

The Centre starts today

The MRC Centre for Cognitive Ageing and Cognitive Epidemiology starts today, Monday 1st September 2008. Over the next five years, it must make a difference to its members' research, and to postgraduate education and training in the fields that we cover. The Centre is an exciting development for us all. You should see it as a big vote of confidence from the MRC in the work you have been producing already, and strong encouragement to develop the work and collaborations. Now that the MRC has recognised our strong and unique take on life-long health and wellbeing, we hope the status of the Centre will provide a respected affiliation for your work—alongside your University or other affiliation—and a meaningful way to construe your research. In getting this Centre grant we never compromised on what we were and we wanted to do. We insisted that our distinctive combination of strengths was what they should support. They did; indeed, our feedback is that, among the many prestigious Centre applications, ours was the outstanding one.



The Centre will work best if you use its resources, especially the core staff. To that end we shall be making sure that you are familiar with who they are as they are appointed, and what they can do to help you. In this first bulletin it is important to let you know where the Centre stands just now. The final signing-on-the-dotted-line with the MRC has still to take place, so it's been gratifying that the University allowed us to appoint two core staff and to advertise others in advance of a budget's being in place. As you'll see below, we shall be appointing staff over the next several months. Our first PhD students will start in September 2009.

The profile of the Centre will build energetically and appropriately. It is important to have our early scientific meeting of the members and key guests, to bring us together. Thereafter, we shall have a media launch and will be spreading the news about the Centre through a website, briefings, and proactive news management. Having our own Web Designer (soon) and Knowledge Transfer Officer (from Autumn 2009) will be a boon. For now, from our early-development status at present, we hope the Centre will grow in its use to you, and will be a forum and a platform: a place for useful meetings, and from which to launch to greater scientific heights.

Ian Deary, Centre Director

Where is the Centre?

The Centre exists in the numbers of sites at which the staff will be appointed and where its members work. There is an area of core Centre offices in Psychology, 7 George Square, on the West side of the first floor. The refurbishment of the offices for the Centre's reception area and some of the core Centre staff is nearing completion. The main reception for the Centre will be room F2 in 7 George Square. The Centre Researcher/Scientific Administrator and the Administrative Secretary will be based here. Other core Centre staff (Database and IT Manager/Web Designer, Statistician, Knowledge Transfer Officer, Human Testing Development Technician) will be based in room F4 of 7 George Square. There are desk spaces, in this large, attractive office, for two Centre visiting scientists. The offices adjacent to these are Ian Deary's (F5) and his Lothian Birth Cohort team (F3) and Research Fellows (F1).

Opening Scientific Symposium

To celebrating the scientific opening of the Centre we are holding a day-long inaugural scientific meeting on Thursday 11th September 2008 from 9.15am until 5.15pm. A Champagne reception will follow the meeting. The location of the meeting is the Department Psychology at the University of Edinburgh (7 George Square). There will be two Keynote Lectures by Professor George Davey-Smith and Professor Monique Breteler. There will be talks from leaders of each of the six groups whose work forms the basis of the Centre's research focus. Registration is free. If you wish to attend and have not registered please do so at: www.edinburghneuroscience.ed.ac.uk/MRCcentresymposium/Index.html

Official Media Opening

We are working with the Communications and Marketing team at the University and the MRC to discuss a full launch for the benefit of the media. We shall be in touch and we hope you will help with that.

Appointments

Staff appointed today

Please welcome Dr Beverly Roberts (née Shipley) as the Centre's Researcher/Scientific Administrator and Dr Sarah Harris as the Centre's Geneticist-Bioinformatician. Beverly will be based in the Centre's main offices at 7 George Square. She will work on delivering the scientific aims of the Centre through day-to-day and strategic management of the Centre, focusing on the scientific direction, as well as feeding in to inform strategic management decision-making. She will facilitate the delivery of current translational research and enhance future research endeavours by co-ordinating research themes across the Centre. She will also focus on pursuing personal research aims with appropriate collaborators for the benefit of the Centre, and lead author groups on scientific papers and in research programmes. Sarah will be based in Professor David Porteous's lab in the Medical Genetics Section at the Western General Hospital. She will provide and integrate the bioinformatics information required by the Centre and will curate the Centre's DNA stores. She will also carry out research into the genetics of cognitive ageing and cognitive epidemiology, write scientific papers, lead research programmes and also lead the Lothian Birth Cohorts' genetics research team.

Staff advertised now

Adverts for other core Centre staff (Administrative Secretary, Statistician, Database and IT Manager/Web Designer) have been placed and we hope to have these individuals in post by the end of the year. Professor Robert Logie is currently receiving applications for the Centre's Human Testing Development Technician. Professor Joanna Wardlaw has now advertised the post for the Centre's Brain Imaging Development Technician.

Staff to come

Two further posts, the Centre's Genetic Statistician and Animal Development Technician, will be advertised in due course.

Research

The Centre is already helping with research grant bids. This first is for the BBSRC Targeted Priority Studentship Competition. This annual competition awards PhD studentships funding in areas of research priority. This year one priority area is ageing research. Centre scientists Alasdair MacLulich and Beverly Roberts are working on this bid with the Centre for Vascular Sciences as the hub department. Our Centre and Centre for Inflammation Research will be collaborating Centres on the bid.

