

# The Academy of Medical Sciences | FORUM

Update Summer 2007

## About the FORUM

The FORUM is an active network of scientists from industrial companies and academia. It currently focuses on the pharmaceutical, biotechnology, medical engineering, medical IT, and health product sectors with representation from relevant trade organisations, Government departments, Research Councils, and other major research sponsors. Medico-legal and venture capital firms are also included.

The FORUM promotes interaction between industrial and academic biomedical scientists and engineers,

and other groups committed to improvements in healthcare through research.

The FORUM holds lectures, symposia and workshops to champion new knowledge, share information and air complex issues in science and health care. Working groups of FORUM members, Academy Fellows and external experts also prepare reports, discussion papers and consultation responses.

**Chairman** Dr Barry Furr OBE FMedSci

**Deputy Chairman** Dr John Young FMedSci

**FORUM Officers** Dr Mike Collis, Dr Jeff Kipling, Dr Richard Sullivan

## Update on OSCHR

On 7 June, Professor John Bell PMedSci addressed a joint meeting of FORUM members and Academy Fellows on the role of OSCHR (Office for Strategic Coordination of Health Research) and its progress towards an overarching UK strategy for publicly funded health research. The new investment and cultural change emerging from the Cooksey Review brings an important opportunity to capitalise on UK excellence in biomedical research and build leadership positions in translational medicine, public health research and e-health. A summary of Professor Bell's presentation can be found at [www.acmedsci.ac.uk/forum](http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk/forum).

Dr Barry Furr FMedSci, on behalf of the FORUM, welcomed the OSCHR strategy and the commitment to build industry-academia partnerships, particularly in experimental medicine and the earlier phases of R&D. FORUM members highlighted a range of issues important to the success of OSCHR and UK biomedical research more generally: the need to enhance funding for basic research; the importance

of applying consistent and rigorous peer review procedures to applications for research funding; and the value of European sources of funding to support translational medicine objectives.



Professor John Bell PMedSci



# Annual FORUM lecture

Dame Nancy Rothwell FRS FMedSci

Dame Nancy Rothwell FRS FMedSci presented the Annual FORUM lecture in March on '*The highs and lows of academic-industrial collaborations*'. This wide-ranging review and lively discussion analysed perspectives from the university and bioscience industry sectors, identifying a variety of mutual strategic interests and emphasising the importance of collaboration on policy issues. The lecture concluded with a call for the sectors to work together in providing better measures of the benefits of biomedical research, supporting public engagement and shaping government targets and strategy. A summary of the lecture can be downloaded at [www.acmedsci.ac.uk/p50evid66.html](http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk/p50evid66.html).

## Communicating risk and benefit

One of the major outcomes of the 2005 FORUM report on 'Safer Medicines' was a recommendation for medical and science journals to develop an agreed, standardised system of presenting the risks and benefits of medicines.

At a recent roundtable meeting, conceived and attended by Professor Patrick Vallance FMedSci, Fellows from industry and academia discussed how this recommendation could be implemented, including options for a consistent format for presenting quantified risk/benefit in medical journals. Two further meetings will be held later in 2007: a scoping group of UK and US journal editors to discuss the feasibility of a standardised format; and a larger meeting with scientists, industry representatives and other interested parties, including patient groups and experts in risk communication.

For more information contact [forum@acmedsci.ac.uk](mailto:forum@acmedsci.ac.uk).



Professor Patrick Vallance FMedSci

# Use of non-human primates in research

In December 2006, an independent working group chaired by Sir David Weatherall FRS FMedSci published the report '*The use of non-human primates in research*'. In June 2007, the four sponsors of this initiative, the Academy of Medical Sciences, Medical Research Council, Royal Society and Wellcome Trust, fulfilled their pledge to respond to the report and its recommendations within six months of publication. These responses can be downloaded from [www.acmedsci.ac.uk/index.php?pid=118&pressid=33](http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk/index.php?pid=118&pressid=33).

The four sponsoring organisations, together with the BBSRC, strongly endorsed the report's call for a more integrated approach to UK non-human primate research. This was also backed by the Government's Chief

Scientific Adviser, Sir David King FRS, who has pledged to '*bring stakeholders together to develop a national strategy for the use of non-human primates in science.*'

The current momentum and Government support provides a timely opportunity for FORUM members to make their views on this issue heard. The FORUM Advisory Board will be considering the findings of the Weatherall report in the Autumn. For more information contact [helen.munn@acmedsci.ac.uk](mailto:helen.munn@acmedsci.ac.uk).



