



Termly Newsletter

Hilary 2020

Congratulations to Tim Behrens



Professor Timothy Behrens has been recognised in the Blavatnik Awards for Young Scientists, the largest unrestricted cash prizes available to

scientists under the age of 42. His research is already changing science and our understanding of the world.

Tim receives a Laureateship worth £75,000 in the Life Sciences category. He has developed innovative models for mapping the brain's electrical signals that have significant implications for brain surgery, the treatment of mental disorders, and artificial intelligence.

Dr Brooke Grindlinger of The New York Academy of Sciences said: 'Through a rigorous combination of applied mathematics, behavioral neuroscience, and neuroimaging, Professor Tim Behrens' work has transformed how we study the brain. From creating and distributing widely-used analytical methods to helping inform artificial intelligence algorithms, Prof. Behrens is at the forefront of technical and philosophical discovery about how our brains make sense of the world around us'

Professor Kevin Talbot, Head of the Nuffield Department of Clinical Neurosciences, said: 'Tim Behrens is a tremendous asset to Oxford Neuroscience and we are very proud to have him as a member of NDCN. He is at the centre of Oxford's growing reputation for computational neuroscience, which is rapidly becoming a major area of strategic importance.'

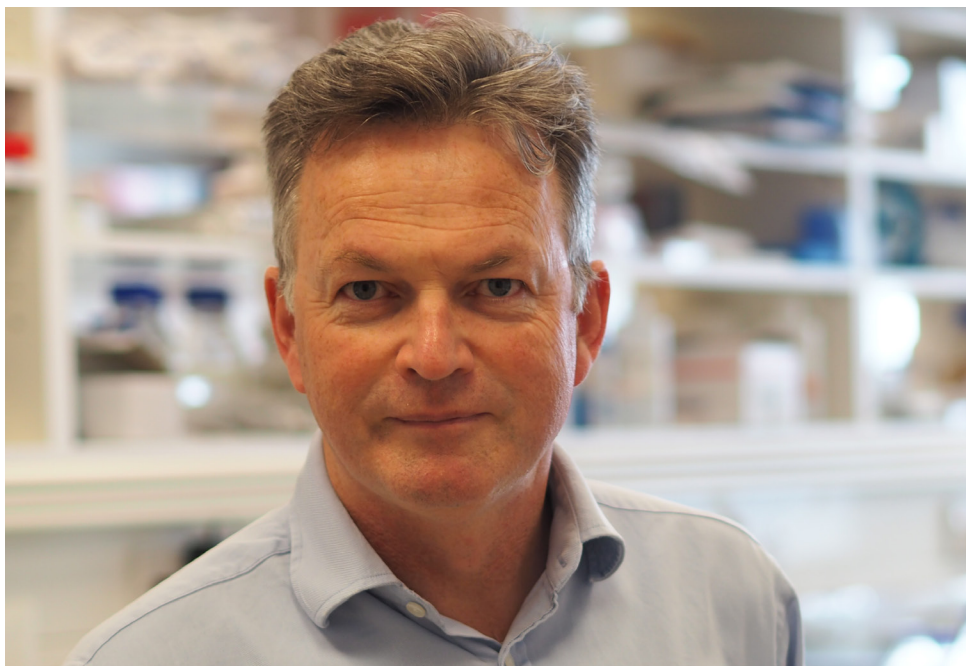
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Honoured for epilepsy research

Congratulations to Emeritus Professor Angela Vincent, who received the Research Recognition Award, clinical science, at the annual meeting of the American Epilepsy Society in December 2019.





NDCN is a truly international department, where everyone is welcome. We will not allow Brexit or covid-19 to distract us from our aim of attracting the best scientists from around the world!

From the Head of Department

One of the major challenges in a large Department like NDCN is creating and maintaining a common sense of identity. The diverse range of research activities, spread across multiple sites in Oxford biomedical campus, is testament to our success as a Department, but we should also work hard to identify collaborations and synergies within NDCN.

I am delighted to welcome the MRC Brain Network Dynamics Unit (BNDU) as the sixth Division of NDCN. Led by Peter Brown, the BNDU produces world-leading basic and applied neuroscience research into neural networks in health and disease.

Developing the careers of young researchers is a key function of a research-intensive department such as NDCN. Last term I met with early career researchers to talk about how the Department can support their careers. As a result we will shortly produce a 'Guide for new principal investigators' which will be available on the intranet. This term I will meet with post-doctoral researchers to hear how NDCN can provide support at this important and often difficult career stage.

Please read the important information on page 5 of this newsletter about the Research Excellence Framework (REF) process, which is at a critically important point this term.

