When the Health Sciences Research Beacon was set up in 2009 it was structured around the workstreams of drug discovery and therapy application, led by Professor Roz Anderson, and health improvement and well-being, led by Professor Ann Crosland. As we started to assess our respective areas of strength and work on developing these into a coherent body of research it soon became apparent that whilst we may carry out our research in different contexts and use different research methods there is considerable overlap in the topics of research in each of the workstreams. Moreover, it became quite clear that staff across the workstreams were carrying out complementary research from which we could all learn and share ideas. A recent comprehensive review of all publications, projects and research students reinforced this, so we set about developing a strategy built around our current strengths as well as our future potential. The end result is a strategy built around five key themes:

- **Common mental health problems**: from prevention to novel therapeutic interventions.
- **Infection and immunology**: from pathogenesis to treatment.
- **Pharmaceutical sciences**: from disease to medicines use.
- **Understanding health behaviours**.
- **Knowledge translation**: theory into practice and science into product.

We are now in the process of identifying a leader for each of the workstreams is currently being identified. It is then envisaged that all of those with an interest in each theme will meet on a regular basis to share ideas, develop new projects and to support each other in the development of outputs. These groups will be open to all with an interest in the area and information about them will be posted on the Health Sciences Beacon web site, where the strategy can also be accessed.

**Forthcoming... Research funding workshops**

Designed to explain the entire funding application process: from identifying potential funding bodies through to constructing an excellent proposal and realising outputs.
Dr Louise Delicato joined the University of Sunderland as Senior Lecturer in Psychology in 2007. Louise completed her MA (hons) in Psychology at the University of St Andrews in 1998 and her PhD on the “Psycho physics of Visual Motion Perception”, at the University of Nottingham in 2002. Subsequent postdoctoral research positions were at the Centre for Neurobiology and Behaviour, Columbia University, New York (2002-2004) where she investigated how the brain processes depth from disparity with Dr Ning Qian and then at Newcastle University where she investigated visual attention with Professor Alex Thiele (2004-2007). Louise has continued her psycho-physical research into motion and depth perception at Sunderland. Louise has worked in collaboration with Professor Andrew Derrington (University of Liverpool) and Dr Ignacio Serrano-Pedraza (Complutense University of Madrid) in these areas and is now collaborating with Dr Fatima Felisberti (Kingston University) on the effect of depth cues in crowding. In addition, Louise has recently begun an investigation into the use of emotion recognition in diagnosing and monitoring treatments of a variety of mental health conditions.

Dr Lewis Bingle was appointed as Senior Lecturer in Microbiology in 2010. He has previously worked on a wide range of research topics within molecular microbiology. His PhD studies at the University of Bristol (1998) were on the molecular genetics of natural product (polyketide) biosynthesis in moulds. This was followed by a two year postdoctoral position (1997-9) at Bristol investigating genetic exchange (sex) in the protozoan parasite Trypanosoma brucei (the causative agent of African sleeping sickness). Subsequent research has been at the University of Birmingham, (1999-2010) where Lewis changed topics again and spent over a decade working on topics such as the spread of antibiotic resistance genes between bacteria and regulation of protein secretion mechanisms in virulent bacterial pathogens like the O157:H7 strain of Escherichia coli. Continuing research interests are the molecular genetics of natural product biosynthesis and regulation of bacterial pathogenicity genes, with projects underway (partly funded by the Research Beacon) to investigate these subjects in non-pathogenic strains of E. coli. A relatively new interest is antibiotic discovery and Lewis has recently become involved in a collaboration with Dr Jonathan Harburn and Molplex Ltd which aims to characterise novel candidate anti-MRSA drugs.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has recently released its consultation document on draft panel criteria and working methods for the forthcoming REF. This document includes information on assessment criteria and panel procedures as well details of the four panels. These can all be found at: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/03_11/>
News - New Public Health School Launched

The University of Sunderland, as part of FUSE, has recently been shortlisted by the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) as one of eight provisional member organisations of the newly established national School for Public Health Research (SPHR) in England.

The new school aims to increase the evidence base for effective public health practice by increasing research and evidence outputs, including evaluations, whilst creating an environment where excellent, public needs focused, applied research can thrive. Public Health Minster Anne Milton said:

“More must be done to tackle the big public health issues like smoking, alcohol, poor mental health and obesity...Research based evidence has a vital role to play in achieving these aims”.

The Health Sciences Beacon looks forward to contributing to achieving these aims. In partnership with our north-east collaborators we aim to build on our existing research to increase our understanding of health behaviours alongside effective ways of translating knowledge into practice.

Research Beacon Publications: March-September 2011


Conference Watch: Recent Presentations from Beacon Staff

Anderson, R., along with PhD and MPharm students, presented three conference posters at the Cystinosis Research Network conference in San Francisco, July 2011:


Roberts J., and Crosland, A., “ I think this is maybe where our Achilles heel is...” A qualitative study exploring GP’s perspectives of consulting with young people experiencing emotional distress associated with mental health problems, Society for Academic Primary Care (SAPC) scientific conference, 2011 Bristol.

Todd, A., Williamson, S., and Singh, A., Does the current MPharm programme equip students with the necessary communication skills to successfully manage cancer patients? British Oncology Pharmacy Association (BOPA) and UK Oncology Nursing Society (UKONS) joint conference, September, 2011, Glasgow.
