including ageing. The first talk of the series will take place in spring 2009. Further details will follow in the new year.

Grants and Publications
Grant for social cognition and ageing study
Dr Sarah MacPherson has recently been awarded a grant of 37,000 Euros from Fundação Bial for a 2 year study entitled ‘How do you know what others feel? A psychophysiological study of social cognition and ageing’. Her project will start this month.

Centre mentioned in Nature
Professor Ian Deary recently published an essay in Nature which publicised the cognitive epidemiology work of the Centre. This is a great advertisement for the work of our Centre scientists! A pdf of the essay is available on the Centre website: Deary, I.J. (2008). Do more intelligent people live longer? Nature, 456: 175-176.

New paper on IQ and death by homicide
Research published in the December issue of the British Journal of Psychiatry by David Batty and Centre colleagues Catharine Gale, Ian Deary and others, suggests that young Swedish men with higher IQ test scores are less likely to experience death by homicide than their lower scoring counterparts. They discuss some possible explanations for these results: people with higher intelligence may be more able verbally to conduct and nullify a dispute without having to resort to physical means because they can call on a larger range of strategies for resolution; or do those with higher IQs have larger income and higher social status employment than persons with lower test scores, such that individuals with higher intelligence can better afford to live apart from neighbourhoods with high crime rates and low social cohesion.

New paper on cerebral small vessel stroke
Annals of Neurology have accepted a paper by Joanna Wardlaw and others. The paper demonstrates that patients with the clinical phenotype of cerebral small vessel (as opposed to large artery) disease have a leakier blood brain barrier and that increasing age and enlarged perivascular spaces are also associated with increasing blood brain barrier permeability.

Visible gadolinium in the CSF on FLAIR image in patient with lacunar stroke.

a) DWI, b) T2-weighted and c) FLAIR image without gadolinium at initial diagnosis showing the acute infarct in the posterior limb of right internal capsule (white spot in a); d) FLAIR image after iv gadolinium at the time of BBB permeability imaging six weeks later. In d, high signal (white) due to gadolinium is present in CSF in most of the sulci (arrows) and some enlarged perivascular spaces (thick arrow).

Government Report on mental capital and wellbeing
Ian Deary and Alan Gow recently published a report within the Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project entitled ‘Determinants of normal cognitive ageing: implications for mental capital’. The aim of the Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing has been to advise the Government on how to achieve the best possible mental development and mental wellbeing for everyone in the UK in the future. For a copy of the report go to www.foresight.gov.uk.

Events
First meeting of Centre’s Executive Committee
The Executive Committee met for the first time on 25th November. It was an extremely successful meeting where progress and procedures were discussed by the Centre director, co-directors and group leaders.

Opening symposium
We marked the establishment of our Centre with a Scientific Opening Symposium on 11th September. The event was a great success with just over 100 delegates attending the day of talks. Special thanks go to Professors Monique Breteler and George Davey-Smith for giving the invited lectures, the Centre members who gave topic talks, and the poster presenters. We hope you all enjoyed your Binet champagne!

Centre website and email address
Mr Dave Liewald has been putting in a great deal of work on our Centre website and it is now live at www.ccace.ed.ac.uk. Many thanks to all who contributed design ideas and content. Future development of the website is an ongoing process. If you have any comments or additions please send these to Anna Sim. We also have a dedicated Centre email address – ccace@ed.ac.uk. Please use this address for general Centre queries and any website additions.

Teaching/Training
MSc course in cognitive ageing and cognitive epidemiology
The first series of lectures for the Centre’s MSc course entitled ‘Cognitive ageing and cognitive epidemiology’ ends on 2nd December. Many thanks to all who participated. The course proved popular with students with around 25 individuals attending the first lecture!

Centre PhD studentships
We have now advertised the first round of our fully funded 1+3 Centre PhD studentships. Please pass the details on to those who may be interested in applying. The deadline for applications is 30th January 2009 and projects will start in September 2009. For more information see www.ccace.ed.ac.uk/PHD.htm.

Getting to know the Centre Administrative Secretary
Once she has settled in, Anna Sim will be scheduling personal visits to meet Centre scientists. Anna holds a key role in the day-to-day running of the Centre and her administrative support will be invaluable to Centre members.

Contact and news
If you have any news, events planned, have gained research grants, or published significant papers then please send the details to Anna Sim (ccace@ed.ac.uk) and she will include it in a future Centre newsletter.

