Consummate clinician
HYMS says goodbye to John Cookson
I am delighted to be introducing this fourth issue of Pioneer, the magazine of the Hull York Medical School.

I became Dean in September 2010 at a very exciting point in the school’s development. We already have a deserved reputation as an international leader in undergraduate teaching. Our innovative curriculum emphasises modern teaching methods, a solid grounding in the sciences and regular clinical experience. We’re now increasing the opportunities we offer to our students – especially in the area of intercalated degrees.

I wanted to work for HYMS because it already has an excellent reputation for its undergraduate curriculum, including its innovations in early patient contact and clinical skills training, problem-based learning, and an appropriate emphasis on learning in community settings. It also has a burgeoning research programme, ranging from basic science research in immunology, neurosciences, and human morphology through to health services research and clinical research including large scale clinical trials and epidemiological studies.

My vision is that HYMS continues to develop its undergraduate curriculum and its postgraduate teaching and research.

I particularly want to attract leading researchers to the School who will make a real contribution to science, and a real difference to patient care in the future, and who will help us to teach cutting-edge medicine, offering our medical students the opportunity to learn about specific areas in greater depth through SSCs and intercalated degrees, and our postgraduate students a variety of opportunities to carry out PhDs and become the research leaders of the future.

Best wishes,
Tony Kendrick
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New facilities which opened at HYMS at the University of York in September will help scientists develop drugs and vaccines to combat chronic diseases that devastate the lives of millions of people across the world.

The new £5m home for the Centre for Immunology and Infection (CII) will help researchers to make an important contribution to international efforts to better understand some of the world’s most important chronic diseases, and develop strategies for prevention and cure.

In developed countries, lives are severely debilitated by conditions such as Crohn’s Disease, diabetes and HIV/AIDS. In the world’s poorest regions, neglected diseases including leishmaniasis and sleeping sickness cause untold misery to hundreds of thousands of people every year.

The CII is a joint research centre created by the Hull York Medical School (HYMS) and the Department of Biology at the University of York. The new building is on the University’s campus at Heslington.

The building was officially opened by Dr Robert Ridley, Director of TDR, the World Health Organization’s Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases.

He was welcomed by Professor Brian Cantor, Vice-Chancellor of the University of York, and Professor Paul Kaye, the Centre’s Director.

The opening ceremony followed a one-day conference on immunity and infection featuring speakers from across the world.

Professor Cantor said: “York is already in the vanguard of research into immunology and infectious diseases and these new facilities will further enhance our world-class research in this area. We are all excited that Rob Ridley of the World Health Organization has agreed to open the Centre officially, which reflects its global stature.”
Professor Kaye added: “This is a significant day in the history of the CII. This new building will help to take our work to a new level. The CII represents what can be achieved by a seamless link between biology and medicine, something rarely seen in long-established medical schools. Our strategy ensures we maximise the quality and impact of our research and maximises the benefits from having both infectious and non-infectious diseases studied side by side.”

The Centre is recognised as a leading facility in the fields of immunology, pathogen biology and experimental medicine, publishing its research in the highest impact international journals and already helping to develop new medicines.

The new 1,350m² building includes an additional three floors of laboratories, increased facilities for handling high risk pathogens and a specialist clinical suite for volunteer studies and clinical trials.

The new clinical facilities will provide the CII with greater opportunities for translational research, and its new Wolfson Laboratories will enable the development of further cutting-edge in vitro models for the assessment of immune modulators, microbicides and pathogen-specific drugs.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) contributed more than £3m towards the new premises. The Wolfson Foundation donated £700,000 towards construction costs and a further £300,000 for equipment while The Holbeck Charitable Trust provided £1m for technical equipment and new staff appointments. Further funding has come from the Hull York Medical School and the University of York.

Principal contractor GB Building Solutions started work on the building in July 2009.

