Introduction

Social responsibility and Biology, Medicine & Health - the global dimension

Whilst much of our SR work is, quite rightly, focussed within our local communities in the UK, we are also aware that an increasing number of our students and staff are responding to the complex needs of vulnerable populations across the world, particularly in low and middle income countries (LMICs) in Asia and Africa.

Our students and dedicated student societies are regularly involved in fund raising to support their work in these environments. This, we believe is a positive development and our Faculty will do all it can to facilitate this work. We are committed to the premise that education and training must become a ‘borderless’ and ‘transnational’ undertaking. Many of our students already undertake elective student placements in these environments as part of their core learning.

The Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health (FBMH) is currently working closely with the Global Health Exchange programme initiated by Health Education England in order to facilitate more of our students – from all disciplines, to gain access to such programmes either through volunteering or within their core programme itself.

In addition to fulfilling a key social responsibility agenda by assisting people and patients in these countries, we are confident that experience gained during such placements will enrich the learning experience of our own students and open up potentially new and exciting research opportunities. The FBMH and Health will do everything in its power to facilitate and encourage such undertakings by our students and staff.

“Startled by the lack of professional support available to dentists in the north of Sri Lanka, oral medicine expert and senior clinical lecturer Dr Raj Ariyaratnam, began visiting the Jaffna area in 2011 to offer his expertise and address this issue.

Dr Ariyaratnam ran clinics, lectures and interactive seminars to colleagues in Jaffna, and helped set up a Continuing Professional Development organisation to facilitate and sustain ongoing learning activity amongst Sri Lankan dentists. The programme has quickly yielded positive results leading to a significant increase in performance and patient care quality.

To take the project further and reach health professionals in low and middle income countries, Dr Ariyaratnam collaborated with University of Manchester colleagues to create a web-based learning environment for overseas colleagues, teachers and students. The Global Online Learning Forum, run by Manchester experts, is a one stop shop for information designed to enhance knowledge and performance and promote collaborative learning.

“GOLF offers a great opportunity to internationalise Manchester and at the same time allows us to fulfil our global social responsibility to those less fortunate than ourselves”

Dr Ariyaratnam
Social integration is a key element in the quest to achieve and maintain peaceful social relations. Research shows that countries having experienced a civil war have up to a 50% chance of relapsing into conflict within 10 years, highlighting the fact that although promotion of social integration and coexistence should be a priority all over the world, even more efforts should be directed towards post conflict societies.

Sri Lanka is an example of a post-conflict country that has been promoting social integration as a means of creating an inclusive society. Professor Mahesh Nirmalan organised workshops in two Sri Lankan secondary schools - S. Thomas’ College in Gurutawala and Bandarawela Tamil Central College - to explore issues around personal development and multilingualism in a society fragmented by civil war. More than 125 students and 50 teachers were encouraged to confront and openly discuss social, cultural, economic and political barriers to personal development of young individuals and ways of dealing with and combating such impediments.

At the heart of the discussions was the need for broader engagement between the major communities to achieve post-conflict reconciliation and true social integration.

It was noted that the Sri Lankan society has to acknowledge its diversity and reiterate the values of inclusivity, non-discrimination and tolerance. Despite new initiatives by the government, the linguistic separations between ethnic societies still exist and thus, the need for multilingualism amongst future generations is essential.

Professor Nirmalan said: “Nation building in post-conflict societies must be based on a bottom-up approach. In this context getting school children to confront some of the relevant issues as part of their core learning activities is crucial.”
After working with colleagues in Uganda, Jo and Lucie recruited health psychologists from across the UK to join existing health partnerships, which are funded through the Tropical Health and Education Trust (THET). Health partnerships are links between high and low or middle income country healthcare organisations in which healthcare professionals support, mentor, teach and work with their counterparts across high, low and middle income countries. Often their purpose is to enhance clinical practice.

