

george's news

Issue 14, January/February 2008
Newsletter for St George's, University of London

The royal treatment

PICTURE SPECIAL:
Princess Anne opens
Horton Halls of
residence
(see pages 7-9)



Editorial

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Letter from the editor

Tamsin Starr, Communications Manager

It may be February, but here on the George's News desk, we're still in a New Year mood, so we've revamped the magazine with a new-look back section and introduced our "People" pages, to bring you more about life here at St George's - and the staff who help make our workplace one of the friendliest in HE.

The comments section of the Staff Survey are now in (see page 15), and our friendships at work, team spirit and camaraderie were some of the aspects of St George's people valued the most. Our new feature, My Day, My Hobby, My Job, brings you more about your fellow staff every month, with two profiles each issue. We start this edition, with PA to the Principal and part-time beekeeper Sarah Jenkins, and Maryon Tysoe, self-help author, Richard & Judy sofa guest and literary fellow. So find out more about a few familiar faces, and some new names - and if you, or someone you know, has an interesting story to tell, email a little bit about your day, hobby or job to tstarr@sgul.ac.uk.

This issue you'll find not just familiar faces, but one very famous one, with our picture special on Princess Anne's visit to



Baroness Elaine Murphy welcomes Princess Anne to Horton Halls, where HRH met Professor Roger Horton and his wife Jenny, and John Duffy (also pictured)

open Horton Halls of residence on 23 January. Read Events Officer Rebecca Brown's behind-the-scenes diary of the months, weeks and days of preparation - and how it really went on the big day.

Elsewhere, science breakthroughs in surgery and genetics, a new book that could hold the key to combating MRSA - plus our new St George's science in the media round-up - bring you the latest from our world-leading research. In addition to our regular grants list, the publications list is returning to George's News, so if you have any papers that have just, or are about to be published, please email the details to Communications

(rbrown@sgul.ac.uk).

On a final note, as George's News is back to being monthly, here are the submission deadlines for 2008:

March edition - Friday 15 Feb.
April edition - Friday 21 March.
May edition - Friday 18 April.
June edition - Friday 23 May.
Summer edition - Friday 4 July.
Sep edition - Friday 22 Aug.
October edition - Friday 19 Sep.
Christmas edition - Friday 28 Nov.

Email your ideas or articles to tstarr@sgul.ac.uk.

See you next month! ■

Win a George's bear

Congratulations to first-year medical student Sharanya Kumar, the winner of the December competition. She goes home with a George's bear!

To stand a chance of winning a bear in the February competition, just answer these questions based on stories in this month's George's News:

- Dr Maryon Tysoe is author of which relationship self-help book?
- Which publishing house is bringing out Dr Jodi Lindsay's new book?
- How many people ranked friendliness as the best thing about working at St George's?



Email your answers marked a), b) or c) to rbrown@sgul.ac.uk with "competition" in the subject line. **Good luck!**

Principal's column

WELCOME to the first edition of George's News for 2008. The highlight of the year so far was the visit of the Chancellor of the University of London, HRH The Princess Royal, for the official opening of the Horton Halls of residence on 23 January. She was accompanied by Sir Graeme Davies, Vice-Chancellor, and was welcomed by Baroness Murphy, our Chair of Council. She had a good tour of the facilities at Horton Halls, and spent time talking with students and staff there.

After her departure, we returned to the boardrooms for a reception, and screening of a rapidly-completed film of the visit. The film also showed the various stages of building the new Halls, and underlined what a vast improvement in facilities this is for our students. The ideal outcome now would be for us to secure new sports facilities for SGUL on the adjoining Springfield site.

This remains a distant target, because of the huge and complex redevelopment of the whole of Springfield, but we remain hopeful of a long-term agreement to secure this. In the meantime we have almost concluded an agreement with Kingston University for shared use of new facilities at Tolworth from September this year.

It is now just over two months until our new Principal, Professor Peter Kopelman, starts formally in post. I hope that everyone will have the chance to meet with him



early on, and to give him full support in the vital leadership role he is taking. I have known him for many years, since we were students together, and have great respect for his abilities and experience. I know that he is fully committed to a successful future for St George's from our ongoing review of strategic options.

We have appointed a working group of SGUL staff and students to continue the task of defining the sort of organisation we wish to be 10 years from now [for more on this story, see page 10]. SPARC (the strategy, planning and resources committee) will carry out further work on our mid-term review of the 2005-2010 corporate

plan, in the light of last term's PA Consulting report; and Professor Kopelman and I will continue to seek your views on the future of St George's via academic, staff and open fora and my blog.

As part of the strategic review, redefining our relationship with St George's Healthcare Trust (SGHT) is a priority. The changes to service provision arising from the Darzi review of London, and the new emphasis on academic health sciences centres as engines of advancement and quality in medical care, mean that we should review our structural and strategic arrangements with SGHT to make the most of coming opportunities. This is particularly the case for research, with the new agenda of the National Institute for Health Research. We need to develop those areas where service development will be strongest within SGUL/SGHT in the next few years – for example, in stroke, cardiac, infection, children's, and trauma and emergency services. We also need to work closely with other providers of acute, mental health and primary care so that we can establish an integrated academic health sciences sector in South West London.

Best wishes

Professor Sean Hilton
Acting Principal

Nepal link brings benefits to all

TWO medical students from Nepal Medical College and Teaching Hospital were welcomed to St George's by Professor Sean Hilton after the formation of an NHS link between the two institutions.

The partnership will give St George's staff and students the chance to apply medical skills in areas with little access to services. The first clinics in Nepal are scheduled for

summer 2009. Visitors Suman and Bibek outlined areas where Nepal could benefit from St George's expertise, such as infection control. It is also hoped this will be the start of many research collaborations.

Student recruitment starts with an information session this month; staff should visit hpnepal.org or contact info@hpnepal.org



From left: Development Manager Chris Conneely, Acting Principal Sean Hilton, Nepalese visitors Suman Adhikari and Bibek Aryal and SGUL student Benn Gooch

News

Bridge the gap, beat the bugs: Fresh focus on a hospital killer

BARELY a week seems to pass without a new scandal about 'deadly hospital bug' MRSA making headlines. But though millions of pounds are being pledged to clean up Britain's wards, one expert believes a new approach is called for.

Dr Jodi Lindsay, Senior Lecturer in the Centre for Infection at St George's, believes the key to combating MRSA is "to encourage more dialogue between the basic scientists and the clinicians, and

'There is often a chasm between lab work and patient care'

ultimately raise the standard of research because of access to good information".

This message is central to a new book Dr Lindsay is editing, *Staphylococcus: Molecular Genetics*, which focuses on the major pathogenic species *Staphylococcus aureus*, including methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* (MRSA).

Dr Lindsay says: "I am concerned that there is often a chasm between the microbiologists working in the lab, and those at the coalface of patient care. I hope that this book might go some way towards bridging that gap." She sees lack of research funding as a major hindrance to collating basic information such as where bacteria are, how they spread, and who is at risk. "Most of the strategies to reduce MRSA infections implemented so far have little evidence that they will work – either because the research has not been done, or it



Bug busting: Dr Jodi Lindsay is editing an overview of the molecular genetics of *S. aureus* (right)

FACT: *Staphylococcus* bacteria are very common and are present on everyone's skin. *S. aureus* bacteria are found in the nose of about one in three people.

FACT: Most of the time *S. aureus* is harmless. But we have all had a

staph infection – if it gets into the body through a break in the skin it can cause reddening and pus formation. Our immune systems are designed to combat it, but fatal infections can occur, usually in immunocompromised patients,

such as the elderly.

FACT: Vancomycin is the last remaining reliable antibiotic that can be used to treat MRSA, but six vancomycin-resistant strains have been described in the USA.

has been done and the measures were shown to be not very effective." *S. aureus* is of particular interest because it can cause serious disease, particularly in the immunocompromised. It is becoming more resistant to treatment, with vancomycin the last antibiotic to retain wide effectiveness. The worry is that new antibiotics will be much more expensive, adding to the NHS's financial pressures. *S. aureus* has more strain sequences than any other bacteria; there are already

14 in the public domain, which is why Dr Lindsay believes studying the molecular genetics is vital. "It is the systems biology approach that we are getting excited about – looking at the further sequencing of strains and comparing genomes, understanding strains and gene expression in response to environmental conditions, and studying where the bacteria are found, how they spread and how they are evolving." In 1959, Professor Stephen Elek, medical microbiologist at St George's Hyde

Park site, authored the seminal work *Staphylococcus Pyogenes and its Relation to Disease*. In 2008, it is hoped Dr Lindsay's book will leave a similar legacy. The first overview of the field in ten years, it will be essential reading for anyone interested in advances in our understanding of the virulence, evolution and epidemiology of *S. aureus*.

Staphylococcus: Molecular Genetics is due to be published by Horizon Scientific Press later this year. ?

News

An X-ray vision...

Spinal injury can devastate a life. But new research by St George's neurosurgeons brings hope to patients facing a bleak future

LIKE so many victims, he was a young man. The lesion was high up in the spinal cord at the level of the fifth and sixth cervical vertebrae.

He was near death when he came in, but they saved him: his mind intact, his body paralysed from the neck down. It was years ago, yet even now the patient's words to the medical team still haunt Marios Papadopoulos: "I hate you all. You resuscitated me – I can't move my arms or my legs. I can't even kill myself."

Back then Marios was a newly appointed registrar at the old Atkinson Morley Hospital, now part of St George's. Today, as consultant neurosurgeon and senior lecturer, he continues to see the devastating effects of neurological injury.

"Spinal cord injury is bad, it can happen to young people. Any way you look at it, the outcome is pretty devastating," says Marios.

"You are looking at someone who is going to live for many years with a normal intellect, but is going to be dependent. There is no treatment to improve outcome. What can you do?"

New research by Marios and colleagues, to be published in the journal *Brain*, may go some way towards answering that question. It follows several years of work on aquaporin-4 (AQP4) – a water-channel protein in the central nervous system.

AQP4 is found in cells called glia that support neurones. Previous studies showed that AQP4 is important in brain swelling and in scar formation. Both are major factors that determine the outcome after brain injury.

The team's new work focuses on the spinal cord, specifically the way in which AQP4 allows excess water to enter damaged spinal cord, leading to cord swelling, build-up of



Spine-tinkering: neurosurgeon Marios Papadopoulos

pressure – and, ultimately, loss of function. Their study shows that inhibiting AQP4 protects the spinal cord and prevents what can otherwise be catastrophic injury.

For a patient with a spinal lesion, even limited damage prevention could make a

'Saving 10% of spinal cord neurones could be enough for you to walk'

significant functional difference, says Marios: "Any neurones you save are useful. For example, preserving only 10 % of spinal cord neurones could be enough for you to stand and walk.

"Even if a patient were confined to a wheelchair, they could still

retain, say, bowel and bladder function. Patients like the American actor Christopher Reeve, who was dependent on a ventilator for most of his life after spinal injury, might retain the ability to breathe unaided."

As yet no reliable method of

downregulating or inhibiting AQP4 has been identified. This is the next major task for Marios and his colleagues.

Marios and his St George's colleagues, including Wellcome Trust Fellow Samira Saadoun, work not only in Tooting but also at the

'fantastic' facilities of the University of California in San Francisco, where collaborator Alan Verkman is based.

It's a long-term partnership that demonstrates the high international profile of St George's work in clinical neuroscience.

Inevitably, Marios' research is expensive. The team are very grateful to the Neurosciences Research Foundation and the Wellcome Trust for their support.

To make a donation to the Neurosciences Research Foundation, email neurosurgery@sgul.ac.uk or write to the Academic Neurosurgery Unit, St George's, University of London, Cranmer Terrace, SW17 0RE.

All in the genes

RESEARCHERS at St George's may be close to creating the first treatment to halt the progress of a type of motor neurone disease.

Dr Andrew Crosby and members of the Genetics Group have identified the gene responsible for a form of hereditary spastic paraplegia (HSP), which attacks nerve fibres in the spine and can strike at any age.

In the 'pure' form of HSP, patients experience muscle weakness and wasting, gradually losing the use of their legs. Other forms can also affect the brain and eyes.

