Welcome to St George’s!

George’s Clinical Academic New Starters 2021

NIHR funded trainees with awards starting in 2021

Liban Ahmed, Academic Clinical Fellow (ACF) Rheumatology

Peter Crook, ACF Infectious Diseases

Locally-funded trainees with awards starting in 2021

Salma Audi, ACF General Practice

Stephen Woolford, ACF General Practice

Iain Roy, Clinical Lecturer Vascular Surgery

Good News!

The St George’s Integrated Academic Training Partnership (SGUL and SGHT) led by Professor Nidhi Sofat applied for additional NIHR IAT posts in priority research themes for 2022/23 and we are delighted to report that we were successful in our bid via this competitive process. In addition to the NIHR IAT posts allocated via the funding formula (2 Academic Clinical Fellows and 1 Clinical Lecturer) we were awarded 2 ACFs and 1 CL via the competition thus doubling our allocation of NIHR funded clinical academic posts for the next two years.

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Dr Roaa Al-bedaery is an Academic Clinical Fellow hosted by IMBE & PHRI and supervised by Dr Judith Ibison. She attended this year’s virtual Society for Academic Primary Care (SAPC) Annual Scientific Meeting hosted by the University of Leeds in July 2021. The SAPC provides a voice and support for Academic Primary Care, championing primary care research and education. Roaa presented her research as part of her MSc in Medical Education at University College London titled, ‘A realist evaluation of undergraduate medical teaching with remote (telephone and video) consultations in primary care’. With the rise in remote patient encounters in primary care, Roaa has spent the last year exploring the facilitators and barriers to teaching and learning with remote consulting in primary care. She was subsequently awarded the prize for best overall presentation in the education category at the Society of Academic Primary Care conference.

2021 AMEE Conference Success

The 2021 AMEE conference, the leading annual event for all involved in medical and healthcare professions education throughout the world, was held at the end of August. SGUL IMBE academics (Roaa Al-Bedary, Umar Chaudhry, Judith Ibison, Angela Kubacki and Laura Valle-Ogunro) delivered an interactive workshop on ‘How to teach learners when the patient is remote’, thanks to IMBE staff development funding. The workshop facilitated academics from the UK and international institutions to prepare students for learning using remote consultations and included a small cartoon you can see here.

The workshop was fully booked and the breakout rooms were buzzing! Feedback indicated it was very well received and one participant said: ‘This has been an absolutely stellar workshop. Thank you, team, for this.’ Any queries to rel-beda@sgul.ac.uk

Congratulations to Dr Mohammad Razai who has been awarded a prestigious NIHR In-Practice Fellowship. The Fellowship supports the academic component of a two-year 50% clinical, 50% academic post and during this time Dr Razai will be undertaking research into mitigating ethnic disparities in cardiovascular health outcomes at Population Health Research Institute
Chadburn clinical lectureships

What is the Chadburn lectureship?

The University of London Chadburn Academic Clinical Lectureships in Medicine are supported by the University from income from a Fund established following the sale of the South London Hospital for Women. The Lectureships are named after Miss Maud Mary Chadburn who was a medical student and graduate of the University, and Founder of the Hospital where she was its Senior Surgeon until 1933. The lectureships are academic clinical lectureships to be held on a part-time basis for a maximum period of five years. Their purpose is to provide opportunities for doctors in training whose personal circumstances make it difficult or impossible for them to give full-time commitment to their careers. Funding supports lectureships in any branch of medicine including medical education. St George’s University of London has two such lectureships with others available at King’s College London, Queen Mary, University of London and University College London. The National Health Service continues to fund the clinical element of the Lecturers’ work and the costs paid include salary and other personal research and development costs.

Meet two of our current Chadburn clinical lecturers:

**Dr Anna Sadnicka**

I am a clinical lecturer fascinated by the neural control of movement and how this is disturbed in clinical movement disorders. My research is funded by a Chadburn Academic Clinical Lectureship. These lectureships are a lifeline to doctors that need or decide to work part time but still wish to pursue a career in clinical academia. During the lectureship I’ve applied for projects grants (e.g. Royal Society) which has allowed the creation of a lab with state-of-the-art robotics, motion capture and neurophysiology equipment.

I have independent research themes, a network of international collaborations and continue to grow my methods toolkit in computational neuroscience. With the neurosciences clinical academic group at St George’s we also have a range of projects developing novel movement retraining strategies and neuralstimulation methods in movement disorders. As my third child approaches school age I plan to return to work full time and apply for the next level of clinical academic fellowships.
Chadburn clinical lectureships

Dr Davina Moss

I am a Neurology SpR at St George’s Hospital and gained a Chadburn Clinical Lectureship to continue my research on Huntington’s Disease. Chadburn Lectureships support doctors in training who need to work part time due to personal circumstances, in my case a young family.

Huntington’s disease (HD) is a devastating neurodegenerative disease caused by a CAG repeat expansion within the huntingtin gene; the inherited CAG repeat size being the major determinant in age of onset. The main focus of my PhD was on the identification of genetic variants which modify the rate of HD progression. We found that in susceptible individuals, DNA repair gene variants drive somatic expansion of the CAG tract, driving earlier onset and faster progression of HD. DNA repair genes are now targets for therapeutic development.