Our psychologists explored the impact of the health partnerships’ interventions on professional practice. They worked on understanding, evaluating and driving behaviour change. The Change Exchange worked with projects in Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique with partners in the UK including the universities, hospitals and the Royal College of Obstetrics & Gynaecology and the Royal College of Midwives.

The project was funded by grants from the Tropical Health & Education Trust and The UK Department for International Development and Health Education England’s Global Health Exchange.

Although this funding stream has now ended, the Change Exchange is working with the World Federation for the Societies of Anaesthesiologists by supporting them to understand and evaluate the impact of their Safer Anaesthetics From Education programme, in Tanzania, Nepal, Zimbabwe and Bangladesh.

Our volunteers will travel to Tanzania to observe and evaluate behaviour change components. They will also train and supervise local clinical fellows in qualitative research methods to build capacity in the team to conduct behavioural research in the four countries. The Change Exchange are exploring other ways that health psychologists might volunteer and gain experience of working with the colleagues in other countries, including mentoring for academic writing.

To find out more, visit www.mcrimpsci.org
Over the past decade more than 200 scholarships have been awarded to exceptional individuals who have demonstrated both academic excellence and a commitment to the economic/social development of their home communities.

Equity and Merit Scholarships aim to assist talented but economically disadvantaged students from some of the world’s poorest countries.

Equity and Merit Scholarships aim to assist talented but economically disadvantaged students from some of the world’s poorest countries. The scholarships are jointly funded by the University and its donors. The University covers the tuition fee in full and the generosity of donors pays for student living expenses, flights to the UK and visas.

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Visitors said:

“Amazing exhibition—I don’t know how I would have told the kids about these topics— but the researchers are great—loved it!”

“Was amazing, kids really going to take a lot back for long-term learning. Would be nice to have it over a week as we couldn’t get to see it all—only three stands! Thank you all”

A storyboard of the day can be viewed HERE and video can be seen at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lLhodx8ygs

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With people waiting for the doors to open at 10am, the visitors were non-stop!
The University joined forces with Manchester Histories Festival and opened its Stopford Building laboratories to the public to host an informative and entertaining ‘Exploding Women’ event.

The British Sign Language - interpreted event brought together different communities and audiences to explode the myth of women in science through a well-received performance delivered by comedy duo Lipservice. Wearing lab coats and safety goggles like ‘real scientists’, attendees explored the achievements and impact on society of five of Manchester’s most influential female scientists: Kathleen Drew – Queen of seaweed; Dame Kathleen Ollerenshaw – Rubik’s cube expert and maths genius who was deaf from aged eight; Caroline Birley – fossil hunter; Marie Stopes – palaeobotanist and women’s right campaigner; and Dame Margaret Beckett, metallurgist.

The University also partnered with the University of Salford, Manchester Metropolitan University and Manchester City Council to host a ‘Women in STEMM’ (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine) event for young people from Greater Manchester in workshops that explored what it is like to study sciences and engineering, and to follow a science career, delivered by inspirational female scientists. A wide range of science subjects were covered, from psychology to astrophysics.

The Faculty hosted 200 guests at an event that included guest speakers Susan Oliver, Nurse Consultant in Rheumatology, and Professor Maureen Baker FRCGP, immediate past Chair of the Council, Royal College of General Practitioners.

Associate Dean for Social Responsibility, Hema Radhakrishnan said, “The Faculty is thrilled to be able to bring world leading professionals together to share their professional and personal stories with inspired audiences.”

Biology, Medicine and Health celebrated International Women’s Day with a range of diverse and interactive events for staff, students and the public.

Celebrating International Women’s Day

Raising Awareness of Animal Research

Have you ever had a vaccination, general anaesthesia or used an asthma inhaler? What about taking pills for hay fever, antibiotics or headache tablets? Or maybe your pet has been given medication by a vet?

If your answer is ‘yes’ to one of these questions then you are one of the many people who have benefited from the use of animals in biomedical research.