## Future FORUM events

### Drug Discovery

Following the success of the 2006 'Drug Discovery' meeting, held at the Royal Society in London, the FORUM Advisory Board has agreed to hold one or more regional events during 2007/08 on drug discovery in specific therapeutic areas. Cancer and diabetes are among the suggested priority areas for a future regional meeting - likely to be held in the Northwest. **FORUM members are invited to propose other topics and locations they might wish to support.** To do so please email [forum@acmedsci.ac.uk](mailto:forum@acmedsci.ac.uk).



### Infectious Disease

A symposium on 'Anti-infectives R&D in the UK' is planned for later in 2007. This will include speakers from industry and academia and will address the current status of R&D in the field, drawing on recent work in immunology and systems biology, and identifying scientific opportunities for novel bacterial, viral and fungal disease targets.

### Other Academy Events

#### 11 November - International Health Lecture

Sir Richard Peto, FRS FMedSci, Professor of Medical Statistics and Epidemiology, University of Oxford

#### 27 November - Pandemic Influenza symposium

Organised in collaboration with the Royal Society, chaired by Sir John Skehel FRS FMedSci

#### 22 November - Jean Shanks Lecture

Professor Tony Pawson, Samuel Lunenfeld Research Institute, Mt. Sinai Hospital, Toronto

For further information go to [www.acmedsci.ac.uk](http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk).

# Forthcoming publications

## FORUM Publications

### MB PhD schemes

Following a highly successful symposium of Academy Fellows and FORUM members in March, the report of the MB PhD working group will be published later this summer. At both the symposium and in written evidence to the working group, FORUM members have observed that UK MB PhD programmes (and the longer-established US MD PhD programmes) can be important in building clinical research capacity and translating basic science into health care innovation. The Academy report will emphasise the need for the UK to retain a flexible and diverse range of options for training the next generation of clinician scientists.

This report will be published in the context of challenges faced during development of the

Modernising Medical Careers initiative and rollout of the Cooksey Review recommendations on filling skill gaps. A summary of the MB PhD symposium can be downloaded from [www.acmedsci.ac.uk/p44evid65.html](http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk/p44evid65.html).

### Careers in Industry

The report of the Academy's working group '*Recent careers for biomedical scientists in industry: promoting greater mobility*' will be published later this summer. The report investigates ways to increase researchers' mobility between the public and private sectors, in the context of wider efforts to promote a more collaborative industry-academia culture in the UK. It draws heavily on input from FORUM members in examining industry's need for skilled personnel and ways to promote careers in industry to academic researchers.

## Academy Publications

### Brain science, addiction and drugs

At the end of 2005, the Department of Health invited the Academy to take forward a process of further deliberation around the issues raised in the Foresight report '*Drugs Futures 2025?*'. This report had explored the likely impact of scientific advances in relation to 'recreational' drugs, medicines for mental health and cognition enhancers.

A working group of experts, chaired by Sir Gabriel Horn FRS, was established and as part of the project, the Academy commissioned a six month national programme of public engagement to explore the views of a broad cross-section of the population on current and future drug use.

The working group will report back to Government at the end of 2007. One of the areas explored involves pharmaceutical treatments for addiction and mental health, focusing on the effectiveness of current treatments, future possibilities and the areas in need of further research. **FORUM members are invited to suggest what they would find useful in following up this activity, particularly**

**opportunities for industry collaboration in R&D for novel treatments for addiction.** For more information contact [robert.frost@acmedsci.ac.uk](mailto:robert.frost@acmedsci.ac.uk).

### Non-experimental methods

An Academy working group chaired by Sir Michael Rutter FRS FBA FMedSci has been established to investigate the strengths, limitations and potential of correlational (sometimes called 'non-experimental' or 'observational') methods in biomedical research, with particular reference to investigation of disease mechanisms.

In June, the working group held a small workshop of scientists and key stakeholders to discuss the emerging findings and conclusions from the study. The final report of the group will follow in Autumn 2007 and will include a set of broad principles to characterise the value of such methods in addressing different research questions. The report will be of particular interest to FORUM members with experience in the use of post-marketing surveillance and other observational studies in hypothesis generation. For more information contact [laurie.smith@acmedsci.ac.uk](mailto:laurie.smith@acmedsci.ac.uk).

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