

NIHR Bristol Nutrition BRU Newsletter



The NIHR Biomedical Research Unit at the University of Bristol and the University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust in Nutrition, Diet and Lifestyle also known as "The Bristol Nutrition BRU" opened on the 1st April 2012.

I am delighted to write a short introduction to our first newsletter. Over the last 20 months we have moved into our new offices, we have appointed all our staff and as you can see from the newsletter there is a lot happening!

I think we have established a unit that is not only an exciting and stimulating place to work but, as the pictures of the Christmas party below and on the back page suggest, somewhere that is an enjoyable place to work too.

I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas. I look forward to working with you in the New Year.

Andy Ness, Director of the Bristol Nutrition BRU



Research Themes

Childhood Disorders

Led and written by Julian Hamilton-Shield

The unifying theme of childhood disorders is to improve the health of children with chronic disease. Our portfolio of studies is therefore broad ranging from new device development to improve care of children with type 1 diabetes, to studies on eating behaviours and diet and their influence on obesity. We also look at type 2 diabetes and autoimmune disease, as well as completely novel projects on potential new therapies to treat rare genetic disorders such as Barth Syndrome. We are keen to work with health care professionals, the voluntary sector and industry in improving nutrition and care for children.

Perioperative Nutrition

Led by Andy Ness (written by Charlotte Atkinson)

People were often kept 'nil by mouth' (NBM) both before and after their surgery. However research suggests that such practices may not be necessary and that recovery may be improved if people are not kept NBM for prolonged periods of time. The overall aim of this theme is to investigate perioperative feeding (i.e., foods and drinks consumed around the time of surgery) to see if we can develop ways to improve outcome in people undergoing surgery or other major hospital treatment. We are currently summarising the results of studies that have been conducted on early postoperative feeding and on the use of chewing gum as a form of sham feeding. In addition, we are conducting interviews with both patients and healthcare providers to get their perspectives on perioperative feeding.

Prostate Cancer

Led by Richard Martin (written by Lucy Hackshaw)

Diet and physical activity (PA) play an important role in the development and progression of prostate cancer (PC). However, there is little evidence on the most effective and acceptable nutritional or PA interventions to recommend. The PC theme is co-ordinating a novel programme of systematic reviews, statistical analyses, qualitative research and the setting up of de novo feasibility studies. Work focuses upon interventions in men with PC, exploring a variety of factors, eg. recruitment and adherence, PC pathology, PSA kinetics and biomarkers of cell proliferation, alongside qualitative research to explore acceptability. The programme of work is now underway. Over the coming months outcomes will emerge.

Sedentary Behaviour and Type 2 Diabetes

Led by Ashley Cooper (written by Catherine Falconer)

We live in an increasingly sedentary world. Evidence is growing that sedentary behaviour is an independent risk factor for poor health. The aims of the type 2 diabetes and sedentary behaviour theme are to characterise the sedentary behaviour patterns of people with type 2 diabetes, use this understanding to identify key determinants which are amenable to change, and design and test interventions to reduce sedentary time.

Patient and Public Involvement (PPI)

By Eileen Sutton

Research Associate in Qualitative Methods



At the BRU we are working towards the active involvement of patients and the public in our research to ensure that it is relevant to people's needs. Since taking on the role of PPI lead I have developed a PPI policy for the Unit that sets out the ways we will work towards our aims. These include setting up PPI groups for each of the Unit's four key research themes. Group members will be invited to help us with tasks such as: commenting on research proposals and study design; providing

feedback on study materials; and identifying and prioritising research ideas.

So far we have set up groups for two of the Unit's research themes: Prostate Cancer (led by Lucy Hackshaw) and Perioperative Health (led by Georgia Herbert). Ten members of the public/patients across these groups have received basic induction and training to equip them for their role as group members. They have already commented on study materials for two of the Unit's PhD students (Vanessa Er and Vaneesha Short), helping them to ensure that these are clear and relevant. Laura Birch and I will be working on involvement with existing local PPI groups for the Childhood Nutrition in Disease theme, and Catherine Falconer is currently looking to recruit newly diagnosed patients for the Type 2 Diabetes theme group. We hope that all our group members will be able to meet up at the next BRU Scientific Meeting when we aim to be able to feedback on the input of PPI in our research.

