LONDON'S GLOBAL UNIVERSITY

UCL

LIFE TIMES

THE NEWSLETTER FOR FACULTY OF LIFE SCIENCES ALUMNI
JANUARY 2020 | ALUMNI NUMBER:

Life Times - Winter 2019/20

My challenge when compiling the latest Alumni Life Times has been deciding which news can or can't make this issue! It's been a tough job, since there have been so many ground-breaking stories. Our leading academics have been getting out and about. Discover more about…

- **Professor Andrea Townsend-Nicholson's trip with a Virtual Human** to the Houses of Parliament for Evidence Week
- **Nadia Bukhari**, whose work in Pakistan supporting education for girls and women in pharmacy saw her invited by the Royal Household to help the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge prepare for their trip to Pakistan
- **Oksana Pyzik led the faculty's Fight the Fakes campaign** at the United Nations in Geneva as we push for steps to be taken to control the availability of fake medicines

Back home within our Life Sciences Faculty, we have welcomed new Biosciences government funding, joined together to celebrate EMBO awards, welcomed guests to the Grant Museum to raise awareness for the plight of the Hainan Island gibbons on International Gibbon Day and published new spatial analysis to explain Britain's booming parakeet population, sadly nothing to do with Jimi Hendrix or the filming of The African Queen.

I am very proud of all the work being undertaken by our leading experts – past and present - including the important research by Professor Kate Jones and Dr David Redding from the Research Department of Genetics, Evolution and Environment (UCL Division of Biosciences), in the area of Ebola as a new UCL-developed model shows how an outbreak could be predicted.

Life Sciences at UCL continues to attract the best-of-the-best to impact positively the world we live in, which I marvel at and embrace with pride! I hope to see many of you at our next alumni event on 5 February 2020 and I hope you enjoy the latest version of Life Times.

Professor Geraint Rees
Dean, UCL Faculty of Life Sciences

Nadia Bukhari helps prep The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge for Pakistan trip

Nadia Bukhari, Principal Teaching Fellow from the Research Department of Practice and Policy and one of UCL School of Pharmacy's inspiring female pharmacists was invited by the Royal Household to a Celebration of Pakistani Culture and Achievement at the Aga Khan Centre in London on 2nd October. As the royal couple prepared for their trip to Pakistan, they invited notable members from UK's Pakistani Diaspora community to a special engagement event.

About Nadia: Nadia Bukhari, Principal Teaching Fellow, UCL School of Pharmacy is working hard to give girls in Pakistan an education and promote gender equality by opening new schools with the charity Pakistan Alliance for Girls' Education (PAGE). So far, PAGE has opened 42 schools. As the youngest female Fellow of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and first Muslim woman on the National Pharmacy Board for England, Nadia is an inspiration to girls considering pharmacy as a career. She also launched the National Alliance for Women in Pharmacy in Pakistan and is Founder and Patron in Chief.

Life Sciences Alumni New Year Lecture and Reception

Wednesday 5 February 2020, Grant Museum

Bench to Bedside: bringing insights from basic research towards treatment for patients by Stephanie Schorge, Professor of Translational Neuroscience from the Research Department of Pharmacology (UCL School of Pharmacy)

Join UCL Life Sciences alumni to hear Professor Stephanie Schorge reveal how basic 'blue sky' research into the behaviour of neurons has led to funding for a clinical trial to treat patients with severe epilepsy. Building on UCL's neuroscience tradition, we've explored how mutations in human genes that cause neurological disease such as epilepsy, cause the behaviours of neurons to change. Stephanie will present how the first study of gene therapy in a rat model of epilepsy was able to stop seizures. Since this first study, Stephanie and her collaborators have developed a portfolio of new possible ways to stop seizure activity in different models.

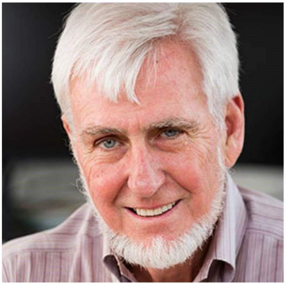
Stephanie commented 'This work represents the best of collaboration at UCL, where basic scientists in NPP, clinicians and scientists in the Queen Square ION, as well as surgeons in the NHNN, and experts in translational neuroscience at the School of Pharmacy have joined together to bring basic research through to clinical trial.'

