Studying ageing’s effect on the brain

Research by biologists at HYMS and the University of York has revealed important new information about the way the brain is affected by age.

Working with scientists at the Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry in Plymouth, they have studied responses to stress in synapses – neuronal connections.

The researchers discovered that under stressful conditions, such as neurodegeneration, resulting high energy forms of damaging oxygen cause synapses to grow excessively, potentially contributing to dysfunction.

Such stresses occur during neurodegenerative disease such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s Disease.

The research, which was funded by the Medical Research Council and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, is published in the latest issue of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Laboratory modelling was carried out using Drosophila, but similar pathways are present in humans. The scientists studied the responses using a model of lysosomal storage disease, an inherited incurable childhood neurodegeneration where enlarged synapses have been observed, but the role that growth has in disease progression and brain function is not yet clear.

Co-author Dr Sean Sweeney, of the Department of Biology at the University of York, said: “The findings have strong implications for neuronal function as brains age, and will add significantly to our understanding of neurodegenerative disease such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s disease.”

Infection Matters

Registration is now open for this year’s ‘Infection Matters’ symposium on 25 November. Co-hosted by HYMS and Hull and East Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust, the symposium will cover a broad range of infection topics suitable for healthcare professionals who have a specific interest in infection. Attendance is free, including lunch and refreshments, and to register you should contact lisaf.hartley@hey.nhs.uk. Follow the link to see a provisional programme.

Inaugural lecture

Dean of HYMS Tony Kendrick will give his inaugural lecture at the University of Hull on Monday 7 November. See back page for details.

HYMS is delighted to confirm that its Postgraduate Certificate in Medical Education programme has been formally accredited by the Higher Education Academy for a period of five years.

This provides national recognition of the programme’s commitment to professionalism in learning and teaching in medical education and demonstrates that its practice is aligned with the UK Professional Standards Framework. It also means that all graduates of the HYMS PGCME are eligible to become Fellows of the Higher Education Academy.

Contact alison.pettigrew@hyms.ac.uk for further information about the PGCME.
**Calendar of events**

For full details of all these events, plus many more lectures, seminars, conferences and social events, visit [www.hyms.ac.uk/events](http://www.hyms.ac.uk/events)

**November**

7
Inaugural lecture
**Down at the doctor’s**
Prof Tony Kendrick,
Dean of HYMS
Middleton Hall, University of Hull

21
Seminar
**Autophagy and neurodegeneration**
Biology Lecture Theatre (K018), University of York

25
Symposium
**Infection Matters 2011**
Lecture Theatre, East Riding Medical Education Centre,
Hull Royal Infirmary

**December**

5
Seminar
**Cell signalling and sex in mice and humans**
Dr Andy Greenfield
Biology Lecture Theatre (K018), University of York

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**SSCs at HYMS**

Student-Selected Components (SSCs) are a particular feature of the curriculum at HYMS and SSC Lead Dr Michael Hardey reports below on how he would like to highlight their contribution to the life of the medical school:

“Common to all medical schools but with many different labels, SSCs promote ‘the intellectual development of students through exploring in depth a subject of their choice’ (Tomorrow’s Doctors (2009) pp.50: 93). HYMS students in Years 1 and 2 choose SSCs usually based at the universities while Phase II SSCs, which are offered in subsequent years, are based in hospitals and clinics.

Many different topics are covered in our current range of SSCs. Students can explore topics from economics to sign language. Tutors are often HYMS academic and research staff who have an opportunity to bring cutting-edge theory and research to the students. However, anyone with a suitable academic background and specialist knowledge can offer a SSC and we have many tutors amongst academics and researchers at both universities. In addition, we have tutors working in charities and the commercial sector. SSCs reflect something of the ideal university relationships in that they provide a platform for an authority in a specialist subject area to teach and share their knowledge with a small group (typically under 15) of highly committed and interested students.

In future issues of the HYMS sheet we hope to highlight the work of particular SSCs. If you would like to offer your own SSC, please contact Richard Nicholson richard.nicholson@hyms.ac.uk (Programme Officer).”

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**New drugs guidance**

A NEW decision framework to support NICE recommendations on the use of new drugs and devices in the NHS has been published by the Centre for Health Economics at the University of York.

**Care inequalities?**

INCREASED competition in the NHS has not harmed deprived neighbourhoods, according to new research from the Centre for Health Economics, University of York.

**Call for papers**

THE University of Hull’s Annual Learning and Teaching Conference will take place on Wednesday 11 January 2012.

**Public consultation**

ON 12 September 2011 Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust formally started its 12-week public consultation around plans to become a foundation trust in 2012.

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**Research publications**

RECENT publications by HYMS staff include:


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**Staff news**

Welcome to...
Alice Kasule, Medical School Technician, based in York;
Claire Acey, PA to Professor Ian Chetter, based at Hull Royal Infirmary.

New appointment...
Dr David Pearson, currently Director of Primary Care Education at Leeds University Medical School, will take over as Deputy Dean (Education) in the New Year.

If you have any contributions for this internal bulletin, please send them to val.parker@hyms.ac.uk

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Stories with the mouse symbol have more information in the news section of the HYMS website, where you will also find breaking news, updates and images. [www.hyms.ac.uk/news](http://www.hyms.ac.uk/news)