Bright minds

HYMS students win national award
Goodbye and thank you

Welcome to the third issue of Pioneer, the magazine of the Hull York Medical School.

Sadly, this will be the last time I write for this magazine as I will shortly be leaving to take up the position of Executive Pro Vice-Chancellor for Health and Life Sciences at the University of Liverpool.

While I am obviously excited about my new role, I am sad to be leaving the vibrant and friendly community that is HYMS. I have really enjoyed my time here; it is never dull, often challenging, and always rewarding. Indeed it has been a privilege to have served as Dean and to have taken HYMS forward a further step in its development.

I will leave HYMS in the capable hands of Professor Ian Watt on an interim basis until a new Dean is recruited. Ian, who has long-standing experience as an academic and in the NHS and was involved in the founding of HYMS, currently works partly for the Department of Health Sciences at the University of York, partly for HYMS and partly as a GP in North Yorkshire.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome David Blaney who has taken over as the new Undergraduate Dean at HYMS, replacing Professor John Cookson who retires in August.

I am sure David will prove a worthy successor to John and I wish him well in his endeavours.

HYMS is now about to embark on the next stage of its development. I am sure exciting times are ahead for such an enthusiastic, young medical school.

I wish it and all the staff that work for it, whether part or full time, in the universities or out in the hospitals, all the very best for the future and sincerely thank them for all the help and support they have given to me during my stay.

With warmest regards,
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Taking up the reins
David Blaney is not one of the world’s couch potatoes. He climbs mountains to relax and thought nothing of working 24 hours a day to cover for absent colleagues as a GP. Now he’s applying that same zeal to his new role as Undergraduate Dean at HYMS.

“I’d always been attracted to the idea of running an undergraduate medical school – one that was different, that was flexible, that was new, dynamic, innovative,” he said. “HYMS has all that. It’s got a new curriculum and a large community base linked to the NHS. I was attracted to the idea of taking it forward and developing it.”

Prof Blaney, who joined HYMS towards the end of last year in a part-time capacity before taking up the role full time in 2010, paid tribute to his predecessor. “John Cookson set it up and established it very well. The next stage is moving from that to consolidate, innovate and develop it.”

HYMS has “a very good reputation among the student body and among the educators for the quality of its delivery.

“The next two or three years will be quite critical for the school – whether it can retain its identity which will be essential to its growth and development.”

Seven years after opening, HYMS is at the right time in its cycle “for a different type of leadership and a different type of culture to develop,” he said. “There will be some challenges and plenty of opportunities. Hopefully people will be able to move with that flow and HYMS will keep developing.”

He has definite plans for the school. “Tomorrow’s Doctors”, guidelines set down by the GMC about the knowledge, skills and behaviours that medical students learn at UK medical schools, has recently been reviewed, which means we’ll have to look at the curriculum and assessment process. My style will be to build up a strong
external faculty of people who would be empowered to deliver it.

“The educational environment is the critical thing. In other words, putting students into the right environment so they can learn. Again that’s going to involve working with colleagues in hospital and in general practice, in addition to colleagues at the university.”

He will be based "where the work is", travelling between the Hull and York campuses as required. The school’s geographic spread offers a special opportunity for students, Prof Blaney believes.

“The area has different cultures and if you’re a student, learning context is quite important. Having the ability to experience life in Scarborough or Grimsby or York, or a GP practice in Pickering or central Hull, is really quite important because different people learn the same things in different ways, they need different exposures.”

Having worked in a variety of health and academic environments, Prof Blaney is in a good position to judge. He studied medicine at Edinburgh University, anticipating a career in hospitals. “I took a year out to do some general practice and never really went back after that,” he explained.

Why? “Because of what it offered: working in an unrestricted environment – you had much more flexibility and freedom within general practice; and there was much less of a hierarchy – you were working independently and with a small group of people.”

In 1989 he moved to a small practice in Killin in the Scottish Highlands, where he remained until 1999. “It had lots of challenges. One was the sense of isolation because you were a long way from hospital and a long way from help. You dealt with everything from major trauma caused by a road traffic accident to mountain rescue work, right the way through to doing home deliveries.

“It was the full spectrum of medical care. We were working 96 hours a week and when my partner or I was on holiday we’d cross cover each other so you were working continuous 24-hour days.”

But there were great benefits. “You were very much an embedded member of the community, you were respected for what you did, and you got tremendous feedback from patients and other staff. It was a very rewarding post.”

The job also started Prof Blaney thinking about the education of doctors. “We got a lot of stories from patients about what happened to them in hospital – what doctors did and what doctors said. My concerns about that led me to develop an interest in medical education because I became quite concerned at the way doctors were being trained, both undergraduates and post-graduates.

“I could see the impact that things such as poor inter-personal skills, poor communication, poor clinical knowledge was having on people’s wellbeing.”

While a GP in Killin, he took up a part-time lecturership at the University of Dundee and completed a Masters in Medical Education. Returning to Edinburgh in 1999 as Director of Postgraduate GP Education and Associate Postgraduate Dean, he subsequently completed a Doctorate in Education at Stirling and developed Edinburgh’s e-MSc in medical education.

This enabled him to put into practice his ideas to improve the training of doctors, and a survey found it to be the best GP training programme in the country.

After ten years in post-graduate training he began to look for something new. “There were elements of what was happening in post-graduate medical education I had difficulties with, specifically the move away from education into training and the introduction of competency-based training.

“It was becoming much more regimented. The research I and others had done would suggest that’s probably not the way we should be going.”

He was attracted to the strong sense of education rather than training still prevalent at undergraduate level.

That brought him to Hull and York. His wife Julie, a nurse, is relocating with him, while their three children are all settled into high-flying careers: Laura, 29, is a marine biologist; Camilla, 28, is a physiotherapist and Gordon, 22, is an electronic engineer.

When he’s not working, Prof Blaney keeps very active, climbing mountains, skiing, cycling and learning the violin. And since 2007 he’s been Chief Executive Officer of the Association for the Study of Medical Education.

He clearly relishes his new role. “I would like to get HYMS to the point where it’s seen by staff as a really enjoyable place to work, and by students as the medical school which gives them the best experience of any in the UK. It’s really important they enter the profession feeling positive about the experience they’ve had.”

A study conducted by Dr Kate Pickett (HYMS and the University of York) suggests that smoking during pregnancy significantly increases the risk of behavioural problems in the child.

The finding is based on a study following the early years of around 13,000 children.
The Director of the Medical Research Council Clinical Trials Unit, Professor Janet Darbyshire, gave a talk entitled “Challenges to clinical trials today” as part of the Academy of Medical Sciences Visiting Fellow Lecture Scheme at the University of York. Prof Darbyshire has been involved in the co-ordination of clinical trials since she joined the MRC following clinical training in respiratory medicine, working initially in tuberculosis and subsequently in HIV infection.

HYMS Professor Charles Lacey is in charge of a clinical trials programme which has won a large proportion of a €12 million grant awarded by the European Commission. The grant is called Combination Highly Active Antiretroviral Microbicides (CHAARM) and the aim is to produce new potent microbicides that will block HIV transmission. Phase 1 trials of new combination topical anti-HIV products will take place in York.

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The results of the study suggest that both the NICE recommendation and widespread current practice should be reviewed.

More than one in 10 women suffer from postnatal depression six weeks after giving birth, yet fewer than half of cases are detected in routine clinical practice. Screening strategies using brief depression questionnaires have been advocated but have attracted substantial controversy.

Furthermore, guidelines issued by NICE in 2007 recommend the use of specific questions to identify possible postnatal depression, but the effectiveness and value for money of this strategy is uncertain.

The research was led by HYMS Professor of Psychological Medicine and Health Services Research Simon Gilbody (pictured), and Dr Catherine Hewitt, of the Department of Health Sciences, together with leading health economists Mike Paulden and Stephen Palmer, of CHE. For further details, log on to www.hyms.ac.uk/about/news.

Research degrees at HYMS, including PhDs, MSc by thesis and MDs, were officially launched in October 2009.

Six months on, the HYMS Postgraduate Centre is responsible for some 28 research students, spread over York and Hull.