I would like to thank Katja Wiech and Jess Hedge for coordinating our Athena SWAN Silver reapplication. Katja is stepping down, having done a wonderful job chairing the Staff Development

Committee over the last few years. We will continue to build on the aims of the Athena SWAN Charter.

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I look forward to seeing you at this year's Thomas Willis Day (7 May), where we are very lucky to have attracted Nancy Kanwisher, a world leader in the study of visual perception to give the plenary talk.

Professor Kevin Talbot



About this newsletter

The Nuffield Department of Clinical Neurosciences provides a focus for world-leading translational neuroscience, allowing the swift transfer of biomedical findings to the clinical setting, and the delivery of evidence-based therapies for the benefit of society and the economy.

It incorporates the Division of Clinical Neurology (DCN), the Nuffield Laboratory of Ophthalmology (NLO), the

Nuffield Division of Anaesthetics (NDA), the Centre for the Prevention of Stroke and Dementia (CPSD) and the Wellcome Centre for Integrative Neuroimaging (WIN).

This newsletter is produced once a term.

Please get in touch if you have any feedback or suggestions: communications@ndcn.ox.ac.uk

MRC Brain Network Dynamics Unit to join NDCN



The Medical Research Council has recently renewed its funding for the Brain Network Dynamics Unit at the University of Oxford (MRC BNDU). Building on this success, the Unit will join NDCN as its sixth Division on 1 April 2020.

The MRC BNDU's longer-term strategic direction is towards more integrated fundamental and translational neuroscience, taking the empirical and theoretical research quickly from discovery stage through to clinical applications that target specific diseases. This broadening of its interests fits very well with NDCN's remit, and will mean that we can exploit existing collaborations and find new synergies.

The MRC BNDU will bring to NDCN a focus on understanding and exploiting the moment-to-moment interactions between brain cells, particularly those involved in movement and memory. A deeper understanding of these circuits could help us develop interventions for when things go wrong.

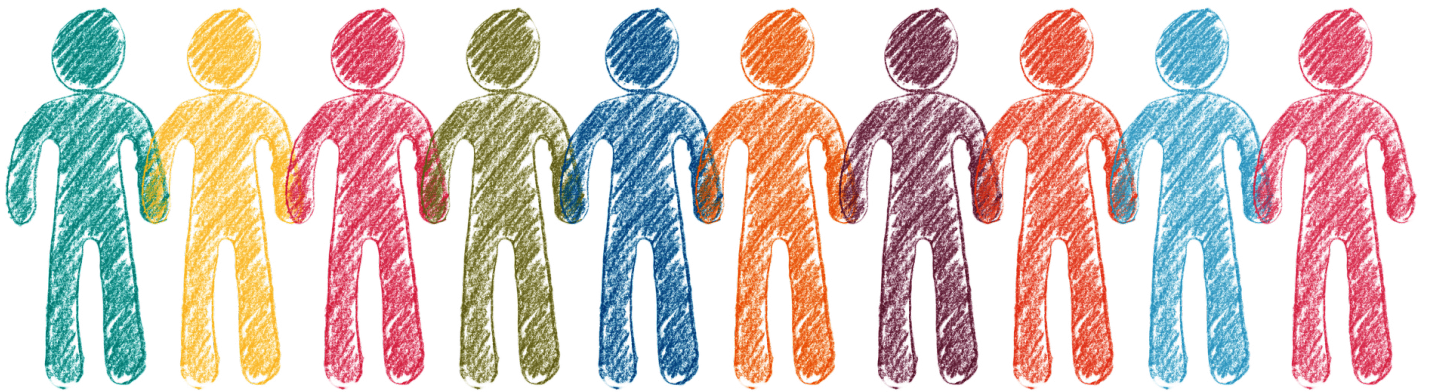
In addition to this new strand to our science, the new affiliation will mean that members of NDCN will have more access to some state-of-the-art imaging facilities, including an electron microscope.

More broadly, the MRC BNDU has excellent track records in public engagement, data sharing and working with industry, as well as a robust development programme for its membership. NDCN will be able to draw on the Unit's experience and expertise on these fronts, rolling out best practice across the Department and ensuring that it is a place in which all can thrive.

The Unit, led by Professor Peter Brown, will continue to have its main physical base next to the Department of Pharmacology on Mansfield Road. This will help to consolidate our foothold 'down the hill', first established by our Sleep and Circadian Neuroscience Institute, which is currently located in the Dunn School of Pathology.

