

CoRE of The Matter



NATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE FOR
GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

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1. From the Directorate

Welcome to the Winter 2006 Edition of CoRE of the Matter.

NRCGD Renewal Process

In a media statement dated 22 June, the Minister for Tertiary Education, Dr Michael Cullen announced *'The success of Centres of Research Excellence (CoREs) has encouraged the government to confirm support for centres beyond 2008'...*"I'm sure all of the current CoREs will be pleased to know that a contestable selection round for funding after 2008 will be held later this year. It is extremely heartening to see that overall, the centres are achieving what they set out to do, which is why we decided on another funding round..."

In light of this news, Principal Investigators were visited by Professor Murray Mitchell and Dr Steve Hodgkinson end of June and early July with the attention focused on outputs for the first 4 years of the NRCGD and special emphasis on outputs for 2006. Projections of full science publications for 06 are 74 from 7 new projects.

Discussions also touched on student graduation, patents and other important outputs. All investigators acknowledged the importance of outputs this year to aid the renewal case early in 2007 and most will work hard to complete papers by Christmas this year.

Following the visit to Principal Investigators, the results were reported to a Board meeting held in Wellington on 19 July. The Board took the opportunity to consult with key Wellington stakeholders on renewal matters by meeting with representatives from TEC, MoE, MoRST, as well as the Minister for Education, Steve Maharey, and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Dr Michael Cullen.

Since the Board's visit to Wellington, Dr. Michael Cullen's office has released a further media statement, dated 11 August. *'Centres of Research Excellence (CoREs) will receive funding and up to two further CoREs are to be established...The government decided in June that CoREs would be supported beyond 2008. An additional \$10m in operating funding and one-off capital funding of \$20m from 2007/08 has now been allocated...'*

"There is some excellent work being carried out in the current centres and New Zealand now has collaborative scientific networks which didn't exist before the establishment of CoREs. The research CoREs are doing also helps and supports developing New Zealand industries, which in turn has a positive impact on the economy", Dr Cullen says

'Requests for proposals are likely to be called for early next month with final applications due in December. Final decisions will be made by June 2007'.

Although timelines for the renewal process are tight, planning is now developing momentum.

With best regards

From the Directorate

2. Epi Gen Launch

A launch for the new multi national research consortium Epi Gen was held at Mystery Creek, Hamilton on 15 June.

The partners are the Liggins Institute and AgREsearch in New Zealand, and the Medical Research Council and the University of Southampton, Developmental Origins of Health and Disease Group, in the United Kingdom.

The collaboration will result in new prognostics, strategies and interventions for the major metabolic and degenerative diseases in humans and to improve productivity and performance in farm animals.

3. Official Opening of Sir John Logan Campbell Classroom

The NRCGD along with the Lion Foundation, the Sir John Logan Campbell Residuary Estate and the University of Auckland contributed funding for the Sir John Logan Campbell Classroom at the Liggins Institute which was officially opened by The Rt. Hon. Helen Clark June 16.

The Liggins Institute and NRCGD Director, Professor Peter Gluckman, hopes that the project will switch young people on to science and "...give them an insight into the exciting world of research".

The classroom provides secondary school pupils with access to 'state of the art' equipment in a purpose built classroom.

There are also plans to open the Centre for adult learning purposes and community translation of current research.

Additionally, Minister for Education, Steve Maharey, will be visiting the Liggins Institute on 31 August to view the Classroom facilities and observe school pupils undertaking practical work.



Chair of the NRCGD Alison Paterson with Associate Professor Chris Williams and the Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Helen Clark at the Sir John Logan Campbell Classroom opening.

4. Symposium on Gene Expression and Chromatin Packing

A one day symposium will be held on September 30th at Massey University, Albany. The symposium is designed to develop and build links between research groups that work on Gene expression within New Zealand and Australia. Thanks to the sponsorship received, attendance at the symposium is free. The sponsors include the NRCGD, IMBS (Massey University), Maurice & Phyllis Paykel Trust, the NZMS and the trade exhibitors (Biolab, Invitrogen, Bio-strategy, TLS and Roche).

The symposium will cover different aspects of gene expression and chromatin in a range of model organisms including: Humans, fish, plants and yeast. Invited speakers include Professor Peter Gluckman (Liggins Institute) and Dr Alan Sheppard (Agresearch).

In short, it is a unique opportunity to stimulate an exchange of information on Eukaryotic Gene expression and build links within and outside New Zealand.

The website address is

<http://imbs.massey.ac.nz/nzgec.htm>.

5. Te Ohu Whenua Hui a Tau

The Te Ohu Whenua Hui a Tau Annual Conference is being held on 7 and 8 September.

This Conference, which NRCGD helps sponsor, is for Māori in the agribusiness sector. The hui is a unique opportunity for Māori to network, share ideas, and celebrate the successes that have been achieved over the year.

Each year the hui focuses on a different kaupapa. The kaupapa of this year's hui is 'Leadership'. The programme has been designed to profile Māori who are demonstrating leadership in agribusiness and explore different aspects of leadership in Māori agribusiness.

This extract was taken from the Te Ohu Whenua website. For more information visit the website www.teohuwhenua.co.nz.