Address for main Centre office: Room F2, Department of Psychology, 7 George Square, Edinburgh, EH8 9JZ. email: ccace@ed.ac.uk; Tel: 0131 650 8275; www.ccace.ed.ac.uk.
Supplement: alphabetical list of new core Centre staff

Dr Mike Allerhand. Appointed as Centre statistician. Mike will be based in room F4 at 7 George Square. He will start on 1st February 2009. Mike can provide advice and support to Centre members for statistical methods, conduct analyses and present methods and results for publication. He can also provide teaching, tutorials and demonstrations of quantitative methods and statistical programming. Project proposals should be sent to Anna Sim in the form of a brief summary of the background, aims, how the work fits within the Centre’s aims, and an anticipated time-scale for the work.

Dr Sarah Harris. Appointed as Centre Geneticist-Bioinformatician. Sarah is based at the MRC Human Genetics Unit at the Western General Hospital. She can provide assistance with data-mining, monitor sample tracking, management and audit, and the accurate provision of DNA to collaborators, and provide advice and assistance to members of the Centre with biological database searches, experimental design issues that impact on analysis and interpretation of results. Requests for her time should initially be sent to Anna Sim and should be in the form of a one page (maximum) summary of the background to the research, how it fits with the aims of CCACE, what is required to be done, and how many hours are likely to be needed.

Mr Dave Liewald. Appointed as Centre Database IT Manager. Dave will be based in room F4 at 7 George Square. He is available to help members of the Centre in data acquisition projects or additional data collection and exchange within existing funded projects that are within the Centre’s aims. He will design, implement and manage secure data storage for any Centre related data including web services as well as completing systems analysis and design of data storage systems to support Centre research. Requests for Dave’s time should initially be sent to Anna Sim and should be in the form of a one page (maximum) summary of the background to the research, how it fits with the aims of CCACE, what is required to be done and to arrange an initial scoping meeting to assess the practicality of the request.

Mr Jack Nissan. Appointed as Centre Human Testing Technician. Jack will be based in room F4 at 7 George Square. Jack is available to assist with cognitive testing of participants within projects run by members of the Centre, and within the Centre aims, to include assistance with setting up experimental protocols, some data scoring and analysis and possible contributions to write up. He can recruit additional younger, middle aged and older healthy adult volunteers for participation in cognitive-behavioural research within the Centre and provide training to non psychologists in the standard operating protocols for psychometric and other cognitive/behavioural testing. Requests for Jack’s time should initially be sent to Anna Sim and should be in the form of a one page (maximum) summary of the background to the research, how it fits with the aims of CCACE, what is required to be done and how many hours are likely to be needed.

Dr Beverly Roberts. Appointed as Centre Researcher/Scientific Administrator. Beverly is based in room F2 at 7 George Square. She will focus on the management of the scientific direction of the Centre to ensure that all research deliverables are met. She will also help the Director, Co-directors and Group Leaders to implement the Centre’s scientific vision and to ensure the efficient running of the Centre. Beverly is available to Centre members to advise on funding opportunities for future research and can co-ordinate and contribute to scientific aspects of writing bids to win research grants for collaborative funding between Centre members as well as help with knowledge transfer activities carried out by Centre members. Requests for assistance with standard research grants or other scientific activities should be made directly to Beverly. Larger requests should be discussed with Ian Deary.

Mrs Anna Sim. Appointed as Centre Administrative Secretary. Anna will be based in room F2 at 7 George Square. She is available to provide full secretarial support to the Director, act as a point of contact for collaborators, colleagues and clinicians, including the induction of new staff, and provide advice and sourcing of information as required. She will also provide administrative support for Centre members for all academic, research and teaching/training components of the Centre, e.g. diary management, maintenance of a press and publications database, organising meetings, activities and events, and providing support in the preparation of applications for future research grants and collaborations by co-ordinating the administrative process from preparation to end stages of any award application. Requests for time for small tasks should be made directly with Anna. Requests for assistance with larger tasks that may require a number of hours should be discussed first with Ian Deary.

Staff advertised
Applications for the Centre’s Animal Development Technician have now closed and interviews will take place this month. The process of finding the Centre’s Brain Imaging Development Technician is ongoing. The Centre’s Genetic Statistician post will be advertised in due course.