Book your alumni event tickets »

Celebrating awards and funding

EMBO election for Roberto Mayor

Professor Roberto Mayor, from the Research Department of Cell and Developmental Biology (UCL Division of Biosciences) has been elected as a new European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) member. In June, EMBO announced 56 life scientists have been elected to its membership, joining a group of more than 1,800 of the best researchers in Europe and around the world.



Professor John O'Keefe elected to Royal Irish Academy

Professor John O'Keefe, from the Research Department of Cell and Developmental Biology (UCL Division of Biosciences) and the Sainsbury Wellcome Centre for Neural Circuits and Behaviour has been made an Honorary Member of the Royal Irish Academy (RIA). Professor O'Keefe was awarded the Nobel Prize for ground-breaking research on the brain's hippocampus.

Royal Pharmaceutical Society Fellowship for Cate Whittlesea

Professor Cate Whittlesea from the Research Department of Practice and Policy (UCL School of Pharmacy) has been made a Fellow of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. This well-deserved honour reflects her extremely high standing in the pharmaceutical community and the many contributions she has made to the education of pharmacists, alongside her research activities in the clinical field.

Next generation of UCL Bioscientists earn government funding

Bioscience PhD students at UCL are benefiting from a share of a £170 million investment announced recently by the UKRI BBSRC. Professor Jonathan Ashmore, Director, UCL London Interdisciplinary Doctoral Training Programme, commented in a UCL news story about the funding: 'The award is really excellent news for UCL's Bioscientists of the future.'

News and views

UCL's Faculty of Life Sciences continues to grab headlines, collect awards and explore the strange and marvellous – as well as pioneering research to improve the world we live in and the lives we lead. Below are just some of the highlights…

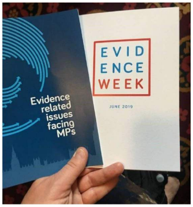
UCL co-led research busts Bogart and Hendrix myths with a parakeet 'crime map'

A multitude of stories have circulated over the years that seek to explain how the non-native bright green birds (Psittacula krameri) started breeding and spread to become one of Britain's most successful alien species. Tales include that Jimi Hendrix first released a pair on Carnaby Street, that a flock was let go from the set of the Bogart and Hepburn classic The African Queen in 1951 - and others say that parakeets kept at Syon Park escaped in the 1970s when a plane crashed through the aviary roof, whilst another theory blames damage to aviaries during the Great Storm of 1987.

However, a new spatial analysis, published in the Journal of Zoology, backed by an extensive search of archived newspaper articles, concludes that Britain's booming parakeet population has instead grown from numerous small-scale accidental and intentional pet releases. The research team used geographic profiling – or 'crime mapping' – a statistical technique originally developed in criminology to prioritise large lists of suspects in cases of serial crime, to analyse spatial patterns of parakeet sightings.

Co-author Professor Tim Blackburn, from the Research Department of Genetics, Evolution and Environment (UCL Division of Biosciences), commented, 'As a keen birder, the various stories about the origins of parakeets always seemed unlikely. I've seen individuals of at least four other parrot species in the UK, which shows that releases or escapes of pets is not uncommon. This was probably the source of our parakeets too. The parakeets are now spreading widely, and negative impacts of these birds are increasingly being reported. This would hopefully act as a warning that letting pets go can potentially have significant consequences, even if they don't become apparent for decades after the releases happened.'

Read the parakeet story in full »



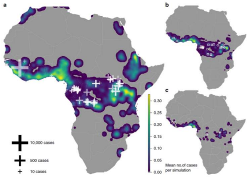
Virtual Human visits Houses of Parliament

As part of Evidence Week at Parliament in June, Professor Andrea Townsend-Nicholson, from the Research Department of Structural and Molecular Biology (UCL Division of Biosciences) took a Virtual Human Avatar to the Houses of Parliament to meet a cross party group of MPs and Lords.

The purpose of the visit was to explain to Parliamentarians how the virtual human uses digital evidence at multiple scales – from the 'letters' in genetic code to medical imaging of the heart – to seek real improvements to healthcare by delivering truly personalised medicine.

Read about the team's visit with the Virtual Human »

UCL's Fight the Fakes Campaign goes to the United Nations



Predicting Ebola outbreaks

On 20 May 2019 a student cohort from UCL's School of Pharmacy took their Fight the Fakes Campaign against counterfeit medicines to the World Health Organization's 72nd World Health Assembly event in Geneva. The campaign's architect, Oksana Pyzik, Senior Teaching Fellow and Global Engagement Lead, from the Research Department of Practice and Policy (UCL School of Pharmacy) drove UCL's role at this significant debate. The student delegation also had the unique opportunity to participate as youth representatives in the World Health Assembly, the world's highest policy making forum.

