The UCL Surgical & Interventional Trials Unit – a strategy looking forward

UCL Division of Surgery and Interventional Science is pleased to announce a number of significant changes that will enable it to provide an environment that will allow clinical trials to flourish and expand.

The most significant is a change in leadership over the next few years. Following the wonderful news that its current Director, Mark Emberton, was promoted to Dean of the Faculty of Medical Sciences, one of its current Scientific Directors, Hashim Ahmed, was appointed as the new Director, through an open competitive process.

Vivek Mudera, the current Director of the Division, said of the appointment

“"I am very pleased to appoint Hash Ahmed as Director of SITU. Hash will bring to this position experience, expertise, enthusiasm, great leadership and an ambition to make it the best. I am keen to see SITU grow and expand to cover all three sites of the Division, across various Trusts, which is a major challenge. A strong and successful surgical trials unit is critical to raising our international profile and making us a world leading academic surgical department. Hash has my full support and I wish him and his team every success over the coming years."

Mark Emberton commented

“"The challenging area of surgical trials is one that UCL has excelled in. I am delighted to place my full support and that of the Faculty for the UCL SITU under the lead of Hashim, who has been at the forefront of innovative and pathway-changing surgical and interventional research. I have no doubt that he will continue his pursuit in the asking of challenging, timely and controversial questions addressing important areas of unmet need in the health domain."
Within a short space of time, Hash has instigated several changes, notably:

- A rebranding of the CTG to something that more closely reflects its work and strengthens its relationship and place within the Division. The new name, Surgical & Interventional Trials Unit or SITU, reflects the Group’s specialization in studies led by surgeons and interventionists.
- Implementation of the findings of a recent review by the Division, notably to make more transparent and robust the process by which studies are adopted and by which the UCL SITU works.
- Inclusion of additional Scientific Directors to represent the scope of the Division in both expertise and geography and stay true to its strengths in nurturing the future surgeon-scientists of the UK.

Of the changes, Hash said

"Michael Baum first and then Mark Emberton did a fantastic amount of work with the trials group. Over the next 2-3 years, I fully expect the newly rebranded UCL SITU to protect that legacy to consolidate, strengthen and grow. UCL SITU is a treasure within the Division, and within UCL, and I am immensely grateful for the support that the Division’s Vivek Mudera, Marilena Loizidou, Mark Cranmer and Dan Sinclair and the Faculty’s Dean, Mark Emberton, have shown. UCL SITU will not disappoint their very high expectations."

UCL SITU will continue to add to our portfolio of 25 clinical trials from which 4511 patients have so far been recruited with 9 staff. This represents a grant income of £15.5 million over the past 12 years.

Staff in UCL SITU also play an important role in teaching trial methodology to MSc students, and working with Clinical Research Fellows to develop their skills in clinical research and will continue to work across the Division and beyond in encouraging ideas and participation in trials from the limited small pilot and fellowship grants through to large multicentre complex interventions requiring significant amounts of commercial or academic funding.

If you have an idea you would like to discuss with the team, please contact Hash (hashim.ahmed@ucl.ac.uk) or the SITU office (SITU.Office@ucl.ac.uk).