Further information about animal research at The University of Manchester can be found on the award-winning animal research website: www.manchester.ac.uk/research/environment/governance/ethics/animals/

The University of Manchester recently won the ‘website award’ from the Understanding Animal Research Openness Awards with one judge saying “The University of Manchester was a clear winner. Information was accessible and appropriate to a wide range of audiences, but layered and easy to navigate. The material covered was extensive and of an excellent standard, and the infographic and Q&A sections are particularly impressive.”

Year 12 pupils from Greater Manchester visited the University to attend our Animal Research Day which promoted transparency about animal research. School pupils learned about the use and importance of animals in biomedical research before touring the Animal Unit to see the care standards and conditions of the animals used in research.
Michael Smith Quad
Living Campus Event

The Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health has hosted a ‘Living Campus’ event in its Michael Smith Building Quad for staff and postgraduate students.

The Quad provides a place for staff and students to take a break from their work and is used as a ‘living lab’ by many subject disciplines, contributing towards the University’s Environmental Sustainability Strategy and the newly launched Living Campus Plan.

The event aimed to highlight environmental sustainability opportunities and to engage people with the living campus. One way to do this is for staff to become sustainability or living campus champions, helping to maintain the garden, encourage biodiversity and to use the space as a teaching, learning and wellbeing resource.

Activities included a plant sale, gardening classes and competitions, a seed-swap, and electric cargo bike demonstrations. For further information on the environmental sustainability at the University, please contact es@manchester.ac.uk.

The University of Manchester’s Volunteer of the Year awards celebrate the achievements of the very best of volunteers.

Prizes were awarded in three categories – Staff, Student and Alumni Volunteer of the Year – and we’re delighted that Dr Karen Rees-Jones, a research associate in the Division of Cancer Sciences, has been named Staff Volunteer of the Year for helping regenerate Ridge Hill, an area of Stalybridge with a population of 6,000.

As Director of Ridge Hill Big Local Enterprises, Karen secured grant funding of £36,000 from the Big Local Trust and a further £2,000 from University of Manchester Intellectual Property. She also established an enterprise office within the Ridge Hill area, applied for status as a registered charity, and the company has employed its first member of staff.

The Enterprise aims to improve the appearance of the area and develop land which will house a fishing lake, outdoor classrooms, countryside areas and a pleasure boating lake.

Karen has liaised with the local council, the Environment Agency, schools and scout groups and has re-established a local fishing club to ensure that this land will be used to its full potential for the community.

These developments led to a further £25,000 award from the Big Local to underpin these activities to the end of 2018.

Anne Sherriff, from the Big Local Trust, said: “Karen is an impressive individual and has made a massive difference in the time she has been involved. She is completely committed to achieving desirable outcomes for her community and has demonstrated the ability to stick at a project until it is finished.”

With more than £60k funding, the Ridge Hill initiative is supported through 2018.

New beginnings: Mick O’Neill, Director of the Big Local Project; Karen Rees-Unwin, Director of Ridge Hill Enterprise; Jayde Mulholland, Big Local Coordinator and Rob Bishop, Community Engagement Officer.
More than 1,500 people recorded their symptoms during a six month pilot project. As a result, the new and improved 2017 version of the #BritainBreathing app allows users to track their seasonal allergies in real-time as part of a major research project to understand allergies. The data collected is then shared anonymously with scientists working to understand more about why the frequency of allergies is increasing.

Members of the public are invited to download a free app to track their seasonal allergy symptoms and to help researchers understand more about why the frequency of allergies is increasing.

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The app has been produced collaboratively by a multidisciplinary team of scientists at The University of Manchester, the Royal Society of Biology and the British Society for Immunology.

One in four people in the UK suffer from seasonal allergies. Researchers still do not understand why the number of people suffering from seasonal allergies, such as hay fever and asthma, is on the rise, but they think it may be linked to environmental changes such as pollen counts, the weather or an increase in air pollutants.

