Jonathan Lane, BDS Student Presenter

The Institute of Dentistry hosted an INSPIRE event at the Suttie Centre on Wednesday 24th January 2018, welcoming Dental Students and Staff from Glasgow and Dundee Universities to Aberdeen INSPIRE is a national initiative coordinated by the Academy of Medical Sciences and supported by the Wellcome Trust aimed at engaging Medical and Dental Students with research.

Our event this year showcased the diversity of exciting research opportunities available to students during the BDS programme aiming to inspire students to a clinical academic career, and also demonstrate the high quality research work that can be undertaken in primary care.

After lunch and a poster display in the Suttie Atrium, delegates enjoyed excellent research presentations by 3 high-ranking BDS students as well as an entertaining talk from visiting Professor Øystein Fardal who travelled from Norway for the day to inspire a future generation of clinicians.

Karolin Hijazi, Chair of the Institute of Dentistry Research Committee, said: ‘We were honoured to host this important event this year and welcome students and colleagues from the other two Scottish Dental Schools. Presentations by BDS students who undertook a research project in 2017 were excellent and have inspired a number of students to undertake summer research projects in 2018. We also hope to have demonstrated how Dental Schools can work with primary care colleagues to deliver high quality research’.

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NHSG Psychology Research Symposium

A local psychology led initiative (PReP: Psychology Research Partnership) aimed at encouraging and supporting psychology staff working across NHS Grampian to achieve their research ambitions hosted the professions 2nd Annual Research Conference at the Suttie Centre recently. Key aims of the day were to highlight to colleagues locally available services that can help support them in realising their research goals and help encourage staff to think about some of the different ways that we can use our research skills to help our organisation meet the myriad challenges it faces.

In this context, sessions consisted of a mixture of short talks and workshops; with a strong focus on (i) overcoming barriers to engaging in research, (ii) identifying ways of forging productive working alliances with collaborators (across organisations), and (iii) utilisation of research and leadership skills to improve the services that we provide to our community. A series of presentations showcasing recent and current research projects undertaken by locally based Psychologists working across NHSG and the University of Aberdeen closed the day.

Feedback from delegates was extremely positive. Attendees described the variety of presentations on offer, the ‘practical tips’ given, and the opportunity to network and learn about how staff combine research with their clinical roles, as particularly valuable. Feeling ‘motivated’ and ‘inspired’ to explore ways of bringing their own research ideas to life, captured further sentiments from the day; with everyone that provided feedback expressing appetite for similar events in the future.

Aberdeen Marrow

Aberdeen Marrow – a University of Aberdeen student society dedicated to recruiting people to donate stem cells to assist with treatment of blood cancers, has received 2 awards at the Marrow National AGM in Birmingham - Most Improved Group and a Life Time Achievement Award for Fearghas Middleton (Aberdeen Marrow’s president 2016-2017). These awards come following the growth of Aberdeen Marrow from 4 students to 15 members on the committee in the past year, and managing to raise over £1000 and recruit 185 potential donors in 2016-17.

Marrow is a student led organisation that is part of the charity Anthony Nolan, a UK charity that works in the areas of leukaemia and hematopoietic stem cell transplantation. Marrow recruits donors to the Anthony Nolan register, which then matches DNA samples (saliva samples) from a potential donor on the register to a person in need of a stem cell transplant.

The register is aligned with many other organisations around the world, meaning a person in the UK may be matched with a donor (and their donated stem cell sample) from anywhere around the world.

In this academic year to date, Marrow has raised £1,385 and recruited 139 people to the stem cell donation register hopefully with more yet to come.
Student Health & Wellbeing Day

At the University of Aberdeen we want our students to stay happy and healthy and have a really enjoyable student experience. However, university life presents students with unique challenges. Our Health and Wellbeing days, organised by the CluedUp Health and Wellbeing Campaign, bring lots of service providers together in one space making it easy for students to find out about the wide range of support and information services which are available to them.

On the 18th January we held a Health and Wellbeing fair at the Suttie Centre on the Foresterhill Campus. We were joined by University services such as AUSA Advice, the Student Support Service, