

Professor Fiona Watt
Chief Executive
Medical Research Council
One Kemble Street
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19 June 2018

Dear Professor Watt

UCL initiative to establish an International Centre for Genomic Medicine in Neuromuscular Disease with partners in India, Turkey, South Africa, Zambia and Brazil

I write to support of UCL's application for establishing an international centre for genomic research in neuromuscular disease, led by Professor Michael Hanna, Director of the Institute of Neurology at UCL.

Acknowledging the continued increase of neuromuscular disease (NMD) across the globe, the International Centre for Genomic Medicine in Neuromuscular Diseases would have very significant and long lasting research and health benefits for patients with NMD. For example, defining patient cohorts by genotype will allow for an increase the number of patients with a precise genetic diagnosis.

In addition it will aid in the discovery of new genes, provide more accurate advice and counselling to patients and families, improve access to appropriate screening and simple health interventions including cardiorespiratory, gastroenterological, metabolic and physiotherapy, and have "trial ready" cohorts optimising our interactions with pharma and industry and visibly expanding the global market for use of new therapies.

Crucially, the international centre would help to train a new generation of clinical academics who will become the leaders of genomic medicine and specialist care delivery.

The openly shared bioinformatics data platform will also prove to be a major advantage, empowering all clinicians and clinical researchers to analyse their own patients' data on the genome phenome analysis platform and derive molecular diagnoses for the benefit of their patients.

The centre will establish a NMD Hub that brings together a critical-mass of multi-disciplinary researchers from UCL and those belonging to partner organisations. Another key feature is that this initiative connects centres in India, Turkey, South Africa and Zambia in a significant transcontinental partnership. This aligns with one of the six principal themes in UCL's twenty year strategy, UCL 2034, which is about global impact. Our Global Engagement Strategy is designed to deliver this and is build around the concept of developing 'partnerships of equivalence' to co-create mutually beneficial solutions.

This proposal resonates closely with two of the five strategic drivers on our Global Engagement strategy: it will 'co-create wise solutions to global challenges and problems', working with a wide network of partners in India, Turkey, South Africa and Zambia as well as contribute to UCL's vision to 'increase independent research capability around the world'.

I commend this project and hope that it wins your support.

Yours sincerely