Speakers at the conference included: Adrian Hayday, King’s College London; Fiona Powrie, University of Oxford; Sarah Rowland-Jones, University of Oxford; Philippe Sansonetti, Institut Pasteur, Paris; Alan Sher, NIH, Bethesda and Ken Stuart, University of Washington, Seattle. For more information log on to: http://www.york.ac.uk/cii

At the Centre for Immunology and Infection (CII) we tackle well-known diseases, such as HIV/AIDS and diabetes, and the so-called neglected tropical diseases – those that have historically received limited attention by governments, funding agencies and the world’s media. We provide an intimate link between biology and medicine, rarely seen in long-established medical schools, and the Centre today results from a strategy that ensures we maximise the quality and impact of our research.

Funding from HYMS, the University of York and charitable foundations provides the infrastructure required to support world-class research. We have access to a wide range of core facilities across campus, representing a technological base rivaling that available anywhere else in the UK. We have appointed rising stars to many of our core academic positions, each with proven excellence in their discipline, yet with an appetite for interdisciplinary research. Identifying common threads between disparate diseases often provides new insights and a synergy rarely attainable in highly disease-focused centres.

Here at the CII we have fully exploited the ‘without walls’ approach that is a feature of York, to extend our research beyond traditional boundaries. Few medical research centres of our size could boast of interactions with structural biologists, plant molecular biologists, computer scientists and public health specialists!

The strategy is already paying dividends. In five years, we have won £16m of external research funding, including multiple large programme-style grants. Our translational research is bearing fruit: we have identified a new lead compound for treating sleeping sickness, the first leishmaniasis vaccine to be developed in over a decade is poised to enter clinical trial, and a range of new HIV interventions are in an advanced stage of planning. We look forward to making further fundamental discoveries in pathogen biology and immunology and continuing to make best use of them for the benefit of global health.

Professor Paul Kaye, Director
Centre for Immunology and Infection
Cell migration clues

Research led by a scientist at the Hull York Medical School and the University of York has thrown new light on the way organs migrate during development in the body.

An international team headed by Dr Mark Coles, pictured, of the Centre for Immunology and Infection – a joint research centre created by HYMS and the University’s Department of Biology – used video microscopy to investigate how cells migrate collectively in groups.

The research, which investigated the science behind the movement of the thymus gland during organogenesis, involved scientists at the Medical Research Council’s National Institute of Medical Research in London, Cancer Research UK and the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Edinburgh, as well as researchers in the USA, Germany and Portugal.

They discovered that migration of the thymus, which is a key component of the immune system, involved co-ordinated interactions of multiple cell types, through signals between EphB and ephrin-B2 receptors.

The research is published in the latest issue of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Dr Coles said: “Exactly how groups of cells move around the body is still unknown. But, by studying some of the processes involved, we have provided useful information to help us to understand, for instance, how tumours spread and wounds heal.”

Major imaging step

HYMS has committed to fund a number of new staff at a new £7m York Centre for Hyperpolarisation in Magnetic Resonance Imaging.

Hyperpolarisation with parahydrogen is a technique developed at the University of York that can dramatically increase the sensitivity of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), the scanning technology widely used in hospitals.

It is hoped hyperpolarisation will eventually be used to help doctors make diagnoses in minutes and tailor treatments more accurately.

The research team, led by Professors Simon Duckett and Gary Green, has secured a £4.36m grant from the Wellcome Trust and a £4.36m grant from the Wolfson Foundation, as well as financial support from HYMS, industrial partners and the university, to build the new centre, which will bring together researchers from HYMS and the Departments of Chemistry, Biology and Psychology.

For more information log onto: http://www.york.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/2010/research/hyperpolarisation/
New Dean appointed

Professor Tony Kendrick has been appointed as the new Dean of HYMS. Tony, who was Associate Dean for Clinical Research in the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences at the University of Southampton, took up his new role in September.

Tell us about your background – where did you grow up and train in medicine?

I grew up mostly in Deal, Kent, but moved around a lot as my father was in the Royal Marines and was drafted to a new posting every few years. So I’ve not been too concerned about moving home to find new challenges, like moving from the far south to take up the post of Dean of HYMS. I trained at University College London for my preclinical training, then the London Hospital Medical College for my intercalated BSc in Psychology, then at St George’s Hospital London for my clinical training.

What did you enjoy most about your early training?

