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NEW RESEARCH PROFESSORSHIP WILL HELP TREATMENTS MAKE THE LEAP FROM THE BENCH TO THE BEDSIDE

A Keele professor is one of eight of the UK’s most promising leaders in medical health research to be awarded a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) professorship, the Government has announced.

Each professor – selected by an international panel of independent experts – will receive around £1.5m of funding to conduct research into conditions that affect millions of patients across the UK.

Professor Nadine Foster, Professor of Musculoskeletal Health in Primary Care, Arthritis Research UK Primary Care Centre/Primary Care Sciences, is to receive funding for her research programme, which will ensure GPs and physiotherapists offer treatments and services that help people with musculoskeletal pain and disability, so they can cope with and reduce pain.

Professor Foster said: “Support from the NIHR for this five year research programme will ensure the delivery of high quality evidence to support treatments and primary care services for patients with common painful conditions including back pain, shoulder pain and knee pain.

“My research, led from the Arthritis Research UK Primary Care Centre at Keele, involves randomised clinical trials testing the clinical and cost-effectiveness of different treatments, as well as new services that can be translated into improved patient care. In addition, the award will enhance primary care research capacity and research leadership in ways that will benefit general practice, physiotherapy and musculoskeletal services more broadly.”

Health minister, Anne Milton, said: “The professors will be given the opportunity to develop their research programmes, but most importantly they won’t stop treating NHS patients. This will help make sure that new ideas make the leap from the bench to the bedside.”

NEW AGREEMENTS SIGNED IN INDIA

A top level visit to India has seen the signing of three Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs). Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost of the University, Rama Thirunamachandran, signed an MoU with the Tata Institute of Social Science (TISS) in Mumbai.

Keele and TISS have been exchanging students in Human Rights and Globalisation under PMI2 for the last three years, but this agreement now takes the partnership to a new level and will enable the two institutions to work closely on a range of activities in Social Work, Social-legal outreach programmes and research.

During the second part of the visit, Professor Gordon Ferns, Director of ISTM, and Dr Paul Roach, Lecturer in Biomedical and Cell Tissue Engineering, visited IIT Indore, where a Memorandum of Understanding was signed.

IIT Indore is a new Indian Institute of Technology, but very strong in Biomedical Engineering and related fields, which will present a range of research opportunities, as well as joint grant proposals.

Rama, with Professor Anand Pandyan, Professor of Rehabilitation, and Dr Annette Kratz, Head of Keele International, continued to Chennai, where they met with the Secretary of State for Higher Education for Tamil Nadu. Together with Professor Emma Bell, newly appointed Chair in Organisational Behaviour and Management, they signed the third MoU with Madurai Kamaraj University.

Links were made with the Centre for Entrepreneurship Development in Madurai and a final visit was undertaken to SRM University in Chennai, where Keele has already had an exchange of students and staff in Physiotherapy. A range of discussions took place with the Vice-Chancellor, Sir Dr M Ponnavaikko to expand these links into Humanities and Social Science.
24/7 opening and more!

The University has provided the Campus Library with funds to open 24 hours a day, seven days a week throughout semester from September 2012.

The Library first trialled this service in 2009/10 for six weeks around final exams and has since increased the number of weeks it offers every year. It has proved to be very popular, regularly attracting more than 500 visits a night, often with over 200 users studying in the building at any one time.

This is one of a number of Library initiatives designed to improve the student experience. Others include the very well used digitisation service, single sign-on to give users easier access to e-resources, a lot more information skills training for students and development of the Aspire reading list system.

The University has now set deadlines for the receipt of reading lists by the Library and Library liaison staff are working hard to try to get this information from Schools. They are also working with the Distinctive Keele Curriculum team to see what more can be done to assist students in further developing their information literacy skills, a key graduate attribute.

There has also been more investment in both e-books and multiple copies of print stock. So in 2010/11, the Library added 15,565 print books to stock, 50% more than its long-term annual average and bought over 1,400 e-books. Users can now find over 300,000 e-books and access over 15,000 e-journals via the Library, far more than were ever available in print.

As well as 24/7 opening throughout semester, more improvements are in the pipeline: the introduction of an online resource discovery service to enable users to search the Library’s e-resources from one screen, improvements to short loan, automated phone renewals to enable borrowers to renew their loans at any time, plus self-service holds so reserved books can be collected even when the counter isn’t staffed.

KEELE WORLD FESTIVAL SUCCESS

The Keele World Festival 2012 proved to be a huge success. Events were organised across campus to support the aim of bringing people together to learn about each other’s countries and customs.

The School of Nursing and Midwifery ran two events at the hospital campus for staff and students, Keele academic staff gave talks on the international aspects of their research and Schools and Directorates ran sessions for staff and students.

All the Halls of Residence devised programmes in celebration of the festival, with activities including demonstrations by Keele student societies, African drum workshops and international food.

Student talent was celebrated at the international art project, the study abroad photo competition and the song and dance showcase.

Food outlets provided tasty internationally themed menus. Comus prepared and served four recipes submitted by students and the student with the winning recipe had a masterclass with award-winning Keele chef Allan Jones.

Chinese New Year was celebrated with traditional food and activities, world films were screened, sporting events took place and a group of students from Kyoto University of Foreign Studies spent three weeks at Keele on a short programme.

Two ERASMUS visiting lecturers arrived at Keele and members of staff will visit universities in Europe under the same scheme. For more information: www.keele.ac.uk/studyabroad/mobilitieschemes/

More information about the festival can be found at www.keele.ac.uk/worldfestival

KEELE ASTROPHYSICISTS USE NASA’S SPITZER TO FIND SOLID BUCKYBALLS IN SPACE

Professor Nye Evans, Astrophysics, has led a team of astronomers using data from NASA’s Spitzer Space Telescope who have, for the first time, discovered buckyballs in a solid form in space.

Prior to this discovery, the microscopic carbon spheres had been found only in gas form in the cosmos. The new work, led by Professor Evans, appears in a paper in the journal Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society.

Buckyballs are named after their resemblance to the architect Buckminster Fuller’s geodesic domes. They are made up of 60 carbon molecules arranged into a hollow sphere like a football. Their unusual structure makes them ideal candidates for electrical and chemical applications on Earth, including superconducting materials, medicines, water purification and armour.

In the latest discovery, the team of scientists, including Keele’s Jacco van Loon, using Spitzer, detected tiny particles of matter consisting of stacked buckyballs. They found the particles around a pair of stars called XX Ophiuchi, 6,500 light-years from Earth, and detected enough to fill the equivalent in volume to 10,000 Mount Everests.

“These buckyballs are stacked together to form a solid, like oranges in a crate,” said Professor Evans. “The particles we detected are miniscule, far smaller than the width of a hair, but each one would contain stacks of millions of buckyballs.”
Many Keele alumni live in North America and their generosity has enabled The North American Foundation for Keele University to extend some exciting new opportunities to benefit from the unique experience of study at Keele. NAFKU Scholarships help to fund approved postgraduate courses for American and Canadian students at Keele.

NAFKU Scholar 2011 Natasha Flick - MA Diplomatic Studies

Natasha Flick was the first in her family to graduate – from San Diego State University in Business Administration and Finance, Cum Laude and with Distinction. She says that the time she spent studying on an exchange at Keele “shaped my future more than anything else”.

“My degree from San Diego State had a business focus but I am making a big switch for my Master’s course at Keele. It’s called Diplomatic Studies and I am drawing on International Relations modules too. I really wanted to study an international course at an international university. I knew Keele already and I loved it here – the course here has a real global perspective and the students are so diverse too, not even half of them are English.

“Keele is very welcoming and everyone is quick to help. Everything is close by and it’s so English – and yet there are people here from all over the world. Not just the students but the professors too.

“I always thought I wanted to work in a multinational business but now I am starting to think I might work in a government or political setting. I haven’t decided yet but I like looking at what makes people work together, how people and countries cooperate to make things happen.”