6. Comings and Goings

Felicitations

Our heart felt congratulations go to Murray Mitchell and Toni Smith who were married in Melbourne on the 20th of May. Murray is of course well known to you all and Toni

is a skilled lab co-ordinator and sheep researcher working with Professor Jane Harding's group.

Congratulations

To Dr Mark Vickers who became a first time Father to Lila in early May.

To Dr Fahimeh Rahnama who is due to give birth in October.

Welcome

Kimiora Hinare (Kimi) and Peter Shang

Both Kimi and Peter are working as Technicians on the placental perfusion model to study epigenetic regulation of activities of key genes following exposure to environmental chemicals.

Before starting at the NRCGD, Kimi, completed his Masters Thesis (MHSc) at the Auckland Cancer Society Research Centre (ACSRC), working on a novel anticancer drug there under the supervision of Associate Professor Lai-Ming Ching.

Peter worked as a technologist for 3 years in a medical laboratory in China. He then worked in a University in Japan as a research technician for 2 years. After qualifying with a BMLS from the Auckland University of Technology, Peter then took up his position at the Liggins Institute.

Kimi says he is "Thoroughly enjoying the role and the learning so far".

Erin Daly

Erin will be joining Dr Ian Morison's team (University of Otago) in September as a Research Technician. Erin's work will underpin a new collaboration between Ian's Genomic research team and Professor Mike Dragunow's neurobiology group (University of Auckland) researching neurodegenerative disease in adults. Their work is funded as a Pilot Project - "Environmentally-modulated epigenetic modification: an Alzheimer disease model".

Erin comes originally from the USA with a background in cancer research.

Yuliana Yosaatmadja

Yuliana is our new Classroom Co-ordinator/Technician for the Sir John Logan Campbell classroom.

Before joining the Liggins Institute, Yuliana completed her MSc in Biochemistry at Massey University, Palmerston North.

Yuliana's role includes setting up the lab, helping to design the module and experiments for the students, conducting the experiments, and teaching.

Visiting Professor – Leslie Myatt

We were fortunate to have Leslie Myatt, an internationally recognised expert in placental physiology, visit us from the College of Medicine, University of Cincinnati, in early August.

During Leslie's visit his expertise was utilised in advising Technicians Kimiora Henare and Peter Shang with their work in placental perfusion. He also gave two presentations, one to the Placental Group at the Liggins and the other to Liggins academic staff titled "Functional consequences of oxidative and nitrate stress in the placenta".

Nichola Thompson – Travel Award

Nichola is the first New Zealand recipient of the Australasian Women in Endocrinology NovoNordisk New

Investigator Travel Award for her research on “Developmental Induction of Enhanced Insulin Action”. The travel grant supported Nichola’s attendance of the US Endocrine Society Meeting in Boston, June 24-27.

Nichola was also invited to give a presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Endocrine Society of Australia on 20 to 23 August, with the title “Preference between exercise and eating is influenced by prenatal nutrition and obesity development is prevented by providing an opportunity to exercise”.

Executive Committee Restructure

The Executive Committee approved a proposal to restructure into an Executive Management Group (EMG) and a Planning Committee. The proposal was endorsed by the Board at its February meeting.

The new EMG is made up of the following Representatives:

Otago and Christchurch Sites	–	Ian Morison
Ag Research Site	–	Jim Peterson
Massey Site	–	Hugh Blair
Auckland Site	–	Mike Dragnow
Liggins Site	–	Wayne Cutfield
Representatives of Trainees	–	Sarah Hopkins

New student representative, Sarah Hopkins, is completing a PhD with Wayne Cutfield on exercise and pregnancy.

The first EMG meeting was held by teleconference on 12 July.

Open Discussion with Sir Paul Nurse

One of the world’s most significant scientists, Sir Paul Nurse, visited the Liggins Institute in early August. Sir Paul is the President of the Rockefeller University of New York, formerly Director General of Cancer Research UK, and he won the Nobel Prize in 2001 for his work on the cell division cycle – the process that turns a single cell into an adult human but can also change a healthy cell into a cancerous tumour.

During his visit, Sir Paul held an open address for Students and Postdocs, giving them the opportunity to

discuss prospects within the industry and learn more about his area of expertise.

7. Upcoming Events

4th September

Science Planning Day for Investigators
(Barrycourt Suites-Hotel, Parnell, Auckland)

7th and 8th September

Te Ohu Whenua Hui a Tau
(Massey University, Palmerston North)

20th September

Executive Management Group Meeting
(Liggins Institute & by Teleconference)

28th to 29th September

Science Retreat for Investigators
(Venue TBA)

29th September

Board of Governance Meeting
(Liggins Institute & by Teleconference)

30th September

Symposium on Gene Expression and Chromatin Packing
(Massey University, Albany)

15th November

Executive Management Group Meeting
(Liggins Institute & by Teleconference)

15th November

Board of Governance Meeting
(Liggins Institute & by Teleconference)

8. Contacts

Contributions to the next Newsletter are welcome and should be sent to Rowena Knight-Brown (r.knight-brown@auckland.ac.nz). If you would like to subscribe to this newsletter or know of someone else who may want to receive a copy please contact r.knight-brown@auckland.ac.nz.