Projects range from the study of microbicides that may block HIV transmission to how monkey faces change in response to the stresses and strains of their diets.

The students come from a wide range of academic backgrounds, including medicine, biomolecular science and zoology.

There is an international flavour to the research student body, with students from Myanmar, Portugal, Pakistan, Hungary and several other countries including the UK. The Postgraduate Centre is looking forward to welcoming more new research students in the future, including Clinical Academic Fellows from the HYMS region.

Some people believe that they suffer adverse reactions when they consume the artificial sweetener aspartame. HYMS is looking for these people to take part in an independent study funded by the Food Standards Agency.

The national study will be carried out by Professor Stephen Atkin, as a collaboration between the University of Hull, the Hull York Medical School and Hull and East Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust.

If you are interested in taking part, please telephone 01482 675372 or 01482 675387 from 9am to 5pm weekdays.
Ian says farewell to HYMS

Professor Ian Greer will be leaving his post as Dean of HYMS this summer to become Executive Pro Vice-Chancellor for Health and Life Sciences at the University of Liverpool.

Ian joined HYMS in January 2007, during which time he has overseen the transition of the medical school from a project-based structure to a more mature and sustainable organisation comprising an Undergraduate School, a Postgraduate Centre and, most recently, a range of academic units with responsibility for delivering teaching and research to enable the next phase of development.

In 2008, the first doctors graduated under Ian’s leadership, and HYMS has continued to set the highest standards of quality and innovation in its undergraduate programme. The School has continued to perform strongly in national league tables and its popularity with applicants to medical school has increased each year, as has the standard of new entrants. In particular, Ian has sought to encourage students to intercalate a year of additional academic work into their medical training and Ian’s tenure at HYMS has seen a five-fold increase in the number of HYMS students choosing to exercise this option.

With a growing population of HYMS graduates in the region, Ian has been particularly keen to develop postgraduate programmes at HYMS. A suite of postgraduate qualifications, jointly awarded by the University of Hull and the University of York, is now available and the first students have recently enrolled. In addition, a portfolio of professional short courses...
is under development to meet the needs of doctors in the HYMS region for continuing professional development. The first courses to be implemented have received extremely enthusiastic reviews from those who attended.

Under Ian’s leadership, HYMS has continued to develop its research activity and significant success has been achieved in a range of areas across the spectrum of health, medical, biomedical and human science research. The success of these efforts is evident in the recent research assessment exercise, in which HYMS staff were prominent contributors to excellent performances in a range of subjects in both Hull and York. These successes will start to establish a strong research profile to match its enviable reputation for quality in undergraduate education.

In addition, Ian has continued to foster collegial and productive links with the regional NHS, in teaching and research. This relationship has enabled HYMS to be well placed to take advantage of the new initiatives in the NHS, particularly in respect of research and development.

Ian said: “I am sad to be leaving the vibrant and friendly community that is HYMS. I have really enjoyed my time here. Indeed it has been a privilege to have served as Dean and to have taken HYMS forward a further step in its development.

“I am grateful for the support and commitment my colleagues have shown during my time at HYMS. I would like to wish HYMS much continued and well deserved success for the future. I have every confidence it will continue to perform to the very highest standards.”
There's a lot more to life than study. And HYMS student societies provide some welcome relief

Anyone who took part in last term’s Freshers Week, or got all glammed up for the Winter Ball, will be thankful for all the hard work put into organising them by MedSoc and its affiliated societies.

Umbrella society

MedSoc is the umbrella society at HYMS. As such, it is the hub of the social wheel. “It’s an umbrella society through which all the other societies are ratified,” explained David Lyness, President of MedSoc.

Despite being a young medical school, HYMS has a burgeoning number of student societies. They include the GPs’ Society and the Wilderness Medical Society, which held a Halloween event last October where members hired a barn and camped in the wild.

Two new groups have launched this year: the Psychology Society and the Emergency Medicine Society.

Many organise lectures for members, but the social aspect is crucial too, says David. “It’s important to let off steam. Students need to get a good balance between work and leisure time.