HSP is part of the wider family of motor neurone degenerative diseases which slowly and relentlessly ravage nerve function. For sufferers – among them Stephen Hawking, who has a related form of the condition – the

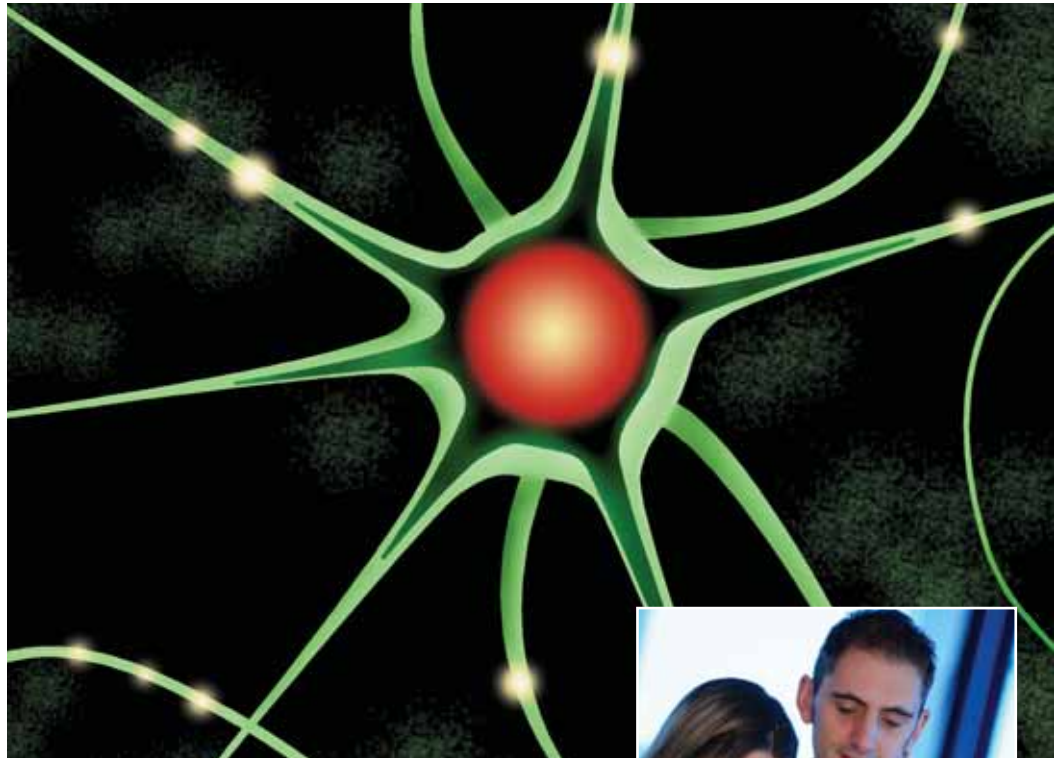
'You are not going to get a neurone back, but it should be possible to halt the disease'

effects can be devastating. Despite worldwide research efforts, the underlying cause of HSP has remained elusive – until now. Studies at St George's have pinpointed mutations in a gene known as CYP7B1 as the most likely basis for the disease.

In the liver, CYP7B1 helps break down cholesterol. In the brain, it provides the main route for the modification of DHEA neurosteroids.

Studies involving family groups found alterations in this gene among people with the 'pure' form of HSP, which affects around one in 10,000 in Britain.

"It's not common, but it's a key group," said Dr Andrew Crosby,



A neurone cell and (inset) Dr Andrew Crosby

Reader in Medical Genetics, who worked with a team including PhD researcher Maria Tsaousidou, who is funded by the Birth Defects Foundation Newlife (UK).

"This find is exciting because it provides the first solid proof that defective cholesterol metabolism is associated with motor neuron degenerative disease, and offers a realistic treatment option for these patients.

"We are now undertaking a range of studies to understand the biology of the mutation, using cell studies and other forms of HSP. The gene impacts on neurosteroid levels, and we are studying these levels to see how important this mechanism is."

Thirty-eight types of motor neuron disease have been identified, seven of them mapped by scientists at St George's.

The new research, shortly to be published in the *American Journal of Human Genetics*, could eventually lead to the development of treatments to halt the progress of HSP in patients who are already showing signs and symptoms, said Dr Crosby.

Individuals in an affected family could even be tested for the defective gene and then treated to prevent onset of the disease, which can occur at any time but is most common in the 20s.

This area of research is the focus of intense interest among scientists across the globe. Dr Crosby stresses that the St George's work is still at a relatively early stage – and that, for patients who already have HSP, the progress of the disease cannot be reversed.

"Once you've lost a neurone, you are not going to get it back again. But it should be possible to halt progress. What we would hope is we could get a treatment so, whatever loss patients have succumbed to, hopefully it will rest at that point and not get any worse."

The research team has received ethical approval to carry out biochemical screening tests among volunteers before large-scale trials take place in the spring and summer. ■

The Princess Diaries

On 23 January, Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal opened the new £17 million halls of residence at St George's, Horton Halls, in her role as Chancellor of the University of London. After being welcomed to the Halls by Baroness Elaine Murphy, Acting Principal Sean Hilton, Professor Roger Horton and his wife Jenny, Director of Administration John Duffy, Halls Project Manager Stewart Jones and SU President Paolo Perella, Princess Anne unveiled an official plaque in the main reception area, visited the room of first-year medic Amy Waters, and met other Horton Halls students in their kitchen, before visiting a common room to be introduced to architects, builders and the cleaning staff



Turn the page for Events Officer Rebecca Brown's behind-the-scenes diary of the day ▶

THOUGH scheduled to last just 45 minutes, the Royal visit to Horton Halls took months of preparation – from the moment the formal request was sent to the Palace, a dizzying schedule of planning, briefing, security checking, rehearsing, decorating, polishing and scrubbing was set in motion. Read a diary of the day by Events Officer Rebecca Brown (pictured right) to find out what really happened on the day...



8.30AM
After a restless night, I'm at the office double checking last-minute emails, taxi bookings, name badges, umbrellas, catering arrangements, security radio batteries, flowers, ID holders and straps...



9.15AM
The phone rings – Horton Halls D Block has sprung a leak, an accident on Blackshaw Road has delayed key personnel and three unmanageably large flower arrangements (plus beautiful gift bouquet) arrive. Reach for the Nurofen...



9.30AM
One porter's trolley and a helpful taxi driver later, I arrive at Horton Halls with flowers. Nothing has been overlooked - light bulbs are new, floors are polished, the water fountain is clean, everything is sparkling.