Find out more at www.mrcbndu.ox.ac.uk/

News from NDCN's Professional Services Team



DPhil applications

Hilary Term is always a busy start to the calendar year, particularly for NDCN's Academic Administration Team, with the annual exercise of interviewing DPhil candidates beginning in January. With 78 applicants, the Department enjoyed an increase in the total number on the previous year, although applications from European countries remained lower than previously. February and March then sees offers and acceptances, as well as outcomes from some funding competitions.

REF

Preparations for the Research Excellence Framework will continue and culminate this year, with Lynn Ossher, as Strategic Initiatives Manager, leading the Department's efforts to ensure

it returns eligible staff according to the University's Code of Practice, and that eligible staff nominate their strongest publications.

Staff changes

This term also sees new staff joining, while others leave the professional services teams. Graham Steers will leave the Facilities Team, while Maen Bazo will join as the new Deputy Facilities Manager. After supporting senior researchers and having worked in the Head of Department (HoD) Office and previously the NDCN Human Resources Team, Linda Phillipson is retiring from NDCN in February, and we wish her many happy days ahead.

Scott Thomson, Head of Administration & Finance

NDCN Summer Party 2020

The summer party for NDCN staff and students will be held on Thursday 9 July, from 6.00pm at William Osler House on the John Radcliffe Hospital site. Don't miss this chance to relax, have fun and meet other people in NDCN. Booking will open in Trinity Term.



‘The REF’: All you need to know



What is the REF?

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the UK’s system for assessing the quality of research in UK universities.

The next assessment will be conducted in 2021, based on evidence submitted in 2020. Expert panels will assess the quality of selected publications, the impact of research in the world, and the environment that supports research at each university, split into ‘Units of Assessment’ (UOAs).

Why does it matter?

REF is important because the results determine how future funding is allocated to universities. Based on its performance in REF 2014, the University of Oxford currently receives about £80 million per year.

The REF is a review of the University as a whole. It is not an HR or performance review exercise for individual

researchers. But a good REF result for Oxford is obviously good for everyone who works here. Our performance is directly linked to future funding for the University, and helps maintain our reputation as an institution doing high-quality research that has wide-reaching impact.

What do I have to do?

- Look out for further communications from the University REF Team in spring and summer.
- Make sure you ‘act on acceptance’, depositing your papers in the Oxford Research Archive: <http://openaccess.ox.ac.uk/>
- If you’re confused, read the FAQs here: <https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/ref>
- Contact ref@medsci.ox.ac.uk with any routine queries.

Thomas Willis Day 7 May 2020

Every year, we celebrate the work of our Department, marking our successes in research, teaching and public engagement.

There is a postgraduate poster competition, an external invited speaker, presentation of prizes, and a drinks reception. This year the speaker will be Professor Nancy Kanwisher from MIT.

Don’t miss this chance to come and meet members of the Department and take time to get to know what people are working on.

www.ndcn.ox.ac.uk



The Professor Interview



Arun Joseph works as a Researcher in our Respiratory Physiology and Biomedical Engineering Group. Here he interviews Professor Michele Hu.

Professor of Clinical Neuroscience, Consultant Neurologist and Deputy Head of the Division of Clinical Neurology are several titles that Michele Hu holds. She is co-PI with Professor Richard Wade-Martins (Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics) of the Oxford Parkinson's Disease Centre (OPDC) established in 2010 following receipt of the £5M Monument Trust Discovery Award, and a £5M renewal grant for 2015-2020. The OPDC exemplifies multi-disciplinary translational neuroscience in Oxford at its best, representing a close and interactive collaboration between research laboratories in the basic sciences and clinicians from NDCN. With over 180 publications, since 2010 the OPDC Discovery Cohort has longitudinally followed 1700 patients with early symptoms of Parkinson's, those with the fully developed condition, and control subjects.

With 650 Parkinson's patients under her care, Michele is also mother of two ever-evolving children and has a

neurosurgeon husband. I had the chance to interview her to find out the secret recipe for her successful journey from young junior doctor to clinical research academic, culminating in her recently conferred title of Professor at NDCN.

'When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.' Her office on Level 6 of the West Wing invites you in with this lovely strength-yielding verse, accompanied by a card from her research group stating that a public enquiry has to be launched, with an inscription: 'Michele's 50! How is this possible?' The card sparked a similar question in my mind, however with professionalism I continued my interview. Without wasting my word count for this article (that's eight gone!) here are the strategies for her academic success.