My current interest is whether DNA repair genes influence intergenerational stability of the CAG repeat tract. Most people inherit the same +/-1 HTT-CAG as their parent, but in others large intergenerational expansion occurs driving more aggressive disease down the generations and we don’t know why. To address this, I am collaborating with others to look at the pattern of and variants influencing intergenerational CAG repeat stability in the 100K genomes project samples. I am also working with Dr Nayana Lahiri (Clinical Genetics) on a project to collect blood and sperm DNA from HD families for analysis.

It is important to know if therapeutic drugs targeting HD progression via DNA repair proteins may also effect intergenerational CAG stability. Understanding what factors influence intergenerational expansion will improve genetic counselling, and help explain why some people develop HD without any family history.

Research Day 2021

Research Day 2021 will be held on Wednesday 8 December.

The main speaker for the day will be epidemiologist Dame Anne Johnson, who will give the Thomas Young prize lecture, entitled People, policy and pandemics.

To view the full schedule and/or register for Research Day please visit the website: - https://www.sgul.ac.uk/events/research-day-2021
Two of our Academic Foundation Programme doctors successfully applied for GAT bursaries to cover the cost of the PgCert Healthcare Research Skills and Methods and are pleased to share their thoughts and reflections on the course.

Dr Thomas McNally

The PgCert in Healthcare Research Skills and Methods was a great learning opportunity and allowed me to develop practical skills that will be relevant for a career in research. The modules are tailored to develop important skills such as grant applications, statistical planning and analysis and dissemination of research. The course was well structured and flexible around my clinical commitments as a junior doctor. The lecturers and module leads are approachable and have been very helpful in developing a research proposal and grant application for my academic block. Additionally, collaborating with colleagues from different medical specialties and careers has been a brilliant learning experience. I would highly recommend the course to any colleagues who are interested in an academic career pathway.

Dr Hilary Warren

Last year I undertook the PgCert in Healthcare Research Skills and Methods whilst doing my FY1 year. It was a great opportunity to learn and apply key research skills. The course offered training and assignments on research proposals, statistics, critical appraisal and data analysis. It was all virtual because of COVID but this made the course even more flexible around my working hours. The lectures and tasks were engaging and useful, offering invaluable methods and approaches to research tasks.

I used the skills I learnt on the programme to enact research proposals and apply for grant funding. These activities in turn improved my assignments for the course itself. The tutors were helpful both with course assignments and general research issues I faced. This was a good foundation in research skills that makes me feel more confident moving forward in planning and actioning research. I appreciate the opportunity to take part with funding support from GAT and St George’s and I would encourage other juniors interested in research to apply!
Thoughts and reflections on the PGCert in Healthcare Research Skills and Methods

The delivery of the PGCert Healthcare Research Skills and Methods during the pandemic has been appreciated by a wide range of healthcare professionals:

I just want to state again what an excellent and helpful course this has been with exceptional teaching, I have recommended it to many of my peers and colleagues.

Dermatology trainee

Thank you for making the year enjoyable and accommodating during very unusual times!

Clinical Research Nurse

I just wanted to say a big thank you for your support this year and flexibility to support us through the pandemic!

Physiotherapist

Fantastic presentations with engaging content and style of presentations.
News from our clinical academic trainees

Dr Rae Wake (NIHR Clinical Lecturer) is a trainee in Infectious Diseases and Microbiology, and is currently working in the Clinical Infection Unit at St George’s. Rae completed her PhD in 2019, studying cryptococcal antigenaemia in HIV-infection. This research was based in Johannesburg, South Africa and analysed screening strategies, clinical consequences and implications for management. The findings have been presented at international conferences including IAS and CROI, published in peer-reviewed articles, and have informed changes in international guidelines for the management of patients with advanced HIV disease.

She continues to be involved in optimising management strategies for cryptococcosis, and has recently delivered two webinars as part of the Advanced HIV Disease Series hosted by the CDC Mycotic Diseases Branch, CHAI (Clinton Health Access Initiative and Unitaid). Ongoing work has led to a published evaluation of quantitative assays for cryptococcal antigen, and continues with collaborators in South Africa to identify immune and genetic factors of susceptibility to this infection. Rae is also involved in designing studies to run alongside an imminent RCT led by researchers at St George’s University; the EFFECT trial aims to compare the efficacy of an oral combination of fluconazole and flucytosine with fluconazole alone in reducing all-cause mortality in patients with cryptococcal antigenaemia and advanced HIV disease in Tanzania and South Africa. She is pictured with colleagues Will Hurt and Jack Adams, following a cycle from London to Brighton, which raised over £1000 for the Meningitis Research Foundation as part of the Jennerosity event this year.

Dr Sarah Sturrock - Academic Clinical Fellow Paediatric Infectious Diseases

I was delighted to have the opportunity to present some of my work on perinatal and neonatal outcomes following maternal SARS-CoV-2 infection during pregnancy at the summer meeting of the Neonatal Society.