10AM
I pitch in with the preparations, and spend the next hour tackling the creases of the table cloths for the floral arrangements. Meanwhile... the students are busy vacuuming and tidying - my, how their mothers would be proud.

NOON
The Royal Protection officers arrive and I take them on a (very brisk) walkthrough of the visit. The nervous but immaculately dressed students, who are to meet HRH are prepped on appropriate language (and advised against swearing). The officers put me into a spin by telling me that "HRH is on time and will be here in 20 minutes." Thankfully, they just hadn't read the programme correctly.
One of the cleaners due to meet HRH gets star struck. After a quick bowing and handshake practice with him in the mop cupboard, he goes off happily to join the line-up.



2.40PM
Baroness Murphy steps forward to welcome HRH and invites her to unveil the plaque. Professor Hilton presents her with a gift bouquet.



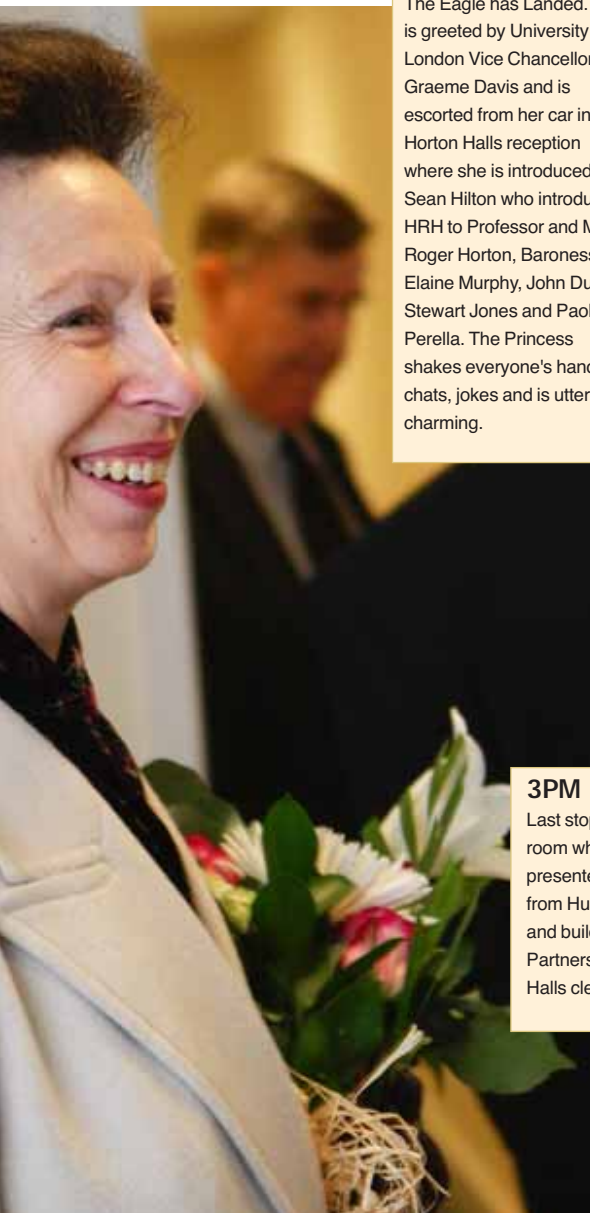
2.35PM

The Eagle has Landed. HRH is greeted by University of London Vice Chancellor Graeme Davis and is escorted from her car into Horton Halls reception where she is introduced to Sean Hilton who introduces HRH to Professor and Mrs Roger Horton, Baroness Elaine Murphy, John Duffy, Stewart Jones and Paolo Perella. The Princess shakes everyone's hands, chats, jokes and is utterly charming.



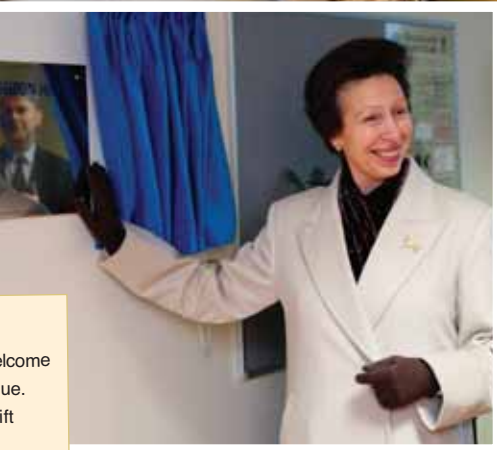
2.45PM

Horton Halls project manager Stewart Jones leads HRH up to the first floor in A block and into Amy Waters' room. Amy gives HRH a quick tour of her bedroom and bathroom. Graeme comments that things have come a long way since his day! Next HRH comes into the kitchen to meet students Mike Dunne, Gabriella Fabrizi, Halima Khatun, Anastasia Benjafield, Andrew Howe and Jahnvi Pal. The Princess asks them where they're from. When Gabriella says: "Croydon", HRH replies: "Oh, I was there this morning." The students beam fit to burst.



3PM

Last stop, 5th floor common room where HRH is presented to the architects from Hunters & Partners and builders from Inspace Partnerships, as well as the Halls cleaners.



3.20PM

HRH and party are escorted back to the official car and hurried on to her next engagement. We head back to the boardroom – for a well deserved cup of tea.

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Flying high

It's been a busy time for the SouthWest London Academic Network and, with the first year now firmly under its wing, the tripartite alliance can look back at its progress with pride.

The infrastructure is in place, with the alliance's three partners – St George's, Kingston and Royal Holloway – working to harness their teaching and research expertise through three new Institutes. Each has a distinctive focus, from science (Institute of Biomedical & Life Sciences, or IBLS), to interprofessionalism (Interprofessional Institute Health & Social Care, or IPI), and leadership and management (Institute of Leadership and Management in Health, or ILMH).

There has also been plenty of activity on the recruitment front. Professor George Dickson now heads up IBLS, and the recruitment of the other two Institute Directors is underway. Currently, Simon Fitch is Acting Strategic Project Manager. Dr Dave Rayner was appointed Project Head of the Common Learning Environment, with responsibility for facilitating cross-site learning tools.

For applicants there's even more on offer. Among the newly validated courses is the MSc in Leadership & Management in Health, part of ILMH's programme, and IPI's Postgraduate Diploma in Physician Assistant Studies. Both are due to receive their first intake of students this autumn.