I loved the buzz of living in London and the independence of university life. My interest in mental health developed through taking up opportunities like the psychology special study module in my sixth form, the world-leading teaching in psychology from Year 1 at UCL, and voluntary work with learning disabled children at Harperbury Hospital in my first year. Intercalating a BSc in Psychology taught me a huge amount about the importance of attention, perception and social learning in understanding the development of behaviour patterns, which are key to helping our patients change their health related behaviours, upon which so much of modern medicine relies.

What was your first specialist area and what made you choose it?

St George’s was a rich training ground for anyone interested in mental health, and I seriously considered becoming a psychiatrist, having been helped by Prof Arthur Crisp, the doyen of anorexia nervosa, to travel to Harvard Medical School to experience liaison psychiatry and hypnosis in a therapeutic community, for my final year elective. However, on qualifying, I realised I wanted to be a ‘proper doctor’ and not restrict my practice to psychiatric patients, recognising that most mental health problems are in any case dealt with in primary care. I owe a huge debt to my mentor Prof Paul Freeling, Professor of General Practice at St George’s, whose insightful research and teaching on mental health in general practice inspired me as a student and later as a researcher and teacher.

What were the key points in the development of your career?

After three years of vocational training in Kent I moved to Surrey and spent five years practising general practice. I was taught educational method to become a GP postgraduate trainer and that helped me develop the role of group undergraduate tutor for St George’s students. I then moved into research, fortunately obtaining a Mental Health Foundation research training fellowship which allowed me to study half-time for a doctorate. I became senior lecturer at St George’s, responsible for communications skills teaching for the undergraduate medical students and postgraduate health sciences MSc students, as well as continuing my research into mental health in primary care. In 1998 I became Professor of Primary Medical Care in Southampton and collaborated on research into the GP care of depression with Prof Chris Thompson who led the large scale Hampshire Depression Project. In 2001 I became Director of the Community Clinical Sciences Division of the School and in 2008 was appointed Associate Dean for Clinical Research. I led the development of the clinical academic training programme at Southampton from 2006 onwards. In the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise my primary medical care group was ranked third highest in the UK for research quality. As Co-Director of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Comprehensive Local Research Network, I helped the network achieve the highest trial recruitment figures in England in 2009. Throughout my career I have continued to practise part-time as a GP.

What have been the highlights of your research?

The biggest kick for me has been seeing the results of my research feeding into guidelines for the care of schizophrenia and depression in general practice, and into performance indicators in the general practice contract quality and outcomes framework (QOF), which means they have made a real difference to patient care within my
lifetime. My MD was on the GP care of people with long-term mental illnesses, showing that setting up case registers and regular structured reviews of their care led to important measurable improvements. Registers and regular reviews were later incentivised in the QOF. In Southampton we showed that psychological treatments could be useful for selected groups of patients; that the more costly newer antidepressants were actually as cost-effective as the older cheaper antidepressants because they worked better; and that GP assessments of the severity of depression could be informed by using structured symptom questionnaires. These findings were cited in the NICE Depression guidelines and informed depression indicators in the QOF. I have also worked with epidemiologists at the MRC Centre in Southampton to show that low folate did not appear to be a cause of depression in a large longitudinal follow-up of the Southampton Women’s Survey, and analysed GP computerised practice data to unpick the causes of year on year increases in antidepressant prescribing.

When you are not working, what do you enjoy doing?
I run regularly, having just joined the York Knavesmire Harriers, and am tackling the Berlin Marathon in September and New York Marathon in November. I love to ski and I also love to walk long distances, and am looking forward to exploring the beautiful Yorkshire Dales, Moors, and Wolds. I find physical exertion in the open air is like a form of meditation, freeing the mind to think through nagging issues. Hopefully it’ll continue to keep me fresh to face the challenges of helping to run HYMS.

To book a place on any of these courses, email postgraduate@hyms.ac.uk
HYMS says goodbye to John

Warm tributes were paid at the fifth HYMS educational conference to retiring Undergraduate Dean, Professor John Cookson.

Described as a consummate clinician, an erudite scholar, an inspiring teacher, a generous friend and a very special husband and father, John was warmly thanked for the enormous contribution he had made to HYMS since the early days of the medical school.