Training in the BRU

By Charlotte Atkinson

Senior Research Fellow in Nutrition



The BRU has made training and development a priority for all staff and students. We have developed a training policy that details the variety of approaches we are taking to provide a mixture of general and specific training. Individual requirements for training are identified through the staff review process, and staff and students are actively encouraged to undertake the training opportunities available to them. The

Training Policy is divided into five sections: 1) Students and Placements, which includes PhD studentships and internships aimed at postgraduates; 2) NHS and University Training, which includes mandatory training such as GCP, generic training in areas such as IT skills, and access to 'Short Courses' run by the School of Social and Community Medicine; 3) NIHR Training, which includes NIHR residential courses such as the 'Summer School' for PhD students; 4) BRU Internal Training and Staff Review, which is tailored to staff and students within the BRU and includes a 'Research Methods' course, a reading/book group, a 'Present and Discuss' series, and funding for travel and conferences; and 5) BRU Open Training, which includes a CPD accreditable seminar series, and opportunities to host visiting fellows with similar research interests. To date, all staff and students within the BRU have made use of the training opportunities that are offered to them.



Charter for women in science
Recognising commitment to advancing women's careers in STEMM academia



By Andrea Waylen
Senior Lecturer in Psychology

The Athena SWAN Charter aims to recognise commitment to advancing women's careers in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM) employment in higher education. In November 2012 the School of Oral and Dental Sciences submitted an application for a silver Athena SWAN award. Our application was successful and Andrea Waylen and Dave Dymock attended the awards ceremony in Edinburgh in June 2013.

The School is committed to academic excellence and fairness and works to provide an environment that is supportive, flexible and fair. Our intention is to ensure that women are fairly represented in a traditionally male-dominated area and to ensure that women and men benefit equally from the opportunities afforded by an academic career.

"A Day In The Life of A PhD Student..."

Vanessa Er



"I am a second year PhD student. I am interested in how diet and lifestyle impact on prostate cancer. I have just completed my first research study and am embarking on two new ones. One is an interview study to find out the motivators and barriers to adopting a healthy diet and lifestyle in African Caribbean men diagnosed with prostate cancer. The other is to assess how diet and lifestyle after prostate cancer diagnosis affects insulin growth factors (a hormone linked to prostate cancer progression).

It is very hard for me to describe my typical day at work as it varies. In the morning, I tend to do work that requires more brain power as this is when I am most productive. I analyse my data or prepare documents for the interview study for ethics application. This is to ensure that the study is ethical and scientifically sound. In the afternoon, I reply to my emails and attend meetings. Lately, I have been corresponding with a bio-bank manager to retrieve blood samples for my study. They will then be delivered to a laboratory in Bristol for analysis. There is a discussion group on research methods and also a weekly seminar on nutrition and health topics at our unit. I like going to these as it helps with my research skills and gives me ideas for my studies. This is my day at work in a nutshell. I hope I have given you a picture of what I do."

Activities in the BRU

Seminars by Georgia Herbert

The Nutrition BRU has hosted a Research Seminar series on Wednesday afternoons for the last year, relating to the subject areas of Nutrition, Diet and Lifestyle. These are free events, and CPD points for attending are available. Topics have ranged from Professor Jeff Brunstrom asking who controls the food that we eat? To Dr Kasia Kordas discussing child development in the context of micronutrient deficiencies and environmental exposures.