“Medicine can become all-consuming. Students can live and breathe medicine, which isn’t ideal.

“It’s healthy to socialise. We have a very large mandate within HYMS to provide a social structure, and that’s what we do.”

Freshers Supper

Most undergraduates are introduced to this side of life during Freshers Week. This year’s was the biggest yet, organised by MedSoc and offering seven days of events to welcome students to HYMS. This included a cross-campus Freshers Supper, which begins the process of bringing York and Hull students together.

Also attending the week were representatives from the British Medical Association, the Women’s Medical Federation and Médecins Sans Frontières.

MedSoc and its affiliates work hard to ensure there’s a programme of events throughout the year. Many are non-alcoholic events to maximise their inclusivity. In the spring term alone, students can take part in paintballing, an activities day and a mini-Olympics.

After the success of the Winter Ball, held at the Country Park Inn,

FAMILLeY awards

Once again HYMS students showed off their communication skills in the annual competition for the FAMILLeY award at the Middleton Hall, University of Hull.

Several hundred students, guests, members of the public and academic clinicians from Hull, York, Sheffield and Leeds were treated to a series of entertaining presentations varying from ‘Older first-time mums: public health epidemic or fact of modern life?’ to ‘Preventing infertility for women with cancer’.

The eventual winner, Adam Jakes, received a certificate and a cheque for £1,000, for his presentation, ‘Treating Chlamydia: Are things improving?’.

This event, organised by the charity FAMILLeY (Female And Maternity Issues Locally in East Yorkshire), is now in its 4th consecutive year.
Hessle, another black tie and ballgown event marks the end of the school year – the Summer Ball.

Everything is timed to fit in well with academic commitments. “We don’t hold things which conflict with studies,” said David.

“Our events are quite well attended because we know what’s expected.”

Successful society

As President of MedSoc, David attended the Medical Society Conference at Bristol Medical School, which included a number of events to help delegates “run a more successful society”.

And MedSoc hosts an annual meeting. Here the £1,000 grant from HYMS is allocated to the various societies, and members can talk through any matters arising.

The HYMS leadership team also consults MedSoc on many proposals, and so it acts as another student voice in the running of the school.

As a result, MedSoc is thriving. “It’s the most active its ever been,” David said. “We’ve the most members we’ve ever had and the most active committee in both Hull and York.

If you would like to learn more about MedSoc or other student societies, email David at david.lyness@hyms.ac.uk.

Unique course

Seven HYMS students were given a unique course in first aid from Scarborough RNLI.

The students, who were on a placement in Scarborough, completed a series of practical activities over the three-week programme as they learned about the work of the Scarborough lifeboat crew.

GP Pete Billingsley, who is the lifeboat doctor and co-ordinated the course, explained that as well as giving the students a practical taste of his work, he wanted to show them a side to Scarborough they don’t often see.

“As well as teaching them seamanship, how we deal with major traumas and completing casualty simulation exercises, I wanted them to learn about the community,” he said.

“We had them out on the lifeboat at night with a full moon and if you’re not moved by the view from the sea of the castle, then you won’t be moved by anything. It’s these things that make people fall in love with the place and might make them consider using their medical skills in the area in the future.”
National award for student project

‘Minds in Motion’, a community project set up by HYMS students to help support local people with dementia and their carers, won a prestigious Citizenship and volunteering prize at the Guardian Public Service Awards 2009.

The awards ceremony, which took place in London, was attended by HYMS students Anna Brassington, Katie Brice, Stephanie Boardman, Sharik Mirza and Naomi Chinn representing Minds in Motion, and by Professor Ian Greer and PBL Director Dr Janine Henderson.

Minds in Motion was set up after HYMS students identified a gap in organised activities for patients with dementia.

“Dementia just isn’t seen as a sexy area - everybody wants to put their time into cancer or working with children,” said the scheme’s former co-ordinator, Katie Brice.

The number of HYMS students involved in the project is swelled by volunteers from a variety of faculties.

“Because we use a lot of entertainment, the music students got involved. Then the psychology ones got interested because they were looking for clinical placements,” said Katie.

