



Director's Introduction

On the 29th of September Mike Turner, Director of Science at the Wellcome, emailed me that our Extension application for the Wellcome Core Award was awarded in full, end date 30 November 2023. Great news and we can now continue to build sustainable operations for all our amazing core facilities.

We await to hear from Wellcome about their future plans and new funding mechanisms beginning next year but their website and logo is indicative of directions they will take (and see their recent first call for their "[Leap](#)" fund).

The Wellcome described our Extension application as "excellent", particularly towards our strategic aims in infectious disease and discovery science, and the translation of our discoveries to the clinic. Recently, with the Department of Psychiatry, we are establishing strengths in neurological disease in the WHG, including from 1st October 2020, Ira Milosevic, to help address the mental health research challenge. She's amazing, as is our other new starter, Nicky Whiffin.

Other news includes Ellie Tzima being awarded the title of "Professor"; we're organizing a Christmas quiz on 11th Dec and Christmas puddings; we're going to go ahead with updating the Microscopy facility upgrade; we have two new Associate Group Leaders from the BDI: David Bonsall (infection) and Jens Rittscher (imaging); the PacBio sequencing machine arrived for long-reads – should be up-and-running by next month; the Pfizer vaccine news is great and also great for the prospects for the Oxford vaccine. On the subject of Oxford's contribution to the pandemic, enjoy these (verified) numbers:

"Highlights here (July – September Q3) for our coronavirus research coverage against:

- Imperial College London – media articles on COVID research 519, total combined reach of those publications 5.4 billion
- John Hopkins University – media articles on COVID research 253, total combined reach of those publications 3.1 billion
- University of Cambridge – media articles on COVID research 171, total combined reach of those publications 2.1 billion
- **University of Oxford – media articles on COVID research, 7,559 the total combined reach of those publications was 61 billion (which is 5x the volume of our competitors... COMBINED and 10x the amount of media coverage our research achieved in the same quarter last year)"**

I'll end by thanking Calli (Dendrou) for her ongoing heroic efforts in the uplifting of our cultural environment, and of course also all the support staff in the Centre and the Department that keep the WHG running and top class.

John Todd, Nov 2020

EDI Network Update:

Our science is better if we are diverse. Our workplace is better when we are inclusive.

Despite the need for social distancing, in the spirit of togetherness the new WHG equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) initiative is off to a great start. Our mission is to cultivate a positive community environment that is safe, informed and encouraging to all Centre members. We aim to realize this mission by increasing awareness of EDI, monitoring the Centre's diversity and research culture perception, forming relevant support networks, providing infrastructure that facilitates inclusion, and promoting visibility to help inspire current and future Centre members to utilise their uniqueness to achieve their personal career aspirations.

As part of our new EDI initiative we have begun to form networks to enable Centre members to support each other and to help advise our management to ensure that our policies and practices can best meet the needs of all our members. Our networks include the WHG LGBTQ+, the WHG Ethnic and Racial Diversity and Inclusion (ERDIN), the WHG Disability, Chronic Illness and Neurodiversity (ABLE), and the Women in the WHG Networks - for any Centre members who identify with these areas of diversity or who are allies. The Network Committees have already begun efforts to increase awareness and have started to run events and activities; notable examples include the WHG LGBTQ+ Network Pride Quiz event held in June and the Black History Month newsletter circulated by the WHG ERDIN Committee in October.

In the coming months we are looking forward to commencing the WHG EDI seminar series that will focus on intersectionality across different areas of diversity, and a Wellcome-funded programme to address the intersection between EDI and mental health in research. This programme is the first of its kind in the University and is a collaborative effort between the WHG, the Wellcome Centre for Integrative Neuroimaging, and the Wellcome Centre for Ethics and Humanities.

To find out more about EDI in the Centre and to get involved, please join us on Teams (Human Genetics WT Centre – EDI) or contact us: edicommittee@well.ox.ac.uk . For anonymous posting of EDI-related comments or queries please use the WHG EDI [padlet](#).

Calli Dendrou Nov 2020

Notices

EDI Networks Christmas Outreach Programme:

The newly formed Equality and Diversity Network as are asking everyone to donate food and other items to the Oxford Community Emergency Foodbank over the next four weeks. A box of food will be in the WHG Cafeteria until the 17th December. Items needed include: tins of meat, vegetables, fruit (no tomatoes), coffee and hot chocolate (no tea), tins of puddings etc, jams and other spreads, sugar, long life fruit juice and milk, practical toiletries (toilet rolls, soap, shower gel, toothpaste etc.), pasta sauces, practical cleaning products.

WHG Christmas Party:

This years Christmas Celebration Quiz will take place, online, on the 11th December at 13:00. Further festive details to follow.

Athena Swan:

NDM's current Athena SWAN Silver Award has been extended by an additional year, to 30 November 2022.