This year PhD Studentship applications have flooded in, as have submissions for Innovation Awards. So look out for more Swan news on these and other activities later in the year.

Our direction is up to you

Pinpointing our strengths and what we stand for is the job of a 15-strong working group of staff and students drawn up as part of a review to decide the institution's future.

Many from across the institution volunteered for the group, and we can reveal the 15 people who will be representing St George's staff and students: Brian Austen, Emma Baker, Linda Burke, George Ellison, Steve Gillard, Mary Luckiram, Julian Ma, Helen Mason, Derek Macallan, Tony Michael, Paolo Perella, Fiona Reid and Jeanette Strachan. New Principal Peter Kopelman and independent member of Council Judith Evans will also attend some meetings.

The group's job is to identify what values, features, and qualities define us as a distinctive HE Institution.

By Easter, it will draw up a list of questions on how those qualities could be maintained in a partnership with Surrey or Kingston University, which will be put to the two institutions in talks

later this year.

The working group will complement a risk assessment and strategy review currently being carried out by SPARC and

Heads of Division. They are analysing St George's current corporate plan and PA Consulting's recent report on our future options, with a view to identifying our weaknesses and their possible solutions. This will feed into a "vision statement", published this Easter, outlining what kind of institution St George's wants to be in 10 years' time.

There are many ways to make your views on our options known. As well as approaching academic and support staff members of Council, posting on the Acting Principal's Portal blog, attending open forums and via online surveys, you can email Acting Principal Sean Hilton at shilton@sgul.ac.uk.



Joint Faculty is leading the way in paramedic science research



Paramedics' life or death decisions will be part of a new study by the Faculty

The range of injuries, clinical conditions, accidents and emergencies encountered by those working in paramedic sciences creates a wealth of possibilities for research.

Mary Halter, Senior Research Fellow at the Faculty of Health and Social Care Sciences, is working on a study of Paramedic Practitioners and Emergency Care Practitioners' clinical decision making. She says: "This study is exploring patterns in decisions about whether to take the patient to the Emergency Department or not; examining the processes involved in making these decisions by talking to practitioners and observing them in practice.

"We follow up the outcomes of these decisions with patients and compare them with the outcomes of care provided by other

ambulance practitioners and GPs. We can then analyse and assess the costs and benefits of care provided. Further studies in urgent care are anticipated to follow this.

"In the near future, we also plan to take forward work on older people who fall and require pre-hospital emergency care.

"Future research will reflect a range of exciting opportunities in the subject both in the UK and in international collaboration."

Paramedic research is one of the cornerstones of the soon to be launched Centre for Paramedic Science. The Centre will provide a hub for education, international development and consultancy.

For further information on the Centre, contact Kath Start on kstart@hscs.sgul.ac.uk ■

News

CHILD'S PLAYS

"We've never done this before though..." I stopped mid-sentence as I watched the young mother flinch. I could see her struggling to make the decision – on one hand, I had just offered her the chance of a weekend alone with her husband for the first time in seven years. On the other, she would have to entrust her three children, all of whom have special educational needs, to myself and a group of students.

They were invited on the first weekend trip organised by Spectrum, one of the community projects at St George's working with local children with learning and/or physical disabilities.

The mother agreed, and on the appointed day last May turned up early at the minibus meeting point with Paul, eight, Oliver, seven and Richie, five. We weren't sure how easy it was going to be to coax them away. We shouldn't have worried. After meeting the staff and student helpers, they and the 11 other kids were soon aboard. There were a few tears from mum, though, who I had to promise to ring that night with a progress report.



A weekend trip for children with special needs was as rewarding for volunteers as youngsters. GEP student Oliver Webber reports

We were whisked off to a residential centre in Surrey, where the children were soon busy with a treasure hunt, pond dipping and a party with face painting and T-shirt designing, before a guide took us on a night walk into the woods.

Away from the centre, we made trips to Box Hill (for a picnic lunch) and to a working farm on the North Downs. The children had a chance to feed the animals, watch a pig race and ride on mini-



the swimming pool. Oliver, who was non-verbal and autistic, took a little more time adjusting to being away from home. Volunteers took turns with Richie, who was also non-



provided by the centre!). At the farm, his eyes lit up at the sight of the bouncy castles behind the animal pens, and he spent a couple of hours jumping happily. We later found out that he has a mini trampoline in his front room at home.

Mum and Dad were very relieved when Peter, Oliver and Richie were returned safely to St George's. Their romantic weekend had been pleasant but not as relaxing as they had hoped: they had been constantly worried! Despite this, they were extremely grateful and pleased that their children had spent some time away from home.

The trip was a huge achievement for Spectrum, and the feedback was universally positive. "What a fantastic weekend!" said one volunteer, "When's the next one?"

'Richie's hobby was escaping - keeping up was quite a workout'

tractors. It was quite difficult to get them to leave.

Paul, who had Asperger's syndrome, quickly got used to being away from his parents and got on very well with his volunteer, John. He enjoyed the night walk, painting pictures at the party, and riding down all the slides at

verbal and whose favourite hobby was escaping (the front and back doors of his house were always locked). It was quite a workout simply trying to keep up with him.

Oliver spent the first hour of the trip crying, but began to cheer up after being given some rice cakes (he seemed far more keen on them than any of the food



Spectrum is planning another weekend trip for children with special educational needs in April, and is trying to raise £4,000 to fund it. If you would like more details or want to get involved, contact spectrum@sgul.ac.uk.

Welcome to our new People section, bringing you more about the 900-strong team of staff dedicated to providing high-quality education and developing further our worldwide reputation for research excellence. If you have a story to tell about your day, hobby or job at St George's, please email tstarr@sgul.ac.uk – and next edition, it could be you!

People

My day...My Hobby...My Job...

She's got the write stuff

FROM academia to Richard & Judy, Dr Maryon Tysoe's gift and passion for communicating ideas has led to her present role as a Fellow of the Royal Literary Fund, based at St George's. She is here to help staff and students develop and hone their writing skills – something she cares deeply about.

"I think it's crucial," she enthuses. "I became a professional writer in the first place because of this urgent feeling that we need to communicate. I am a social psychologist by training. As an academic, I found myself getting increasingly frustrated that all these human beings we were researching never found out what we were discovering about them!"