The students have set up a monthly drop-in Harmony Cafe in York for people with dementia and their carers that attracts around 30 visitors. But they also run 12 activity sessions at three NHS community units in York, which each provide day and in-patient services for between 50 and 80 elderly patients with dementia or psychiatric illness. Each session lasts a couple of hours and includes activities like furniture renovation, singing, reminiscence and music.

While the community units have their own activity programmes, the student-run events offer additional opportunities for patients, according to Claire MacDiarmid, Meadowfields unit manager.

“People like to see something different. It makes them feel more included. That’s what the students do - they enable them to engage but the students also benefit from the experience.”
6 - 7 May
Phenomenology and the Vulnerable Body: the Experience of Illness
at the University of Hull, Staff House
This workshop brings together an interdisciplinary set of speakers to look at the experience of bodily vulnerability and consider its implications for the understanding of embodiment and selfhood. M.Inahara@hull.ac.uk

21 May
York Medical Society Annual General Meeting
Medical Society Rooms, 23 Stonegate, York, 7.30pm.

19 June
Class of 2010 Graduation Ball
Carlton Towers
Tickets will be priced at £60 and will go on sale to students and staff in early April. There are a limited number of rooms available at Carlton Towers so please call and book one asap if you would like to stay the night (Tel: 01405 861666). Coaches will be put on from Hull and York to take people to and from the event.

13 July
Graduation ceremony
City Hall, Hull, 9.30am
HYMS Class of 2010 celebrate their graduation.
emma.edmunds@hyms.ac.uk
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Acupuncture on the brain

Important new research about the effects of acupuncture on the brain may provide an understanding of the complex mechanisms of acupuncture and could lead to a wider acceptability of the treatment.

The study, by researchers at the Hull York Medical School and the University of York published in Brain Research, indicates that acupuncture has a significant effect on specific neural structures.

When a patient receives acupuncture treatment, a sensation called deqi can be obtained; scientific analysis shows that this deactivates areas within the brain that are associated with the processing of pain.

Dr Hugh MacPherson, of the Complementary Medicine Research Group in the University’s Department of Health Sciences, says: “These results provide objective scientific evidence that acupuncture has specific effects within the brain which hopefully will lead to a better understanding of how acupuncture works.”

Neuroscientist Dr Aziz Asghar, of HYMS and the York Neuroimaging Centre, adds: “The results are fascinating. Whether such brain deactivations constitute a mechanism which underlies or contributes to the therapeutic effect of acupuncture is an intriguing possibility which requires further research.”

The York team believes that the new research could help to clear the way for acupuncture to be more broadly accepted as a treatment option on the NHS for a number of medical conditions. For further details, log on to: www.hyms.ac.uk/about/news

Patients across the HYMS region should soon receive better delivery and distribution of care, thanks to a £3m national funding award. The Yorkshire and Humber Health Innovation and Education Cluster has been given the money to promote innovation in the dissemination of best evidence and the adoption of best practice by health care providers. The cluster is the largest of 17 new, nationally-funded initiatives and combines the expertise of the medical schools, universities and NHS across the region.

The national PharmAware event held at York in November was a great success. Students and doctors attended from all over the UK and Northern Ireland. Lectures were provided by HYMS tutors, Prof Alan Maynard, Prof Charles Lacey and Dr Steven Oliver. Anybody interested in becoming involved can find out more at pharmaware.co.uk.

Former student Jemma Egan has had an article printed in the BMJ entitled “The Way I see it - Ladies of the Night”.

Our new website is now up and running. The new site is now displayed whenever anyone visits the HYMS main web address: www.hyms.ac.uk

The launch of the Humber Obesity, Nutrition, Education and Innovation project took place in March at the University of Hull.
The second cohort of HYMS students graduated at the University of York in July 2009

The Honorary Graduand was Professor Sir Alex Markham, a leading scientist and physician who, for over 30 years, has made significant contributions to medical science in various fields.

His leadership and expertise in international cancer research has influenced advancements in public health both in the UK and wider afield.

After the ceremony a champagne and canapé reception was held at the Roger Kirk Centre.