Teaching/Training

One of the training milestones for the Centre is the development of a four year doctoral programme in cognitive ageing and cognitive epidemiology. In meeting this milestone we have successfully created an MSc course entitled 'Cognitive ageing and cognitive epidemiology' within the Individual Differences MSc programme which runs in Psychology. The course will consist of ten 2-hour lectures/seminars that encompass all six areas of cognitive ageing and cognitive epidemiology research covered by the Centre. We are lucky to have the Centre Director, Co-Directors and a number of the group leaders teaching on the course. The course is open to students from other MSc courses. Please contact Beverly Roberts if you want more information.

Our Centre award also provided funding for two PhD studentships for each year of the Centre. Due to the MRC's administrative delays it was not possible to advertise and fill the first two studentships for academic year 2008/2009. The MRC have allowed us to roll these over to next year and we shall advertise four PhD studentships (two based in HSS and two in MVM) for the academic year 2009/2010. This will provide a nice initial community of MSc-PhD students for the Centre.

Events/News

First meeting of Centre's Executive Committee

The Executive Committee consists of the Centre Director, Co-Directors and research group leaders. This group is programmed to meet every two months. The opening symposium will be the first meeting. The first formal business meeting is scheduled for November (date TBC).

First meeting of the Centre Scientific Staff Group

The Scientific Staff Group consists of the Centre Executive Committee, all Centre scientists, contributing scientists, and collaborators. This group is scheduled to meet twice a year. One of these meetings must consist of a research day. The Centre opening symposium inaugural scientific meeting on the 11th September will form the first research day meeting. The second meeting will take place in March 2009 (date TBC).

The Centre has top billing at the UK Ageing Research Forum

Ian Deary, as Centre Director, has been asked to talk about the work of the Centre at the UK Age Research Forum's 'Shaping the Future' day in London on 2nd October 2008. This is a high-profile event, attended by funding organisations, academics, government, policy makers, industry, commerce, and other community stakeholders. It will be a good showcase for the Centre.

Centre's Co-Director appointed Director of the Scottish Dementia Research Network

The Scottish Dementia Clinical Research Network was launched on 29th August funded by the Chief Scientists Office for £1million over the next three years. John Starr, a Co-Director of the MRC Centre is also the new Director of the Network. The Network will research into the causes, cures, and care of dementia. This new initiative, coinciding with the start up of the MRC Centre, will provide an exceptional opportunity to link normative and non-normative cognitive ageing research in Scotland.

Getting to know the Centre Researcher/Scientific Administrator

During September Beverly Roberts will be scheduling personal visits to meet all Centre scientists. Beverly's key role in helping the Centre's scientific mission will be crucial in its success.

A reminder of the Centre's Mission and Aims

The Centre's mission is: (1) to elucidate the routes to the vulnerable ageing brain, and thus provide information to prevent or ameliorate cognitive disability and its negative consequences for health and wellbeing; (2) to determine the mechanisms by which lower cognitive ability through the lifecourse renders the body vulnerable to ill health and impaired wellbeing; (3) to provide an outstanding environment for interdisciplinary research training in cognitive ageing and cognitive epidemiology.

The Centre's objectives are to,

- Maintain, develop and exploit the unique long-term human cohort studies assembled in Scotland as new **national resources** to explore lifecourse influences on *cognitive ageing* and pathways whereby cognitive ability in early life affects later health—cognitive epidemiology.
- **Advance knowledge** by research into biological, neurological, genetic, social, economic, and psychological aspects of cognitive ageing in humans and lifecourse mammalian model systems.
- Develop and evaluate psychological, genetic, other biological, and brain imaging **methods** to assess, monitor, and prevent or ameliorate decline in mental functions with a view to providing a rational basis for translating this into potential interventions.
- Build upon MSc courses unique to our Centre, exploiting the university's resources in innovative methods such as e-learning, to train an essential and **novel kind of researcher** capable of accessing the best technologies to maximise opportunities for working in multidisciplinary teams in cognitive aging and cognitive epidemiology across clinical and basic science.

Leading Centre Scientists

Director: Ian Deary, Department of Psychology.

Co-Directors: Jonathan Seckl, Centre for Cardiovascular Science; John Starr, The Geriatric Medicine Unit

Research group leaders

Cognitive Epidemiology group

David Batty, MRC Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, Glasgow

Human Cognitive Ageing group
Robert Logie, Department of Psychology

Animal models of cognitive ageing and neural health group

James McCulloch, Centre for Cognitive and Neural Systems

Genetics and statistics of brain ageing group
David Porteous, Molecular Medicine Centre

Neuroendocrine aspects of cognitive ageing group

Jonathan Seckl, Centre for Cardiovascular Science

Human and animal brain imaging group
Joanna Wardlaw, Division of Clinical Neurosciences

Contact and news

If you have any news, events planned, have gained research grants, or published significant papers then please send the details to Beverly and she will include it in a future Centre newsletter.

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