Her conviction led her to make the leap from academia to journalism. "I took a big risk and left academic life, with my metaphorical red-spotted-hankie-on-a-stick, and went up to London to see if I could do it." Her challenge was to write about psychology for the general public, and communicate the exciting research that was emerging from her discipline.

The risk paid off, and she has written a psychology bestseller on relationships, *Love Isn't Quite Enough*, worked as agony aunt for a popular women's glossy magazine, and broadcast on radio and TV. Part of her motivation has been to share her knowledge to help people. "I've always felt that psychology can be of great benefit."

Her written work encompasses both the popular and academic media, highlighted by her time as editor of the British Psychological Society's magazine, *The Psychologist*. "I decided to shake it up a bit! When I took over at *The Psychologist* I wanted all 30,000 readers to understand every article, to help psychologists feel part of a cohesive discipline." And



Fellow of the Royal Literary Fund Maryon Tysoe is here to help staff and students to develop and hone their writing skills

the advice she gave as editor of the magazine is similar to the advice she gives to students. "I tell all my students that audience is key. I try to hone people's antennae as to who and what they

have." Students bring essays, dissertations and articles, and common concerns include structuring and academic style. "People often feel at some level that writing is an alien activity and

writing, Dr Tysoe is now working on her first novel, which follows her enduring fascination with human relationships. "My interest in relationships was partly triggered by my divorce, and wondering what happened, and what went wrong." She describes the work-in-progress as a relationship novel with a sense of humour. "Creative writing is the most fun, work-wise, I have ever had, and writing is the thing I most want to do for the rest of my life. It's a pleasure to use all the things I've learned to help other people. I love it when someone's face lights up and they say, 'Yes!...I get it!'"

'It's a pleasure to use all the things I've learned as a writer to help other people. I love it when someone's face lights up and they say, "Yes!...I get it!"'

should think about when writing."

The service at George's is provided by the Royal Literary Fund, which places professional writers in universities to help staff and students with their writing skills. The response at George's has been enthusiastic, reflected in a busy timetable for Dr Tysoe. "Writing is just a craft skill that everyone can learn, and once you have it, it's one of the most powerful tools that anyone can

it's alarming, and I try to say, 'No it isn't'. I say, 'Tell me what you're trying to say in this essay', and they explain it to me beautifully, and I say 'That's brilliant, but it's not actually down here on the page'. And they say, 'No I can see that!' But when they realise writing is about actually communicating to another human being, and being kind to the reader, it feels less frightening."

Having tackled non-fiction

If you would like Maryon's help with your writing skills, she offers free one-to-one sessions. You can book one of the appointment slots available on MOODLE via the writing skills support link.

Getting a buzz out of bees

IT'S not everyone who walks away from a near-fatal traffic smash vowing to take up beekeeping, but for PA Sarah Jenkins, it was a "now or never" moment.

Though her car was written off when a motorcycle hit it as she was driving along a dual carriageway, she walked away unscathed – and with a new determination.

Recalling the accident, which happened five years ago, Sarah explains: "I don't think I consciously decided I'd been given a second chance to do the things I always wanted, but that was what happened. I'd attended a lecture about beekeeping and the methods of managing colonies about 10 years before, and had come out thinking, 'I'd love to do that'. I just assumed you couldn't keep bees in London."

'Opening up a colony is so absorbing – it's like dipping into a different world, watching all these lives going about their business'

Sarah was back soon in the lecture hall – attending the winter series of 'beekeeper beginners' talks run by the Twickenham Beekeeper's Association. Then it was on to her first practical at one of the Association's training colonies.

She admits to a few jitters before her first hands-on experience. "I'd never had any experience of working with bees at all, and I must admit, I have a phobia about spiders, so I wasn't

sure whether I could open up a box full of bees.

"In the beginners' group, they teach you all aspects of practical beekeeping; how to open the hive, what to look for in a healthy colony, how to manage swarming, etc. But it's so different in practice. I remember thinking: 'Am I just going to completely flip when they open the roof and then run a mile?'

"It wasn't the stinging I was worried about, it was the thought of them crawling and all flying around me."

But she was soon hooked: "It's so absorbing opening up a colony of bees – it's like dipping into a different world, watching all these lives going about their business. Sometimes you see a bee hatching out from a cell, or the bees doing their waggle dance on the frames, or the queen laying

her eggs. It's amazing – and actually really relaxing!"

Five years on, Sarah's homegrown honey is much in demand among staff at St George's. She keeps four colonies; two in her garden at home in Wandsworth, and two in a friend's garden nearby. "Perhaps surprisingly, she says, "the bees do very well in south London – this semi-urban environment with its gardens, commons and railway embankments offer a rich and



PA Sarah Jenkins keeps two bee colonies at her home in Wandsworth

wide variety of flowers and trees for the bees to forage on nearly all year round."

Sarah has also become a passionate advocate of apiculture. "Every third mouthful of food you eat is dependent on the work of honeybees," says Sarah. As crop pollinators, honeybees are worth an estimated £165 million a year to the UK's agricultural economy. "But with more than 90 per cent of honey sold in the UK coming from overseas, more British beekeepers are needed!" urges Sarah. "Keeping bees in a city is certainly a very hands-on hobby and it is quite a commitment. But, it is also immensely rewarding, both in terms of the challenges of working with a living organism and in having something sweet and delicious at the end of it."

With courses at Twickenham starting next month, you won't

need to wait as long as Sarah to find inspiration. "There are some things that just capture your imagination. Beekeeping was like that for me – even if I did take 10 years to get around to it!" ■

CONTACTS

■ Twickenham Beekeepers' Association's next practical classes start on 7 March, 6.30pm (www.twickenham-bees.org.uk)

■ British Beekeepers Association: www.bbka.org.uk/

■ Every Third Mouthful, a free exhibition on the art and science of bee colonies, runs at the Horniman Museum, 100 London Road, SE23, until 11 May (020 8699 1872).

People

Honours and achievements

The St George's Reproductive and Cardiovascular Research group's website has been ranked in the country's top 10 by Scientist magazine. It scooped the honour at the annual Laboratory Website and Video Awards.