The Founding Dean’s Award presented to the student with the best academic performance over five years of study on the MB BS programme was presented by Senior Lecturer in Anatomy Menos Lagopoulos to student Brendon Parmar.

Brendon was also awarded the Alderson Medal for Clinical Medicine for the best performance in clinical assessments in Phases II and III of the HYMS MB BS Programme by Undergraduate Dean John Cookson.

Finally, the Bob Morton prize awarded to the student with the best performance in Student-Selected Components relating to the Humanities, was presented by Phase II SSC Project Manager and Electives Facilitator Gwen Irving to HYMS student Amy Atkin.

The Dean of HYMS, Professor Ian Greer, congratulated all the students and wished them well in their future careers.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England is providing more than £3 million for a new building to house the Centre for Immunology and Infection, a joint research centre created by HYMS and the Department of Biology at the University of York.

The Wolfson Foundation is supporting the project with £1 million and the Holbeck Charitable Trust is donating £1.04 million for staff and equipment.

The building will provide improved facilities for the Centre to pursue research into infectious diseases, translate scientific discoveries into new treatments and conduct clinical trials. Work is expected to be completed by June 2010.
The University of Hull’s student union won a prestigious national award for its services and activities. The union was one of only two in the country to be given a silver award by the Students’ Union Evaluation Initiative at a special awards ceremony at the House of Commons.

The University of York will be holding an alumni reunion weekend on 8-9 May 2010 – email alumni@hyms.ac.uk for more information.

HYMS was among 12 departments of the University of York which were ranked in the top ten in their subject areas for teaching in the 2009 National Student Survey. The results follow the university’s strong performance in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise which rated York 8th out of 159 UK higher education institutions for research excellence. The University of Hull was ranked 44th.

A new, free legal advice service has been officially opened at the University of Hull. Staffed by law students, the Legal Advice Centre will offer guidance to the public on a range of issues including welfare and benefits, housing, debt advice and consumer rights. It will open to the public for the first time on 24 February, with drop-in sessions every Wednesday between 1pm and 5pm.

Leading Hull entrepreneur Mr Assem Allam, who is a supporter and benefactor of the University of Hull, has donated funds of £1.5m to the University to establish a new bio-sciences research centre - the Allam Institute.

The Berrick Saul Building at the University of York was officially opened in December 2009 by the University’s Chancellor, Greg Dyke. The building was named after former Vice-Chancellor, Berrick Saul, who was present at the event.

► Student is latest addition to Council of Anatomical Society

HYMS PhD student Jason Dunn has been elected to the Council of the Anatomical Society of Great Britain and Ireland.

In an election on 7 January, Jason was voted as an Ordinary Member onto the council of this prestigious society, joining two other HYMS members, Professor Jonathan Bennett and Dr Sam Cobb.

The Society was founded in 1887 and its principal object is the promotion, development and advancement of anatomical and related sciences, which it does through organising meetings, publishing the acclaimed Journal of Anatomy and Aging Cell, as well as awarding grants and prizes. It acts as a forum for research and education in the anatomical sciences, including topographical anatomy, histology, cell biology, embryology, neuroanatomy, pathological anatomy, and other related topics.

For his PhD, Jason is looking at the craniofacial anatomy of Old World monkeys and relating it to biomechanical function and ecological factors. His research is funded by the Anatomical Society. This makes him one of only around a dozen people in Great Britain and Ireland to be in receipt of such funding.

Jason’s responsibilities as a council member include organising career or skill development events for students at the society’s meetings. In the past, such events have seen speakers such as Professor Gillian Morris-Kay, editor of the Journal of Anatomy, give a talk on that subject. Jason is planning the next event which will take place in July this year.

► New gowns for Postgraduates

Ede & Ravenscroft, official robe makers for the universities of both Hull and York, are busy designing new academic gowns for HYMS postgraduate students. The HYMS colours feature strongly in the new gowns, which incorporate the designs of both universities. HYMS looks forward to seeing them being donned by our students at future degree congregations.

For more information on postgraduate training options being developed at HYMS, email postgraduate@hyms.ac.uk or visit our website.
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