HYMS staff from all across the East Riding, North Yorkshire and northern Lincolnshire attended the event held at Bishop Burton Agricultural College in September.

Entitled “Achievements and Challenges: HYMS – the first 7 years”, there were a mixture of lectures and workshops on an educational theme.

There was also a chance for staff to meet the new HYMS Dean, Professor Tony Kendrick, who had recently taken up the role. He said he regretted not being privileged to learn alongside John. “Your reputation precedes you,” he said. “You are a real Tour de Force.”

The first speaker was former Hull Postgraduate Medical School chair in Primary Care Medicine Peter Campion. He talked about HYMS and in particular the Problem Based Learning (PBL) aspect of the curriculum. He described John’s role in developing it.

“He is a consummate clinician, an erudite scholar, an inspiring teacher, a generous friend and a very special husband and father. From all your friends and colleagues in HYMS, thank you John.”

The second speaker was The Rev Dr David Taylor, Deputy Director of Medical Studies at Liverpool Medical School. He said the students had driven John as a medical educationalist. PBL was not just a

Struck a chord

John described his own experience of medical education and the way in which it had developed. One of his first lessons was that learning was more important than teaching.

He said a student had once stopped him and said: “What I need is about ½ hour a week of direct observation and feedback on my performance. The rest I can do myself.”

This had really struck a chord with him and influenced the way in which he developed the HYMS curriculum. He believed PBL was a good way to learn and, above all, fun. All of us need to get out of our comfort zones and more often say to students “I don’t know”.

“If we do that it shows them that nobody can know everything; we are all learners and it gives them permission to expose what they don’t know which is the beginning of learning.”

He spoke positively about the future of medical education, “Undergraduate medical education in the UK ain’t broke. In HYMS in particular it is in good heart and we should all say so loud and clear.”
method of teaching but a philosophical system. He added that HYMS had taken the best educational theory from many different places and put its own spin on it. “You own your own curriculum,” he said. “That is very important.

“John wants students to learn what they need to know and enjoy doing it and HYMS students are great advocates of PBL. They genuinely enjoy it.”

There were a series of workshops covering e-learning in HYMS, the student office, reading and writing in healthcare, and the assessment process before Professor Stewart Peterson, Head of Medical Education at Leicester, gave a thought-provoking talk on “Who is responsible? – Student centred learning in a regulated world”.

He described John as a “typical English gentleman – an old style consultant of the nicest kind,” adding that he was “an intriguing blend of intellectual radicalism and conservatism with a small c.” If John says he will do something, it will happen,” he said. “There are not many people around with John’s particular set of attributes. We missed him at Leicester and I’m sure you’ll miss him at HYMS.”

Professor Mike Morgan, Chairman of the executive of the British Thoracic Society, spoke about “Completing the loop: educating doctors and patients”.

“I don’t know what John is going to do in retirement but if he is going to ride off into the sunset, it would have to be an African one,” he said.

Professional satisfaction

“I have loved my time at HYMS,” said John. “I can honestly say it is one of the most rewarding jobs I’ve ever had.”

John was interviewed for his HYMS role by a daunting panel of 12 in May 2002. Within the 12 months remaining – after he started work full-time with HYMS until the arrival of the first students – he ensured a solid educational framework was in place; which in turn ensured a very positive experience for HYMS’ first undergraduates.

He joined Sue Hubbard, from the Strategic Health Authority, and Giles Davidson, who had formerly worked on the set-up of The Deep in Hull, as well as the first Dean of HYMS, Professor William Gillespie.

John was Director of Clinical Studies and Honorary Professor of Clinical Education at the Leicester Warwick Medical School before moving to HYMS.

“I was attracted to the job at HYMS because medical educators rarely get the chance to put in place a new curriculum from scratch,” he went on. “It has given me a lot of professional satisfaction and I’m proud of what we have achieved.”

Born into a medical family – his father was a GP and his mother a nurse – John studied medicine at Birmingham University and, after qualifying in 1968, went to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) where he spent six months in obstetrics and six months in a bush district hospital.