NAFKU Scholar 2011 Annabelle Flores – MA Human Rights, Globalisation and Justice

Annabelle Flores is the first NAFKU Canada Scholar. She studied at Ottawa University and graduated in Criminology Magna, Cum Laude. Although a native French and Spanish speaker, she completed a semester as a Study Abroad student at Keele and appreciated the opportunity to study in English.

Annabelle says: “The great experience I had at Keele is part of the reason I wanted to return for my postgraduate studies here. I liked the idea of studying in Britain but I didn’t do any detailed research before I came. Once I got to Keele I liked it and I heard out about the Master’s programme in Human Rights, Globalisation and Justice. It is a unique course, unlike anything else I have seen elsewhere, and certainly not a course I could pursue in Canada. I knew Keele already and I liked the course so it was a very easy decision. Keele seems to be a traditional University with a good community life. I really liked the idea of being in the country.

“I want to help people. I would like to set up or be part of a programme for people in forced marriages or in human trafficking or something similar. That’s part of what I am studying at Keele. I’d love to stay to work in Europe but I will probably have to lay the foundations of my career in Canada. “I always thought I would like to have a good connection with Ottawa Victim Services; my supervisor was happy about me taking this course and encouraged me to return there, to work with victims of crime.”

UK FIRST FOR KEELE AS COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS LAUNCHED

Keele has launched a pioneering community-based volunteering strategy, linking its student population, through the Students’ Union, with three North Staffordshire organisations – Aspire Housing, Embrace and North Staffordshire Volunteering Centres (NSVC), as part of National Student Volunteering Week.

The new strategy, named ‘Keele Community Connections’, was launched as part of National Student Volunteering Week, the 50th Anniversary of the award of Keele’s charter as a University and the tenth year of formal volunteering at Keele. The University will also join with the NSVC and Volunteering England to become a branch of NSVC – and it is believed Keele is the first university in the country to become a branch of this national organisation.

The initiative will provide high quality volunteering experiences in partnership with a wide range of local and global organisations, thereby contributing to social, environmental, and economic agendas locally, nationally, internationally, and enabling Keele students to make a positive and valued contribution in the communities in which they live and work.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nick Foskett, said: “The University’s mission includes our commitment to contributing positively to social, environmental and economic agendas locally, nationally and internationally. The ‘Keele Community Connections Volunteering Strategy’ is an innovative, pioneering, community-based initiative, which will strengthen Keele’s links with its communities for the benefit of individuals and groups within those communities, and Keele’s students and alumni.”

Professor Marilyn Andrews, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience), said: “We are absolutely thrilled to be launching ‘Keele Community Connections’, which we hope will become a beacon of excellence in volunteering, as well as creating a significant and positive impact within the Keele, local and global communities and on those who participate in volunteering.”
The Professorial and Readership Promotions Committee has made the following promotions to personal chairs.

Chris Exley – Professor of Bioinorganic Chemistry

Chris Exley works at that fascinating interface between inorganic chemistry, organic chemistry and biology. He obtained his BSc in Biology from Stirling University in 1985, and stayed there for his PhD at the Institute of Aquaculture, where his fascination in the biological actions (and toxicity) of aluminium began. A stint as an ICI postdoc at Stirling was followed by a similar role at Keele, before starting a Royal Society Fellowship here between 1994-2002, when he was appointed as a Reader. Chris has established an international reputation in the area of aluminium biochemistry, both promoting continued interest in this research theme, and developing his specific expertise in aluminium toxicity and in ways of mitigating its effects, most notably through the effect of silicon compounds (especially silicic acid). His work has been particularly prominent in evaluating the impact that aluminium has on triggering Alzheimer’s disease, and he was an expert witness in the Camelford water contamination case. Chris has won around £2m of research funding, and published 80 peer-reviewed papers, of which 15 have been cited more than 50 times. He has presented his research extensively as a keynote speaker around the world, and has founded the biennial ‘Keele Meetings on Aluminium’, whilst also disseminating his knowledge to more general audiences through a range of public and media events.