First, 'Be Optimistic and Resilient'. Michele explains herself as a visionary; she likes to see the bigger picture and tries to lead her group of ten towards a common

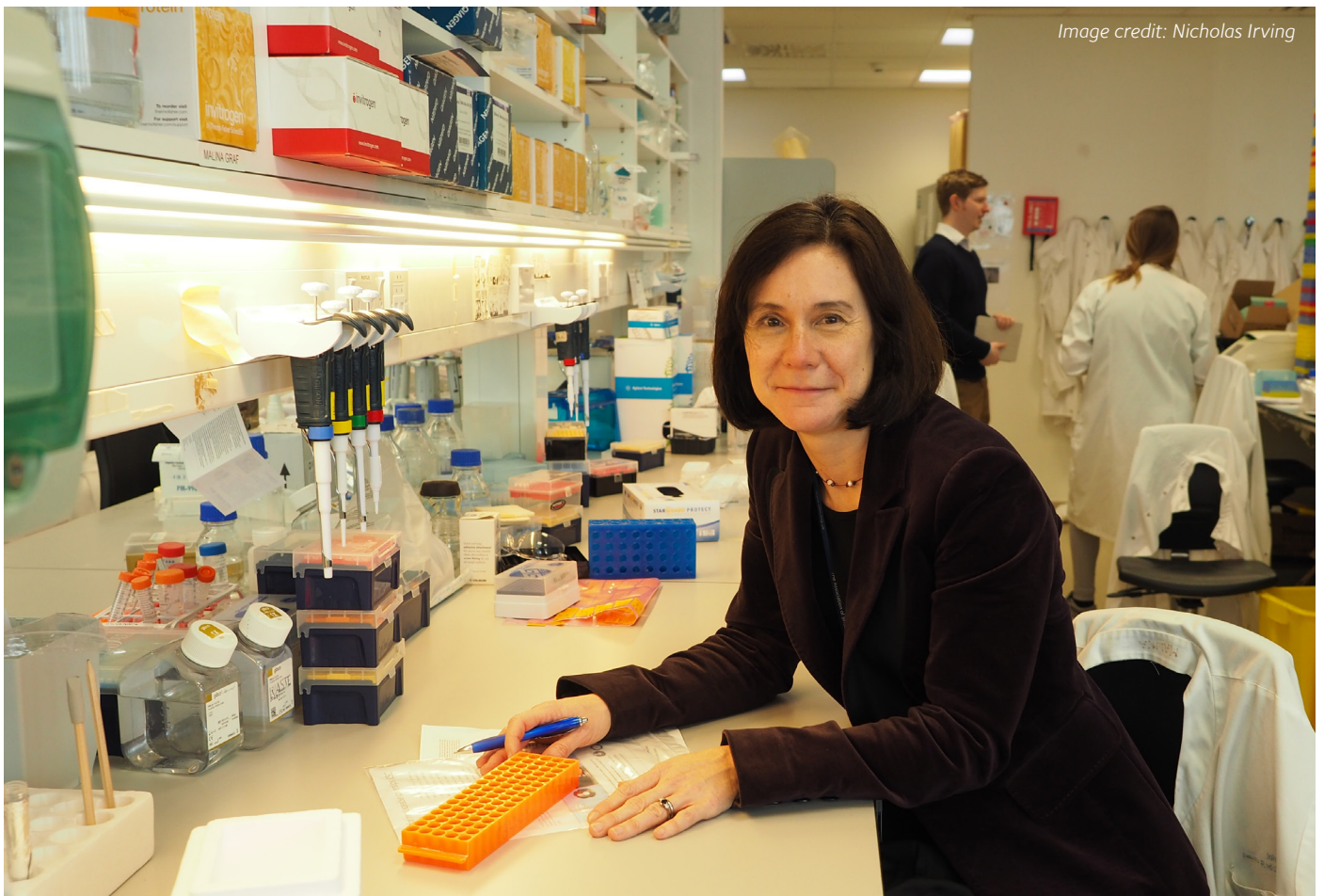


Image credit: Nicholas Irving

ambition. Her approach to leadership helps her to set long-term goals and be resilient when faced with obstacles in achieving them. I am not surprised when she states that her purpose in life is to find a cure for Parkinson's. Her passion for finding the cure is evident from the strong empathy that she manifests towards her suffering patients. The remarkable interpersonal journey that she and her team go through with patients would provoke confidence in any listener that they may find a cure for the disease in the near future. This empathy does come with an emotional cost, and Michele portrays an attitude of courage and purpose to face these challenges with love and trust. A cure is not simply the absence of the disease, she explains; it means delaying the onset or progress of the disease, providing good quality of life and developing better symptomatic treatments.

Second, 'Ask for Help!' It is not an easy journey for women in science. Michele agrees that nurturing your children, looking after family members and climbing up the clinical ladder simultaneously requires lots of hard work and multi-tasking. Her husband has played a very important role in parenting, sometimes over long weekends while Michele is busy with out of hours clinical work and research commitments. Michele's attitude to work/life balance is inspiring: 'At the end of your life, you will never look back and wish you had worked more NHS or academic hours, achieving more publications. You will wish you had put more time into growing your relationships and loving your family'.