Read about the team's UN visit »

The next Ebola outbreak could be predicted using a new UCL-developed model that tracks how changes to ecosystems and human societies combine to affect the spread of the deadly infectious disease. A team led by Professor Kate Jones and Dr David Redding from the Department of Genetics, Evolution and Environment (UCL Division of Biosciences) are researching predicting Ebola outbreaks by understanding how ecosystems influence human health.

This UCL story received extensive media coverage, including Mail Online, CNN, Telegraph, Yahoo News UK, New Scientist, The Verge, Gizmodo. Listen to BBC Radio 4's 'Inside Science' (from 1 min 31 secs).

International Gibbon Day had a swinging start

International Gibbon Day 2019 on 24 October saw a host of exciting gibbon-related activities, displays and talks led by Professor Helen Chatterjee, from the Research Department of Genetics, Evolution and Environment (UCL Division of Biosciences), and a team of UCL researchers, the Zoological Society of London and Oxford Brookes University. Carolyn Thompson, UCL PhD student and gibbon researcher, recently returned from Hainan Island which is home to the world's rarest ape. With fewer than 30 individual Hainan gibbons remaining in an isolated 15 km2 forest fragment on an island in the South China Sea, there is urgent need to protect this critically endangered species and raise much needed awareness.

Read about the launch in UCL's Grant Museum »

Health in old age is a lifelong affair

Diet restriction from youth may improve health in old age and extend lifespan, reveals a UCL co-led study in mice. A restricted diet may improve health in old age, however, only if food reduction begins at an early age, finds the new study in mice. The findings published in the scientific journal Nature Metabolism this October add to evidence in people and animals of how dietary restriction may reduce age-related illness. Researchers reduced the amount of food given to young and old mice, and found the mice only become healthier if they started food reduction early on.

'One should establish healthy behaviours early in life… said Professor Dame Linda Partridge, from the Research Department of Genetics, Evolution and Environment (UCL Division of Biosciences) and the Max Planck Institute for the Biology of Ageing, one of the study's lead authors.

Read more about this UCL co-led study and listen to the discussion BBC Radio 4's 'Woman's Hour' (from 24mins 35secs).

Your UCL alumni community

Alumni giving

Volunteering | The gift of time

Philanthropic support from our alumni and friends helps the Faculty of Life Sciences achieve its goals and maintain UCL's position as a leading global university. The FLS Alumni Summer Studentships offer undergraduates with an interest in research the opportunity to spend up to eight weeks in a FLS research laboratory. Donate today to support a student. Your contribution is very much appreciated.

Support FLS Alumni Summer Studentships »

Your time at UCL will have given you a unique view on education, work and the world around you. This understanding can help current or prospective UCL students or alumni networks around the globe, in more ways than you can imagine. But you can benefit too – build your own networks, develop your people skills and add to your own CV, all by investing a little of your time.

Find a fulfilling alumni volunteer role »

UCL Alumni Online Community

Connect with other UCL alumni in our exclusive social networking platform. The UCL Alumni Online Community is an exclusive networking site where you can find careers advice or a mentor in your field. Read alumni advice from eight FLS alumni volunteer mentors, who share their experiences and tips to help with the next step in your working life.

Alumni benefits and services

As UCL alumni, you're a crucial part of UCL's vibrant global network and there's a huge range of useful services and exclusive benefits available to you.

Sign up for your UCL alumni card and get discounts and travel deals, access to the UCL library and much more. Plus, you can keep a UCL email address for life.

Keep in touch!

We are on-hand to embrace and celebrate your life after UCL Faculty of Life Sciences. So do share your stories and what you are up to with us on the **UCL Alumni Online Community**!

Discover more news and events from the UCL School of Pharmacy and UCL Division of Biosciences on their webpages.

While you are here...

We are making some exciting changes to our alumni communications and want you to be a part of them. To ensure that you continue to hear about our news and events, including a brand new online Portico magazine, please make sure you opt in.

Join the Campaign for UCL: **www.ucl.ac.uk/campaign**

Connect and share:

Unsubscribe: By clicking this link you will unsubscribe from all future UCL fundraising and alumni communications.

Contact: alumni@ucl.ac.uk +44(0)20 3108 3833

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