Sue Read – Professor of Learning Disability Nursing

Sue Read has been awarded a personal Chair for her national and international standing as an academic in the field of Learning Disability Nursing. Sue has become one of the leading international figures in the highly sensitive area of bereavement counselling and end of life care for those with learning disabilities. A distinctive feature of her work is that it not only influences the field of nursing, but has been utilised across the whole range of health and social care professions; such multi-professional impact is an outstanding achievement within nursing. Her research has had an increasing impact on client service delivery as well as contributing to professional education and development. As a recognised leader in the field of working with vulnerable populations, Sue continues to drive forward changes to practice through her distinct and unique contributions. Over a period of 15 years, she has produced a sustained body of high quality collaborative research into learning disabilities, loss and bereavement along with novel practical aids in the form of a ‘toolkit’. By her dedicated focus on these relatively neglected clinical topics, Sue has been able to develop a significant body of research evidence that has begun to shift the quality and character of services for this vulnerable client group.

Pat Black – Professor of Pharmacy Professional Development & Education

Patricia Black, Director of Postgraduate Studies in the School of Pharmacy, has been promoted to a personal Chair. Pat has been a member of staff since 1994. During her career at Keele, Pat has built a rare combination of skills around knowledge of healthcare, pedagogical issues and experience of constructing courses via distance education. She founded and subsequently developed a highly successful postgraduate unit and team that deliver courses to qualified healthcare professionals that meet a strongly expressed need for learning within the workplace. The modular, ‘pick-and-mix’ approach is perfectly attuned to the increasingly sub-specialist nature of postgraduate training in health disciplines and has provided a model for PGT in the Faculty of Health. She demonstrates vision and leading-edge thinking in her practice, particularly in relation to open, distance and flexible learning, and the use of structured reflective learning portfolios that have received critical acclaim nationally and internationally. Her research publications demonstrate the positive transformational effect that her work has had on learners, particularly in the context of CPD. Pat currently holds a National Teaching Fellowship.

HARD RAIN AT KEELE

Keele was the venue for the official UK launch of a new display of the groundbreaking, internationally acclaimed touring exhibition, Hard Rain. The original exhibition has been expanded to include ‘Whole Earth? – Aligning human systems and natural systems’.

Set outdoors, adjacent to the Claus Moser Building, students, staff and visitors were able to see a display of powerful photography and words illustrating both our global problems and the solutions available.

In 2006 environmental photographer, Mark Edwards, launched an exhibition of photographs, in collaboration with Bob Dylan, entitled Hard Rain. It explored the state of the planet with each line of Dylan’s song, Hard Rain, being illustrated by an image. The new display, Whole Earth? presents solutions to the problems highlighted in Hard Rain, but governments need grass-roots support if they are to scale up these solutions and move towards sustainable development.

The official opening of the exhibition was the first official event for our new Chancellor, Jonathon Porritt, and creator Mark Edwards later gave an inspirational talk, Hard Rain: Whole Earth? In the Westminster Theatre.
Study Abroad Photo Competition

The Study Abroad annual Photo Competition in Keele Hall proved to be a huge success with scores of outstanding entries.

Out of almost 100 submissions, the three guest judges, John McCarthy (Director of Marketing and Communications), Karen Clarke (Director of Finance & IT) and John Easom (Alumni Officer), selected nine finalists to be displayed at the event.

Returning Keele exchange students and new International arrivals were invited to attend to vote for their favourite entry. The winner of the top prize of £100 was awarded to Matthew Thompson, who studied at Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia. The Study Abroad team were pleased to welcome their highest number of guests yet, with a total of over 160 attendees. The event gave guests an insight into other students’ Study Abroad experiences throughout the world and enabled new arrivals at Keele to meet students who had studied at their institution.

Keele Key Fund Awards

The Keele Key Fund Disbursement Committee has reviewed 12 applications for funding from a wide variety of applicants.

Almost £25,000 was distributed towards the following projects: Keele Capoeira Society workshops; VE@Keele Student Volunteer Programme; Cricket and Fencing sports projects; Keele Concerts Society workshops; The Ray Pahl Honorary Studentship; Keele Heritage; Keele Community Concerts and the Kimbilio Sustainability Centre Project (Congo).

Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost, Rama Thirunamachandran, said: “It is very satisfying for the committee to have such a number of different and interesting projects and we only regret that we cannot support all of them. We look forward to making the next round of awards at the April meeting.”

Keele Stars on BBC2 Stargazing Live

Keele’s planet-hunting research had a starring role on the BBC’s “Stargazing Live” programme with Professor Brian Cox.

The exoplanet-themed programme included a live link from the studio at Jodrell Bank to Keele’s WASP-South Observatory in South Africa, including an interview with postdoc David Anderson. WASP-South runs robotically, so David and Keele’s Professor Coel Hellier set up a link allowing presenter Dara O’Brian to send a command triggering WASP-South into live action.

Keele Observatory also took part in the Stargazing Live extravaganza. Doors were open to the public from Monday through to Thursday and despite the poor weather, most visitors were able to gaze at Jupiter and its moons through the 138-year-old giant telescope, whilst daytime visitors watched some spectacular solar flares.

For many of the 1,000 visitors, this was their first experience of looking at the sky through a telescope. Observatory staff and Keele astronomers showed people around the Observatory and talked with them about the many mysteries of the Universe.

Keele Researcher Receives Prestigious Wellcome Trust Award

Stephen Wilkinson, Professor of Bioethics and Head of the Research Centre for Law, Ethics and Society, and Rosamund Scott, Professor of Medical Law and Ethics at King’s College, London, have jointly been awarded a Senior Investigator Award in Ethics and Society by the Wellcome Trust.

The award has been granted to support a programme of work on The Donation and Transfer of Human Reproductive Materials and is expected to be worth more than £900,000 over five years.

Their research will consider the best ethical framework for the donation and transfer of human reproductive materials (such as eggs and sperm) as well as the implications of this framework for clinical practice, law, policy, and regulation.

The grant will support a number of post-doctoral researchers, based partly at Keele and partly at King’s, as well research leave for the award-holders and a series of conferences and workshops.
Research in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences:

by Professor David Shepherd
Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Library and Information Strategy)

A n enduring image of researchers in the humanities and social sciences (not least among the researchers themselves) is that of ‘lone’ or ‘single’ scholars.

And indeed long hours of silent, uninterrupted work in the library, archive and study will always be essential for the writing of books such as Ann Hughes’s Gender and the English Revolution, Nick Rayland’s Zbigniew Preisner’s ‘Three Colours’ Trilogy: A Film Score Guide, Andrew Francis’s At the Edge of Law: Emergent and Divergent Models of Legal Professionalism, Farzana Shain’s The New Folk-Devils: Muslim Boys and Education in English, Helen Wells’s The Fast and the Furious: Drivers, Speed Cameras and Control in a Risk Society (all published in 2011), or Luis Lobo-Guerrero’s Insuring War: Sovereignty, Security and Risk (2012), and of the articles that are no less important a part of the stock in trade of the historian, literary scholar, criminologist, sociologist, or specialist in politics and international relations.

But even this seemingly solitary endeavour requires others’ input: a librarian’s assistance, a colleague’s critical reading, a copy-editor’s correction. And collaboration is increasingly integral to ensuring that our research maintains and surpasses the levels of international recognition and excellence attested to by the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise. Keele has a long and proud tradition of inter-disciplinarity, and this underpins recent successes in securing external funding: grants under the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s Connected Communities programme to Michael Murray (Communities in History), David Amigoni (Reintegrating Self and Community), and Mihaela Kelemen and Anita Mangan (Exploring Personal Communities); Dana Rosenfeld’s project on ageing and HIV/AIDS, funded by the Medical Research Council and Economic and Social Research Council and bringing together social policy and health; Alannah Tomkins’s AHRC network grant, in collaboration with Staffordshire University, on health and creativity; a £370K project funded by ESRC and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council and led by Andy Dobson and Mark Ormerod in which social and natural scientists join forces to tackle the problem of ‘Reducing Energy Consumption through Community Knowledge Networks’; and, just announced, a Wellcome Trust Senior Investigator Award worth almost £2m over five years to allow Steve Wilkinson, together with a colleague from King’s College London, to explore the implications of the donation and transfer of human reproductive materials for practice, law, public policy and regulation.