Dr Sheena Cruickshank, from the University and British Society for Immunology, said: “More people than ever are suffering from seasonal allergies but we don’t understand why this is. It could be pollution, super pollens, increased cleanliness, or a combination of factors. With the help of the public we hope to gain a better picture of the driving forces behind why seasonal allergies are on the rise.”

The project is enabled by funding of up to £2,000 for staff who are supporting socially responsible graduates by making innovative Social Responsibility enhancements to the curriculum.

A second funding call has enabled 13 members of staff to use £1,000 each to support activities relating to the University’s key priority of ‘engaging our communities’. This funding aims to support public engagement activities, enabling staff and postgraduate research students to build capacity within the Faculty. This will support the Faculty’s priority to embed community engagement as a normal, valued activity for Biology, Medicine and Health staff and postgraduate research students.

Hawys Williams, Centre for Engagement and Involvement Manager, said: “We are excited by the diversity and innovative approaches on offer and hope to be able to showcase some of the funded schemes later in the year.”

Dr David Allison leads the Social Responsibility programme in the Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health’s School of Health Sciences. He said: “This is fantastic recognition for the effort being put in to raising awareness of our flagship antibiotic resistance programme.”

Third year Medical Student, Lydia Bagg, and public health scientist, Dr Roger Harrison, have received awards from the Public Health England-supported Antibiotic Guardian awards.

Citizen scientists to track allergies with new smartphone app

Antibiotic Focus takes Top National Awards

Enabling staff to ‘Make a Difference’

Students are being challenged to think about how their subject can make a difference beyond the immediate demands of their course.
What does your role entail?
My current work contributes to exciting new research on dementia and the use of MRI to detect the very early changes that lead to this devastating condition. I develop and validate new imaging-based measurement methods, checking that these measurements are both accurate and useful for application in dementia patients in the future.

Apart from research and teaching, you have been involved in equality and diversity activities. Tell us more about your expertise in this field.
I was the Students’ Union Disability Access Secretary and ended up doing a bungee jump in my wheelchair on Oxford road to raise awareness of disability equality. That was the start of my brand of ‘disability activism’. On completing my PhD I secured a research associate position at the University, and soon realised that all of the support I had as a disabled student suddenly disappeared as a staff member, even though I was the same person with the same impairments. So, I continued my ‘brand’ of disability activism by helping to start up and lead the University’s Disabled Staff Network (DSN). Our first success was to help make the University one of the first in the country to provide dedicated support for disabled staff, alongside the support already provided to students.

I have organised the first national conference for and about disabled staff in higher education institutions from across the UK, where I launched the National Association of Disabled Staff Networks (NADSN), a super-network that connects and represents DSNs in universities and colleges.

In 2016, we held the inaugural event in honour of the late Lord Alf Morris of Manchester, a born-and-bred Manchester MP who brought in the first laws to give rights and support to disabled people and became the first ever Minister for Disabled People anywhere in the world!

In March 2017, I was invited to tell my story at an afternoon tea reception, hosted by Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, held for the Snowdon Trust at the House of Lords which supported me to do my MSc and PhD, and since then I have been one of their Ambassadors.

I have now been nominated for the National Diversity Awards in the ‘Positive Role Model – Disability’ category.

What are the key challenges you face in your equality and diversity work?
The main challenges are time and funding. All the activities that we do, including DSN meetings, involve a great deal of time and rely on us to volunteer. What we are trying to achieve can be really hard work, especially when we have our own impairments and we have day jobs that we love.

What’s the best thing about working in the Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health?
Firstly, being able to work alongside high-profile scientists and clinicians in the Faculty is absolutely thrilling. The people you meet here are extraordinarily clever and are truly making a huge difference to the lives of people all over the world. Secondly, being a member of the Faculty’s Equality and Diversity Committee!

And finally, what are your hobbies?
Between my research, teaching and disability equality work, there is little time left for hobbies. However, I love my family very much and I try to spend as much time as I can with my wife and children.

The National Diversity Award winners will be announced in September.
Making a Difference

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