Winners of the January Biomics Paper of the Month are Rezaie T, Ghoroghchian R, Bell R, Brice G, Hasan A, Burnand K, Vernon S, Mansour S, Mortimer P, Jeffery S, Child A and Sararazi M for (2008) Primary non-syndromic lymphoedema (Meige disease) is not caused by mutations in FOXC2. *European Journal of Human Genetics* 49: 1-5

PhDs and MDs

Gavin Arno, PhD, Nov 07

Chlamydia Pneumoniae and Atherosclerosis

Jonathan Coxon, MD, Dec 07

Effect of Bisphosphonates Alone and in Combination with Docetaxel: Studies in Prostate Cancer

Catherine Donaldson, PhD, Dec 07

An Investigation of Current Physical Therapy and Functional Strength Training for Rehabilitation of the Upper Limb after Stroke

Timothy Doulton, MD, Nov 07

The Influence of Sodium on Cardiovascular Risk Factors in Chronic Kidney Disease

Wing Fai Rebecca Nip, PhD, Nov 07

Mood and Food: An Exploration of Mood and Nutritional Status Post Stroke

Soonie Patel, MD, Dec 07

Reimmunisation of children after completion of standard chemotherapy for acute leukaemia and after haematopoietic stem cell transplant

Adam Shaw, MD, Nov 07

Natural History and Clinical Studies of Noonan Syndrome

Emma Wilton, MD, Oct 07

Ascending Aortic Dilation and its Association with Abnormal Aortic Valves

Hitting the headlines

AS a world-leader in research, our innovations and discoveries make headlines around the world. In our new monthly feature, we bring you a round-up of the top St George's science stories

•Hidden salt risks

Professor Graham MacGregor once again hit the headlines last month as he called for the food industry to lower worrying levels of 'hidden salt' in children's food. The story was picked up in newspapers and news networks across the world (28 January).

•The virtual treatment

A project to create virtual patients being developed by St George's and Coventry University came under the spotlight in the Times Higher Education Supplement, as reported in the Times Higher Education Supplement last month (24 January).

•Work stress is heart strain

A 12-year study of Whitehall civil servants has found that workplace stress can lead to coronary heart disease. Researchers including



Marek Malik of CVS, followed up from the 1985 study of more than 10,000 civil servants, discovering that "32% of the effect of work stress on coronary heart disease was attributable to its effect on health behaviours and the metabolic syndrome," as reported by website ITWIRE.com (24 Jan).

•Expert advice

Professor of Molecular Parasitology and Medicine Sanjeev Krishna was called to give his expert opinion to website

SciDevNet (23 Jan) when researchers in Malaysia sent out a warning that a potentially fatal form of malaria was being mistaken for a less serious form. He also underlined the urgency to find new treatments in an interview with the BBC News website, in a story on how a protein found in sea cucumbers had been found to disrupt the growth of malaria-causing parasites (23 Dec).

For the full stories, see the Communications Portal page.

Grants

Medical Research Council

Ovarian anti-Mullerian hormone: what does it do in the normal ovary and why is it so high in polycystic ovary syndrome?

Dr Helen Mason – **£305,718**

UK Clinical Research Collaboration/Medical Research Council

Exploiting advances in diagnostic and wireless technologies to reduce the burden of STIs.

Dr Tariq Sadiq, Dr Phillip Butcher, Prof Sanjeev Krishna and Prof George Griffin – **£56,749**

Medical Research Council

Defining the role of cyclic nucleotide-gated cation channels in adult lung fluid homeostasis.

Professor Dafydd Walters – **£153,083**

British Heart Foundation

Contribution of bestrophin to calcium-activated chloride channels in vascular myocytes.

Dr Iain Greenwood – **£158,653**

The BUPA Foundation

Retinal microvascular structure in British children of South Asian, African-Caribbean and White European origin. Dr Chris Owen, Professor Peter Whincup, Dr Alicja Rudnicka, Dr Sarah Barman (Kingston University) – **£98,741**

Neurosciences Research Foundation

Harrison Fellowship, Post-Doctoral. Prof B Anthony Bell and Mr Marios C Papadopoulos – **£92,870**

Lambeth PCT

Frontline for London.

Dr Annie Bartlett, Gill McGauley – **£60,000**

University of London Central Research Fund

Research into the Functional Characterization of the Novel ZF2D protein.

Dr Francesc Miralles – **£5,010**

London Sports Forum for Disabled People

Enjoying Exercise and Sport.

Professor Sheila Hollins – **£32,819**

People

Welcome



Dason Evans has been appointed as Senior Lecturer in Clinical Skills in the Centre for Medical and Healthcare

Education. Dason has followed a career in medical education while remaining clinically active. He joins us from Bart's and the London, where his responsibilities and interests included clinical skills teaching, learning and assessment, supporting students in difficulty and organising the first intercalated degree in medical education in the UK. Dason will lead the clinical skills team across both the five- and four-year curricula and joins us at an exciting time of curriculum change.

He can be contacted at devans@sgul.ac.uk, extension 0859.



He is joined by **Janette Myers**, new Senior Lecturer in Student Learning and Support in the Centre for

Medical and Healthcare Education. Janette is a practitioner and researcher in the field of education, specialising in student support. Her interests include transition, widening participation, development and integration of learning support with the curriculum, and the history of student support in UK higher education. She has worked in several universities devising curriculum-based programmes of learning development and models of personal and academic student support, as well as supporting individual students, and will continue and develop this work at St George's. Contact details are jmyers@sgul.ac.uk, ext. 0616.

YOU'VE had your say on life at St George's – and our friendliness is topping the league of things you most like about life here.

Comments made in the staff survey show levels of friendship or camaraderie of your team or colleagues are the best thing about working here – as voted for by 104 of 466 respondents.

This was followed by a happy/friendly working atmosphere/environment (57 respondents), good holiday provision (49), working time flexibility (44) and support and encouragement given for personal development (29).

Comments provided regarding areas for improvement were grouped as follows. St George's could work toward improving conditions/size of working environment (59 respondents), improve communications overall (43), increase involvement in/communication about important issues (23 respondents), improve level of recognition for work done (20) and improve opportunities for promotion/progression/development (19).

These results have been shared with SPARC and form a key source of information to inform the institution in the development of a range of strategies and plans. An Institutional Action Plan for



Improvement is being drafted and will be circulated to committees for comment.

Written staff comments were grouped into 'what staff feel is good about working for St George's' and 'what could be

improved'. For more information see the Staff Survey Newsletter or the Human Resources portal site – a one-stop shop for personnel information, including codes of conduct, staffing policies and contracts.