“In the latter I had to do pretty well everything,” he recalled. “There was a fair amount of surgery and obstetric work. I was given the opportunity to do a lot of things with limited resources, I would not have done in the UK. There were times when I was the only doctor in charge of 200 beds so the experience was invaluable.” It was during his time abroad he met his wife Anna, a doctor working in paediatrics in Rhodesia.

When they finally settled back in the UK John became a consultant in chest medicine (lung disease) at a hospital in Leicester where he juggled both clinical and educational work.

The couple have two children – Alastair, a banker in London, and Fiona, a GP. He has two grandchildren – Hamish, 6, and Olivia, 5.
Twenty five pupils from schools across East Yorkshire took part in a residential summer school run by the Hull York Medical School in July 2010.

Pupils from Driffield School, Wilberforce College, Wyke College, John Leggott College, Scarborough College, York College, Selby College, Woldgate College, Headlands School, Malton School and Beverley Grammar School spent three days learning what it takes to train to be a doctor.

The summer school was organised by HYMS Widening Participation Manager Jo Cross, in association with Aimhigher Healthcare Strand Humber and North Yorkshire. It took place at The University of Hull where the 17-year-olds were housed in student accommodation for the 3 days.

During the course they experienced a session of PBL with HYMS students, interacted with a hi-tech patient simulator as well as visiting the Centre for Clinical Skills where they focused on aspects of organ donation and transplantation with Dave Muir, Lecturer Practitioner in Nursing and Midwifery and Debbie Robinson, Lecturer in ODP in the Faculty of Health Professional Studies.

They also spent time in workshops which included: “The role of a GP” with Dr Andrew Davidson, GP from Scarborough; “Emergency medicine” with Nick O’Roarty, “Emergency Care Practitioner; Care in healthcare” with Fiona Macmillan from Skills for Care; and “Body image – the role of media in public health” with Jane Pearce, Project Officer HYMS Postgraduate Centre, and Dr Andy Kardasz, HYMS Senior Teaching Fellow in Medical Education.

They also took part in a debate on organ donation and were given guidance on interview skills for medical schools. In the evenings social activities included circus skills and 'chilling out' in a local coffee bar.

All the pupils, who want to go on to study medicine, applied to take part in the summer school, which was funded by Aimhigher Healthcare Strand Humber.
Using a moving 3D computer model based on the skull and teeth of a New Zealand reptile called tuatara, a BBSRC-funded team from the Hull York Medical School, the University of Hull and the University College London has revealed how damage to dental implants and jaw joints may be prevented by sophisticated interplay between our jaws, muscles and brain. This research will appear in a future edition of the Journal of Biomechanics.

The tuatara is a lizard-like reptile that has iconic status in its homeland of New Zealand because its ancestors were widespread at the time of the dinosaurs. Unlike mammals and crocodiles which have teeth held in sockets by a flexible ligament, tuatara have teeth that are fused to their jaw bone - they have no ligament, much like modern dental implants."

BBSRC postdoctoral fellow Dr Neil Curtis, from the University of Hull said: "Humans and many other animals prevent damage to their teeth and jaws when eating because the ligament that holds each tooth in place also feeds back to the brain to warn against biting too hard."

Dr Marc Jones from University College London, also a BBSRC postdoctoral fellow, added: "In the sugar-rich western world many people end up losing their teeth and have to live with dentures or dental implants instead. They've also lost the periodontal ligament that would attach their teeth so we wanted to know how their brains can tell what's going on when they are eating."

I would like to thank all those who have marked my retirement by contributing so generously to the Zimbabwe Health Training Support, an organisation which helps to support undergraduate medical and other health-related education in that country in difficult times. If you would like to make a donation and have not done so, you can do it by following this link: http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/fundraiser-web/fundraiser/showFundraiserProfilePage?action?userUrl=JohnCookson

John Cookson

A HYMS Christmas staff barn dance is to be held on Thursday 9 December, 7-7.30pm until 12am in Lindsey Suite, Staff House, the University of Hull. Tickets, at £20, include a hot carvery buffet. Partners are welcome. It is hoped as many HYMS staff as possible will make the most of this opportunity to get-together. Please contact janet.tasker@hyms.ac.uk for further details.