Colleagues who inspired Michele to choose neurology and subsequently focus on Parkinson's/Movement Disorders include Damien Wren, Nigel Leigh, Andrew Lees and Kailash Bhatia. Others at NDCN include Kevin Talbot, Angela Vincent and Irene Tracey, who supported her through the transition from NHS consultant to clinical research academic (2005-2013), followed by Professorship in 2019. Michele advises: 'Don't worry if you start small: My first PI award was a Parkinson's UK project grant of £21,000 in 2005. Five years later, alongside talented OPDC co-applicants we up-scaled this to £5 million.'

Third, 'Faith and Play'. According to Michele, a sense of humour, having good friends around, a supportive family and plenty of hobbies outside work are essential for productivity. She loves being outdoors. Gardening, walking, hiking, water sports, climbing and fitness classes are some of her stress busters. Michele also acknowledges that her Christian faith gives her a great sense of purpose. This also puts her failures and tough times into a different perspective, imparting a sense of courage and determination.

See www.opdc.ox.ac.uk and www.ndcn.ox.ac.uk/team/michele-hu

Be Green

Did you know that NDCN has a group of environmental champions? We meet regularly to take a look at our carbon footprint and work out how we can make improvements in energy saving and sustainability.

We've joined the Green Impact scheme and are working on our action plan with the help of the University's Sustainability Team.

There are some challenges as our Department is split across various sites, in some of which we are tenants (such as the West Wing of the John Radcliffe Hospital). But here are some easy wins that you can help with:

- Bring your own cups to meetings
- Switch off your computer at the end of the day
- Turn lights off when you leave meeting rooms
- Use the recycling bins provided
- Only print when necessary, and try to use double-sided where possible
- Check out the University's Reuse Portal: <https://sustainability.admin.ox.ac.uk/warpit/reuse>
- Send pictures of unnecessary packaging from suppliers to sustainability@admin.ox.ac.uk
- Find out about the University's sustainable travel schemes: <https://travel.admin.ox.ac.uk/>
- Read the University's Sustainability Policy: <https://sustainability.admin.ox.ac.uk/files/environmentalsustainabilitypolicy.pdf>

If you'd like to become one of NDCN's environmental champions, contact lynn.ossheer@ndcn.ox.ac.uk



New Public Engagement Ambassadors for 2020



What is the ambassador scheme?

Our Public Engagement Ambassador Scheme is run jointly by Carinne Piekema (Public Engagement Coordinator in our Wellcome Centre for Neuroimaging) and Jacqueline Pumphrey (NDCN's Communications and Public Engagement Manager). We're delighted to announce our new cohort of ambassadors for 2020:

- Selene Lee
- Katrina Tse
- Beatriz Silveira de Arruda
- Jesper Andersson
- Cristiana Tisca
- Andrew Galloway
- Maryann Noonan
- Hannah Willis
- Giedre Cepukaityte

Carinne and Jacqueline are running a training programme for the ambassadors, who will learn why public engagement is

important, and how to craft a message. Workshops will cover how to think about audiences and generate ideas for activities that will engage them with our research, as well as how to evaluate in order to keep improving.

As well as working on their own activities, the ambassadors will work together on a joint public engagement initiative later in the year.

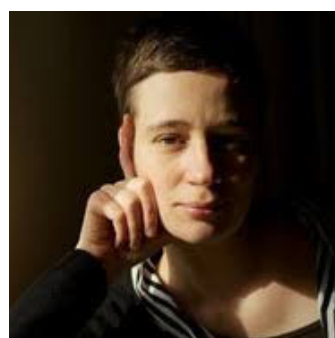
How can I get involved?

Anyone who is interested in getting more involved in public engagement is welcome to contact one of the ambassadors, or Carinne or Jacqueline (carinne.piekema@ndcn.ox.ac.uk; jacqueline.pumphrey@ndcn.ox.ac.uk).

See also our webpages:

www.ndcn.ox.ac.uk/public-engagement

www.win.ox.ac.uk/for-the-public



Carinne Piekema



Jacqueline Pumphrey

Staff Development

The Staff Development Committee submitted the Department's Athena SWAN Silver application at the start of December 2019. Thank you once again to everyone who contributed to the application, whether through completing a survey, providing case studies or quotations,

or participating in a focus group; your help was crucial in enabling a thorough self-assessment of gender equality within NDCN. The application is currently under review and results are expected in early May this year.