New staff

Academic Services

Mr C Porter-Garthford – Audio-Visual Technician
Mr T G Peeke – Audio-Visual Technician

Administration

Miss S Blighe – Administrator/Communications Assistant (SWAN)
Ms S L Redhead – Student Centre Advisor

Basic Medical Sciences

Miss K Szewczyk – Technician
Dr F Michel – Research Assistant
Dr S Srivastava – Clinical Research Fellow

Cardiac and Vascular Sciences

Dr A Catanchin – Clinical Research Fellow
Miss V E Bull – Locum Analytical Biochemist
Ms S Ledbetter – Locum Analytical Biochemist

Cellular and Molecular Medicine

Ms J Barford – Research Assistant

Centre for Medical and Healthcare Education

Ms J Myers – Senior Lecturer

Dr D E W Evans – Senior Lecturer (Head of Clinical Skills)

Clinical Developmental Sciences

Miss J Dixon – Academic Administrator
Miss K Pratt – Academic Administrator

Community Health Sciences

Dr L Perkins-Porras – Lecturer in Social and Behavioural Sciences
Dr S Shah – Senior Teaching Fellow
Dr M Amalesh – Research Assistant
Dr E Butler – Research Assistant
Ms E M Wanninkhof – Research Assistant
Mrs M Hart – Research Assistant

Mental Health Sciences

Mrs J Gunaseelan – Administrator

Student Support

Miss M A M Goncalves – Café and Hospitality Assistant
Mr B Merzouk – Café and Hospitality Assistant
Miss L Thomson – Café and Hospitality Assistant

The main event...

ST GEORGE'S ushers in a new season of inaugural lectures, kicking off on Tuesday 4 March with two of Cardiac and Vascular Science's newest professors, Marjan Jahangiri and Brendan Madden.

Both have racked up an impressive list of achievements – Marjan is Europe's first female Professor of Cardiac Surgery and Brendan, as well as being published widely and lecturing around the world, is a blackbelt in kung-fu.

Marjan Jahangiri is Professor of Cardiac Surgery at St George's, University of London, as well as Consultant Surgeon at St George's Hospital. She became professor in July 2007, just 18 months after becoming a Reader and

“Marjan is Europe's first female Professor of Cardiac Surgery”

remains one of only two female cardiac surgeons in the UK.

Professor Jahangiri joined St George's in 2001, when she was appointed Consultant Cardiac Surgeon and Honorary Senior Lecturer. Her career began at University College Hospital London, moving into cardiothoracic surgery as a Registrar at various London hospitals, as well as serving as a senior resident at the Children's Hospital Boston. Professor Jahangiri has written over 80 peer-reviewed articles and abstracts and regularly speaks at national and international forums.



When kung-fu meets cardio: Professor Brendan Madden multi-tasks, and (inset) Professor Marjan Jahangiri

Professor Jahangiri will be joined at the lectern by her friend and colleague, Brendan Madden, Professor of Cardiothoracic Medicine at St George's, University of London and Consultant Cardiothoracic and Intensive Care Physician at St George's Hospital. He received his professorship in July 2007 and is the UK's first professor in this specialty.

Professor Madden graduated from University College Dublin, becoming tutor in medicine at Trinity College Dublin, and then Registrar and Senior Registrar in Transplantation and Cardiothoracic Medicine at Harefield and Royal

Brompton Hospitals. He is a tutor and instructor in Advanced Trauma Life Support at the Royal College of Surgeons.

Aside from his professional interests and commitments, Professor Madden has an impressive sporting record; having been an international track and field athlete, soccer player and Gaelic footballer.

Inaugural Lectures: Professor Marjan Jahangiri and Professor Brendan Madden Michael Heron Lecture Theatre 5.30pm, Tuesday 4 March
Followed by reception in Boardrooms 3 & 4, Hunter Wing Level 2. All welcome.
Contact: rbrown@sgul.ac.uk, ext 6845.

WORDS: CHRIS CONNEELY

What's on

Lessons Learned in Assessment: Medical and Healthcare Education Lecture

19/02/08, 5pm Michael Heron Lecture Theatre, 1st Floor, Hunter Wing

Professor Cees van der Vleuten, Visiting Professor in Medical and Healthcare Education, will lecture on assessment research in the last 50 years and the lessons that can be learned. Details: Jeremy Smith (jsmith@sgul.ac.uk)

Creatures – Photographs by Mel Isaccs

05/02/08 – 03/03/08, 7.30am – 7:45pm, The Gallery, The Restaurant, Lanesborough Wing, St George's Hospital
Exhibition of photographs.

Become a bone marrow donor

20/02/08, Noon – 5pm, Lab 1B, Hunter Wing

If you're 18 to 40 and in good health then you could help save a life by joining the bone marrow donors' register. Student-led organisation Marrow are holding a recruitment

clinic & information session for potential donors. Details: <https://zeo.sgul.ac.uk/marrow>

Prevention & Management of Cardiovascular Disease Annual Meeting

11/03/08, 9am – 4.30pm, registrations from 8.15am, Michael Heron Lecture Theatre

Organised by the nurses in the Blood Pressure Unit, this is for anyone in secondary care with an interest in cardio vascular disease. Speakers include Professor DG Beevers from City Hospital Birmingham, Professor NR Poulter Imperial School of Medicine at St Mary's and our own Professor Graham MacGregor. Details: Nirmala Markandu (nmarkand@sgul.ac.uk, ext 2849)

If you have an event to include in the next George's News, please email rbrown@sgul.ac.uk with details including the name, date and time of the event, where it is to be held and a small paragraph explaining what the event is.

Internal courses

Handling Difficult Conversations

Tuesday 26 February, noon-1.30pm
Having "difficult" conversations with staff is a necessary and important role of a manager/supervisor. This session will highlight the skills necessary to tackle difficult people situations whilst maintaining effective working relationships.

CV Writing

Thursday 28 February, noon-2pm
For Contract Research Staff and PhD students, CVs will be reviewed, key words and phrases to include will be identified.

Time Management

Wednesday 5 March, 9.30am-12.30pm
For any member of St George's staff. This course will be of particular interest to Administrative, Clerical and Secretarial staff
This workshop will introduce participants to the key skills of effective time management.

Managing Personal Information

Friday 7 March, 2pm-4pm
An introduction to the Data Protection Act 1998.

To book places, email staffdev@sgul.ac.uk