Christmas Closure

As per previous e mail communication, 2 additional days of annual leave granted by the Vice Chancellor will actually be **Wednesday 23rd and Thursday 24th December** within NDM. This has been decided to encourage as many staff as possible to take a longer break. During this time there will be no admin support, stores/goods-in, glass wash, reception cover and buildings facilities staff.

Staff can still achieve the two week break the VC mentions, however, you will need to book two additional days leave, i.e. Monday 21st and Tuesday 22nd December. If you have already booked Wednesday 23rd and/or Thursday 24th on your leave card you should unbook it.

For those unable to take the Christmas/New Year period off for significant operational reasons, cleaning staff will still attend the building to clean common touch points and communal areas, and deep clean some areas. We anticipate that cleaning staff will be off on 25-27th December, and 31st Dec-3rd January.

Those staff unable to take the 23rd -24th December for significant operational reasons, or who do not usually work on a Wednesdays and/or Thursdays should book the additional two days as near to Christmas as possible, and no later than mid-January.

COVID testing news

End of term testing arrangements for students

Silver Group agreed plans for providing tests for students ahead of the Government's Christmas Travel Window from 3-9 December.

All students who leave Oxford during the travel window will be offered 'Christmas Travel Tests'. They will be asked to take two of these Lateral Flow Tests (LFTs) in their college the week before they travel home.

The tests will be delivered as the initial phase of the new University COVID-19 Asymptomatic Testing (CAT) programme. Colleges will facilitate students taking the tests, using training and support from the University.

CAT builds on the learnings of the FACTS research project which will continue in Merton and St Hilda's colleges. It complements the University's existing Testing for COVID-19: Early Alert Service for individuals with symptoms, which continues to be operational.

Full details about the programme are available on the [Christmas vacation page of the University coronavirus site](#).

A communications campaign has been launched to encourage students to take the tests under the banner 'Take the Christmas Travel Test. Protect the people you love'. Separate emails will be sent to all and outlining the aims and actions for the campaign. Materials to support the campaign have been sent to SPOCs and Communications Officers, and can also be found [on SharePoint](#).

The University is now developing plans for how to manage CAT and the wider testing programme ahead of students' return in Hilary term, and information will follow in the near future. Learnings from Christmas testing will help to inform plans for the new year.

Testing for COVID-19: Early Alert Service Christmas closure over the winter vacation

Silver group has agreed that the Testing for COVID-19: Early Alert Service, will close from Tuesday 22nd December – Sunday 3rd January inclusive. This should mean that the last day college/department Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) will receive test results from the Early Alert Service will be Wednesday 23rd December.

Over this period:

- The Early Alert Service Results Liaison Team (RLT) will remain open to provide public health advice, with the support of the senior clinical team, throughout the Christmas period (including Christmas, Boxing and New Year's Days). Details of this will be provided closer to the time.
- Staff and students developing COVID-19 symptoms will be asked to seek testing from the NHS, reporting positive results to their college/department when appropriate.
- The University's Incident Coordination Group will continue to monitor the situation across the collegiate University over the winter vacation, and if an issue arises will be prepared to meet to assess the situation and provide coordination and central support for colleges.

The intention is to ensure that the Testing for COVID-19: Early Alert Service, particularly its contingent of volunteers, have a break over the Christmas period to ensure resilience going into Hilary term. At the same time, it should reduce the burden on SPOCs who will have a break from dealing with the comprehensive notifications from the Testing for COVID-19: Early Alert Service and any follow-up infection tracing required. That burden will fall back on the national test and trace system, in line with the service provided to the rest of the population. College SPOCs will be able to focus their efforts on providing support to the (expected to be very small number of) students (and their households) who notify them directly that they require support self-isolating following a positive test with the NHS.

Move to 'High' COVID Alert level: implications for the University and colleges

Further to the announcement that Oxfordshire will move to 'High' or Tier 2 COVID-19 alert level on Wednesday 2 December, Silver Group has confirmed that:

- There are no changes to education and research activities, and the University will remain in Stage 2 of its emergency response framework
- The University's four museums will re-open from Wednesday 2 December
- The Iffley Road Sports Centre will reopen for some activities on Thursday 3 December. Organised sport, such as University and College sports clubs, will be able to resume in line with government guidance, from Thursday 10 December, after the end of the Student Travel Window. Go to [www.sport.ox.ac.uk/coronavirus](#) for more information
- A range of college services can resume, within the constraints of the Government guidance

Information for students has been updated on the [local restrictions page](#) of the student section of the University coronavirus site.

NDMFT – Christmas deadlines

Taking into consideration the extended Christmas break this year, and in order to meet these Central deadlines detailed above, the NDM Finance Team would like to work towards following deadlines to allow adequate time to complete our part of the process:

Expenses

Claimants to submit completed expense claims **by 5pm Friday 4th December 2020**. The NDM Finance Team will then review and contact approvers on the 7th December with a view to submit to Central Payments by 5pm Tuesday 8th December 2020.