So more and more of our researchers, while continuing to produce pioneering work within the familiar spaces of their disciplines, are venturing out to join colleagues in the exploration of new territory, national and international. And their work receives due recognition: recent accolades include an ESRC/EPSRC award for best application of social science in a Knowledge Transfer Partnership to Alena Audzeyeva; Rosie Harding’s Hart-Socio Legal Studies Association book prizes (early-career and standard); and the International Music Prize for Excellence in Composition to Rajmil Fischman’s Et HaDa’at (The Tree of Knowledge).

Our Research Institutes for the Humanities and the Social Sciences stimulate and support this broad range of disciplinary, multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary investigation, drawing on the superb service offered by the Faculty Research Office team, led by Clare Wydell. The Research Institutes and Research Office play a vital role in recruiting and supporting the postgraduate research students who are the lifeblood of the academic profession and a fund of expertise for the public, private and third sectors. In recent years we have used external and internal funding to increase the number of research students, which now stands at 237. A number of these hold Graduate Teaching Assistantships, and many others also undertake undergraduate teaching: they share with the academic staff who supervise them a conviction that our undergraduate curriculum should be enriched by the latest research findings, ensuring that our graduates leave Keele with a strong understanding of, and pride in, the outstanding achievements of its humanities and social science researchers.

More information about the Faculty’s research can be found at www.keele.ac.uk/rihums/ and www.keele.ac.uk/rihums/.

T he Nova Centre, an innovative campus-based enterprise project, has been set up to help ambitious new businesses hone their competitive edge, link up with like-minded organisations and benefit from financial expertise.

Based in a converted former farmhouse at the University Science and Business Park (KU BSP), adjacent to the Sustainability Hub, the Nova Centre has eight offices that can be rented at very low cost. The facility is specifically for businesses that have been trading for 12 months or less, and is ideal for enterprising graduates who intend to grow their business and employ more people over the next two years.

Fledgling businesses that locate to the Nova Centre will join a two-year business growth programme including tailored advice on sales, marketing, HR, performance and strategy and opportunities to network. The project is on schedule to be completed by the end of March.

Lucy Delaney, KU BSP Business Development Manager, said: “We have received interest from a range of people involved in fledgling and new business ventures. They range from university postgraduates and budding entrepreneurs to those with no previous ties to Keele, but who have been attracted by the reputation and the prestige of the facilities. We are keen to receive applications from Keele graduates, postgraduates or anyone who has a business in the early stages of trading.”

Application forms and more information can be found at www.kusp.co.uk/29/the-nova-centre or telephone Lucy Delaney on 01782 734603 for an informal chat.
Researchers at Keele have entered the second stage of a study which they hope could lead to the prevention of age-related hearing loss.

Dr Dave Furness, School of Life Sciences, has been working for three years on a study funded by Deafness Research UK and The Freemasons Grand Charity to look into the causes of age-related hearing loss.

The study has found that in some cases, hearing begins to decline when cells in the inner ear known as fibrocytes, which usually manage levels of potassium and sodium, start to degenerate. Once fibrocytes cells have died and no longer function correctly, other parts of the inner ear can become permanently damaged, leading to increased loss of hearing and possible deafness.

Now, Dr Furness, and his PhD student Jacqueline Tickle, have begun the next phase of the research, which will explore whether replacement fibrocytes and fibrocyte stem cells can be successfully grown and implanted into the ear. If successful, the research could pave the way towards the prevention of age-related hearing loss.

Dr Furness said: “If we can find a way to replace fibrocytes through stem cell therapy when they start to degenerate, but before other parts of the inner ear get damaged, we could potentially have found a way to prevent age-related hearing loss. “The second stage of our research is to do just that – grow fibrocytes in culture specifically to treat age-related hearing loss. We’re still in the preliminary stages of the research, but are growing these cells successfully and the next stage will be to find a way to transplant them effectively into the ear.”

This is the first time that researchers have explored growing fibrocytes with a view to helping prevent age-related hearing loss.