This work was in collaboration with Dr Shohaib Ali, an academic FY1 at Chelsea and Westminster, and our supervisors Dr Chris Gale, Dr Cheryl Battersby, and Professor Kirsty Le Doare. We completed a systematic review of all papers reporting outcomes for babies born to mothers who had a SARS-CoV-2 infection whilst pregnant, with a focus on neonatal morbidity. Although we identified a large number of papers, there was little data to clearly answer the question of whether there would be long-term consequences for these babies; however, we did find a likely association between maternal coronavirus and premature birth. We also found a significant research gap in low- and middle-income countries, and in early pregnancy infections, despite the known consequences of first trimester infection with other viruses such as Zika.

The event was a hybrid event, with a small number of attendees in person at the Royal Society of Medicine, and other attendees joining online via Zoom. It was seamlessly run between the online and in-person elements, although the real pleasure was in meeting like-minded clinicians and academics in person, and hearing about all the exciting neonatal research happening across the country even in such difficult times. I am very grateful to our supervisors for their support during what has been a complicated project, and to my collaborator for his contribution.
Dr Julia Zöllner Academic Clinical Fellow Obs and Gynae

I was selected for the Emerging Leaders NIHR leadership programme. As a NIHR ACF I was eligible to apply and took advantage of such a unique opportunity. It consisted of 3 virtual residential, 1 face to face residential and multiple personal and peer group coaching. This leadership programme transformed my thinking to that of an independent researcher mindset. In addition, I have formed great networks and gained an insight on how to actively direct my career goals. There were many highlights but one of them included a virtual reality coaching session.

I chaired this year’s BMA virtual annual academic trainee conference. I joined the committee as a trainee representative a couple of years ago. Standing up for clinical academics is at the heart of what I believe. The focus of the conference was “building blocks to an academic career”. The conference was fully booked and included a wide range of participants. I was delighted that we were able to provide a variety of breakout groups to give a wide range of opportunities (from how to write a grant to how to give an engaging presentation).

I also completed a PgCertificate in Genomic Medicine last year. It was fully HEE funded and I would encourage anyone to pursue this PgCertificate. I have since then obtained advanced bioinformatic skills and I am conducting a collaborative genetics project where I am able to apply all the skills learned in the PgCertificate. Finally, I was awarded first prize in the "Best Peer Teacher" category of the "Excellence in Education Awards" 2021. I have delivered a set of formal lectures and seminars to medical students at St George's University. I take pride in mentoring junior academics, and I am grateful for this recognition.

Dr Sanjay Sivalokanathan - Reflections on Research Collaboration

An aspect of what drew me to the field of research was the opportunity to collaborate with a variety of investigators across the globe. It truly is an aspect of medicine that not only navigates through barriers but furthers dialogue and imparts valuable knowledge. My journey began in the US, at Johns Hopkins, where I had the opportunity, under the guidance from Roselle Abraham, to explore the aetiology of atrial fibrillation in hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) patients. Five years on, and having maintained contact, my new project, based at UCSF, focused on the role of investigative imaging techniques in HCM patients. Whilst I may have swayed towards the field of Cardiology since medical school, I would have never imagined that my special interest would have been cardiac imaging.

There are many steps that are required before a successful collaboration is established. Firstly, it's important to have, or explore, and pursue an interest that is personal to you. This may not happen immediately, and it may take years. However, once you’re drawn to a subject, the next step is to reach out, and form those connections. This is an arduous and lengthy process, but enthusiasm and persistence always prevails. The most important thing, once at your new institution, is to show what you are capable of. Hours of hard work, private study and enthusiasm ultimately paves way for new and exciting projects. A piece of advice I always tell myself is, when one door closes, another one opens.
Sites of interest for clinical academic trainees

The Clinical Academic Training Forum (CATF) has launched an exciting new website to promote the role of clinical academics and support health professionals beginning their clinical academic journey. CATCH, the Clinical Academic Training & Careers Hub, aims to be a one stop shop for information on academic careers.

You can visit the new website at www.catch.ac.uk

The Academy of Medical Sciences Grant Schemes

The Academy works in partnership with other research funders to offer grants for biomedical researchers. The schemes support those on the clinical training pathway and those working in basic biomedical research. Have a look at the website for more information: https://acmedsci.ac.uk/grants-and-schemes/grant-scheme

NIHR Fellowship Programme

Four fellowships have been designed to support individuals at various points of their development in becoming leading researchers, from initial pre-doctoral training to senior post-doctoral research.

1. Pre-Doctoral Fellowship
2. Development and Skills Enhancement Award
3. Doctoral Fellowship
4. Advanced Fellowship

Have a look at the website for more information: NIHR Fellowship Programme | NIHR

Twitter

The GAT twitter account is live and being moderated by Ifrah Ali. Any news you would like share or engage with online please email iali@sgul.ac.uk

This account is open to showcase the opportunities available for those at St George’s and to share the amazing work being done by our clinical academic trainees.

Have a look and follow, share and retweet!