Qualitative Research Book Group by Eileen Sutton

The staff at the Bristol Nutrition BRU come from a wide range of backgrounds including epidemiology, statistics, dietetics, psychology and qualitative research and it is great to be able to learn more about less familiar research methods and theoretical perspectives. This autumn, together with Georgia Herbert, Lucy Hackshaw and Aidan Searle, I led a series of book group discussions looking at a range of qualitative methodologies. We had useful discussions on the theoretical underpinnings of qualitative research, ethnography, interviews, focus groups, narrative methods and qualitative data analysis. Hopefully we can now all distinguish ontology from epistemology! I certainly found the sessions a great opportunity to reflect upon my research practice.

Present & Discuss by Lucy Hackshaw

We are now into the second year of our 'Present & Discuss' seminars. This is an opportunity for those who are part of, or affiliated with, the BRU to present their work. This can include potential grant proposals, ongoing research, conference presentations etc. This is an informal environment where research is shared, discussed and constructive feedback given. For example Catherine Falconer recently presented 'Pedal power: Electric bikes for type 2 diabetes'.

Present & Discuss is held on the second Tuesday of every month in the BRU. For further information or to present at one of our upcoming seminars, please contact Lucy.Hackshaw@bristol.ac.uk

Journal Club by Chris Penfold

We have recently started a journal club in the Nutrition BRU. These are informal sessions where we get together to discuss a research paper selected by one of the research team. These papers may be related to on-going research or to a new research direction. So far I presented a paper on childhood eczema and Holly Cole-Hawkins presented a recent paper about quality of life in patients with head and neck cancer. Vanessa Er then ran the final session before Christmas. As well as selecting the research, the presenter also provides some edible treats to keep us going through lunch – Holly's brownies have set a particularly high bar for those who follow.

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BRU Scientific Meeting

The MShed, 2 October 2013

By Richard Hocking
BRU Manager

September saw the second annual scientific meeting of the Bristol Nutrition BRU. This day long event at The MShed, Bristol,



welcomed academics and clinicians from Bristol and beyond to hear how the BRU has progressed over the past twelve months and to listen to cutting edge research presentations from many of the BRU's collaborators. The meeting kicked off with updates from the BRU

Director, Professor Andy Ness, and the leads of the research themes. This was followed by a session centred on some technological aspects of nutrition and lifestyle research in areas such as remote sensing and monitoring and dietary assessment technology. Following a healthy and nutritious lunch hopefully befitting to a Nutrition Biomedical Research Unit, the attendees heard updates on topics around Diabetes, Obesity and Fatty Acids. The meeting was brought to a close by a fascinating Keynote speech from Professor Tim Lang on sustainable diets from sustainable food systems, which certainly encouraged a good deal of post meeting discussion. This was a most enjoyable and enlightening meeting and I'm sure many attendees will be looking forward to hearing further developments next year.



Christmas Event

By Catherine Falconer
Research Associate

On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me... Andy Ness in a Santa onesie!

Friday 6th December, 10am, the Square Food Foundation Bristol. The teams had been drawn, the fancy dress challenge laid down and all that remained was for 24 members of the Bristol BRU to rise to the challenge of not only preparing and cooking a three



course, restaurant standard meal but doing it whilst dressed as turkeys/reindeers/Santa. And rise to the challenge they did. Under the slightly chaotic,



yet inspiring instruction of Barney Haughton we succeeded in serving up and enjoying a three course, meal. Reindeers chopped herbs for the salsa verde, turkeys cooked the vegetarian option and Tarte Tatin, Santa and his little helper butchered and beautifully cooked some amazing organic chickens, I made a hedgehog bread roll and everyone entered into the spirit of the day. A really great day out for all and hopefully the start of a fruitful (!) relationship with the Square Food Foundation.



Bumps & Wedding Bells

Here at the BRU we are celebrating two firsts, our first pregnancy and our first wedding!

Georgia Herbert was delighted to announce that she and her partner are expecting a baby, due 5 March next year. They are very excited but keeping the sex a surprise! And Lucy Hackshaw is getting married to John McGeagh on 14 March 2014 in Priston. Congrats to them both on their news!