Barclaycard

Preparers to submit the completed template to **by 5pm Friday 11th December 2020**. The NDM Finance Team will then review and contact approvers on the 14th December with a view to submit to Central Payments by 5pm Tuesday 15th December 2020. I fully appreciate this is a tight deadline and therefore I suggest preparers start to collate receipts and coding ahead of this deadline. It's not expected there will be a high volume of spend at this time, and if a nil return, please just notify us of this so we can mark as complete.

Accounts Receivable (AR)/ Small Research Facilities (SRF)

Please submit your AR invoice requests to **by 5pm Tuesday 15th December 2020**. The NDM Finance Team will then review and contact approvers with an aim to raise the invoice within 5 days. Please consider new customer requests, if these could be submitted as soon as possible to avoid delays.

For SRFs, please ensure your logs are updated **by 5pm Tuesday 15th December 2020**, the NDM Finance Team will then proceed to raise the internal trade invoices.

Requisitions

The final day to place requisitions is **Midday Friday 18th December 2020**. Please consider the need-by date when placing your order, when can the supplier fulfil this? Please speak to your suppliers in advance of placing your requisition and if delivery is unlikely to be until we return w/c 4th January 2021, please wait and order after this time. This is will reduce the number of supplier queries i.e. are we open for delivery? failed delivery attempts and possible spoiling of goods, in addition to goods getting stuck in customs over the Christmas period. Please also consider the opening dates/times of your local Goods-in/Stores as these may differ across the different buildings on campus. Finally, please consider the availability of reviewers in the approval hierarchy ensuring they will be available to process your request or have setup appropriate vacation rules.

Receiving

Whilst your local Goods-in/Stores/Lab Managers should receipts goods entering the building through the usual channels, please do consider the receipting of services such as maintenance contracts, engineer visits/call outs, travel; flights, accommodation, trains etc. Internal Trade e.g. sequencing and software up to 31st December 2020. If you are unsure how to receipt, you can watch an online video [here](#).

The NDM Finance Team's last day will be Tuesday 22nd December 2020 returning on Monday 4th January 2021.

*To note, Central Finance i.e. Purchasing (UPD), Central Payments & the VAT team have an extended break and therefore they will **not be available to provide support to us w/c 21st December 2020, their last day in 2020 is Friday 18th December 2020. This is worth considering in advance if you have new suppliers requests, urgent payments or VAT queries.***

NDM HR team Christmas period availability

With the festive break approaching, I would like to advise you of the recruitment cut-off and HR availability within the NDM HR Centres for Excellence (ORC). Recruitment cut-off is 12:00, midday on Wednesday 9 December 2020 for jobs be advertised before Christmas.

Recruitment from previous years has demonstrated that advertising during the Christmas break is not effective, so please, where possible wait to advertise in the New Year. If you need to advertise, then please get in touch with the Recruitment team as soon as possible.

All teams will be available until Friday 18 December 2020.

We will then close and there will not be a service operating on Monday 21 and Tuesday 22 December 2020.

HR will be back in the New Year on Monday 4 January 2021.

Starters

We would like to extend a warm welcome to those who have joined the WHG recently:

Carolyh Achia	Research Assistant in HTG
Jason Hendry:	Postdoctoral Research Scientist
Colin Dayan:	Senior Clinical Researcher
Rungtiwa Nutalai	Postdoctoral Research Scientist in Immunology
Nicola Whiffin	Sir Henry Dale fellow
Paolo Piazza	Head of Innovation
Juliet Agudelo	Research Assistant in HTG
Matthieu Miossec	Bioinformatics Analyst
Aekkachai Tuekprakhon	Postdoctoral Research Scientist in Immunology
Long Chen	Postdoctoral Research Fellow in HIV-host Interactions
Ira Milosevic	John Black Senior Research Fellow in Parkinson's disease
Sthfany Pagliari	Postdoctoral Research Scientist in Vaccine Development
Bjoern Forsberg	Postdoctoral Research Scientist in cryo-EM
Abirami Lakshminarayanan	Postdoctoral Research Scientist in Structural Biology
Alexandra Martin-Geary	Postdoctoral Bioinformatician

New Students

Holly Eggington	Leedham group
Nechama Tatz-Wieder	Whiffin group
Jie Yan	Cornall group
Edward (Solomon) English	Douglas group
Paulina Bryjka	Green group
Emily Rowlands	Jones group
Janvi Ahuja	Bowden group
William Seaton-Burn	Zhang group
Alex Au (Ho Au)	Grimes group
Megan Healy	Siebold group

Leavers

We would like to thank and wish good luck to the following people who left since November:

Jaclyn Bowman	Laboratory coordinator
Sulochana Omwenga	Research Assistant in Cancer Biology
Hai Fang	Postdoctoral Research Scientist -DD
Marysa Champan	Project Assistant