

The HEFCE / NHS Clinical

This article forms part of a collection of invited articles which will be collated and published as a 'Research Handbook in Dermatology'. Dr Mike Arden-Jones, Dr Clive Archer, Dr Graham Ogg.

The aim of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) / NHS Clinical Senior Lectureship Awards is to develop a core of senior clinical academics who not only carry out research but also manage a clinical caseload, play a key role in medical student teaching and contribute to leadership of the profession. The awards are supported by the UK Clinical Research Collaboration (UKCRC) – a partnership which brings together the major UK research funding bodies (Wellcome Trust, Medical Research Council, and Cancer Research UK); academia, the NHS, regulatory bodies, the bioscience, healthcare and pharmaceutical industries, and patients.

Dermatology

Since 2006/7 the HEFCE scheme has offered funding of £50,000 per annum over five years towards the salary costs of up to 160 posts through four annual rounds of awards. The host NHS Trust makes up the balance of the salary and if the candidate has achieved agreed milestones over the term of the award their salary is then taken on by the host University. The fifth and final round of the scheme will conclude later this year.

I was fortunate in securing one of the 40 awards made in round three and this was the first such Clinical Senior Lectureship awarded to dermatology. During round four, Richard Warren, who was also nominated by The University of Manchester in partnership with Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust was awarded the second Clinical Senior Lectureship in dermatology.

The University of Manchester is one of only six Universities to have established a track-record of success in each round of funding of the Clinical Senior Lectureship awards. The other Universities are: University College London, Imperial

College London, King's College London, Cambridge University and the University of Newcastle.

Nomination and Eligibility

Candidates are nominated jointly by the partnership of a University and NHS Trust. Individuals are expected to have: the Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT); a higher degree and; an established personal research portfolio including evidence of high quality publications and independent grant acquisition.

Eligible Universities are those with medical schools which currently receive quality-related (QR) funding from HEFCE for research in clinical medicine or dentistry i.e. those having made at least one submission to the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise.

The selection process

The Clinical Senior Lectureships are awarded following a three-stage national selection process.

Stage 1

In the first instance suitable applicants are identified and nominated jointly by a University and an NHS Trust.

Stage 2

In the second phase of the selection process, all nominations are scored by a referee panel. These assessments are then used in the third phase of the process to aid the selection panel in their recommendation of candidates to the funders.

Stage 3

During the third and final stage an expert panel will assess nominations against a common set of criteria including:

- a. Evidence that the individual has an excellent track record of clinical and academic activities (research and teaching).



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- b. Evidence that the appointment is a good fit with the clinical and academic plans and priorities of the Trust and University, and will build upon established strengths.
- c. Evidence that the appointment will provide a reasonable balance of clinical work, research and teaching activity.

Funding and employment

The senior lectureship awards are jointly funded by HEFCE and the participating local NHS Trusts. The award holders usually receive a substantive employment contract with a University and an honorary employment contract with one or more NHS partners. The employer issuing the substantive employment contract acts as the paymaster for the award holder's salary and related costs. The appointments are usually 50% clinical and 50% academic.

As outlined in the Follett Review Report¹, the key principle for NHS and University partnerships involved in the employment of staff who are engaged in both research and the delivery of patient care is 'joint working to integrate separate responsibilities'. This includes a jointly agreed annual appraisal and performance review process based on that for NHS

Senior Lectureship Awards

Consultants, conducted by both the University and the NHS partner.

A personal note

Having received a Clinical Senior Lectureship award in September 2008 (split 50% academic: 50% clinical) I have had the opportunity to focus my clinical academic career on taking forward research questions that arise from direct patient care, particularly in the field of psoriasis. The management of chronic disease, of which psoriasis is the commonest inflammatory disease in the UK, is a key point of current health strategy. I am one of the three Consultant Dermatologists who lead the Manchester Psoriasis Service which was established in 1994 by Professor Chris Griffiths and Dr Robert Chalmers as a multidisciplinary clinic for patients with severe psoriasis. Dr Richard Warren is due to join the Consultant team in the near future.

One aspect of my current research work is centered around the emerging evidence that cardiovascular disease is an important co-morbidity of psoriasis. I have become more actively involved with medical undergraduate teaching and mentoring. Since my appointment I have also been deputy director of the Research Masters (MRes) in Medical Sciences course at The University of Manchester - an intercalated Masters programme for medical students positioned between 4th and 5th year – and I look forward to directing the MRes programme from September 2010.

Conclusion

A career in clinical academic medicine is an opportunity to have an impact on the lives of many through clinical practice coupled with research and education. Recent years have seen an unprecedented explosion in the

support for clinical and basic science research in the UK together with the establishment of a clear training pathway for the future leaders in clinical academic medicine. There has never been a more exciting time to consider a career in clinical academic dermatology and I commend it to you.

¹A Review of Appraisal, Disciplinary and Reporting Arrangements for Senior NHS and University Staff with Academic and Clinical Duties. A report to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, by Professor Sir Brian Follett and Michael Paulson-Ellis September 2001

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