Fourth year HYMS student Naomi Chinn has been shortlisted for the Sir Harold Ellis presentation prize at the Royal College of Surgeons in London. Naomi submitted a 500-word abstract for the first round of the prize under the assigned title of “Which surgical speciality will become extinct first and why?”
HYMS class of 2010

The third cohort of HYMS students graduated at the City Hall, Hull, in July 2010.

The latest cohort of HYMS students graduated this summer in a ceremony at the City Hall, Hull.

The Honorary graduate was Sir David Carter and the students were led in their HYMS declaration by Androniki Abelidis. After the ceremony, a reception was held at The Royal Hotel, Hull for the graduates, their parents and HYMS staff.

Acting Dean of HYMS Professor Ian Watt congratulated the new doctors and wished them well.

The Honorary graduate spoke and was followed by Founding Dean of HYMS, Professor Bill Gillespie. Responding on behalf of the graduating students was Amrita Chandra, who gave a thoughtful and entertaining speech. Amrita, who at the age of 22 years and 2 months became one of the country’s youngest ever doctors to graduate, paid particular tribute to HYMS Dean of Medical Education Professor John Cookson, marking his retirement. “Prof. Cookson, on behalf of all the students of HYMS past and current, we would just like to say – for your enthusiasm, patience, motivation, hard work, inspiration and support throughout – thank you for everything.”

Tribute was also paid by Professor Watt to other stalwart members of HYMS staff who are retiring this year, and presentations were made to PBL Facilitator Professor Stuart Lewis, Senior Lecturer in Social Policy and Social Work Dr Lesley Jones, and Student Liaison Officer for Scarborough Hospital Anne Britton.

Student prizes

Student prizes were also handed out at the reception. The Founding Dean’s award for the best overall academic performance over the five years of the MBBS was awarded to Brook Adams.

Quality Improvement Project Prizes, given to students who have done excellent work in projects that enhance the quality of health care services provided by the local NHS, were presented by HYMS Senior Lecturer in Population Health Steven Oliver to Catherine Hornsey, Martyn Stones and Simon Richardson. Claire Hunt, who also won the prize, as well as the Bob Morton Prize for best performance in Student-Selected Components relating to the Humanities was unable to be present.
The North of England Cell Biology Forum 2010 (NECB) took place at the University of Hull on the 17th September. It was organised by Drs Francisco Rivero (HYMS Senior Lecturer in Biomedical Sciences), Klaus Ersfeld and Frank Voncken. More than 85 participants took part in the meeting that is mainly aimed to provide PhD students and Postdocs with an opportunity to present their research. The range of topics was very broad and covered intracellular transport, organelle dynamics, signal transduction and cell cycle regulation. The £100 prize for the best talk was awarded to Nikki Copeland (University of York) for his detailed study of the role of the replication factor Ciz1 in the establishment of DNA replication factories in mammalian cells.

Congratulations to intercalating students who graduated this year with a HYMS BSc in Medical Science, and in particular to Matthew Buck, Andrew Chapman, Fozia Saeed, Alexandra Smith, Peter Szedlak, Thomas Taynton, Jessica Trinquet, Anthony Walmsley and Chris Taynton, who all gained first class degrees. First class honours also went to Catherine Shutt, who gained a BSc in Human Physiology at Leeds.

The University of York has consolidated its position among the world’s elite universities, in two recent rankings. In the 2010-11 Times Higher Education World University Rankings, the university is 81st and is one of only 14 UK universities in the top 100. York was also ranked 88th in the 2010 QS World University Rankings - only 11 UK universities appear in both world rankings.

HYMS alumni get-together

OLD friendships were renewed at a HYMS alumni event held at York Racecourse in July.

The event was also an opportunity to say goodbye to retiring Undergraduate Dean John Cookson, who was joined at the event by his wife Anna and two children, as well as the HYMS founding Dean, Professor Bill Gillespie. Further photos can be viewed at: http://www.hyms.ac.uk/alumni/York15July2010Photos/default.htm

ABOVE: HYMS alumni swap F1 tales
BELOW: HYMS Student Liaison Officers meet up with old friends

For more information on postgraduate training options being developed at HYMS, email postgraduate@hyms.ac.uk or visit our website.
Looking for the right course?

Browse our extensive menu.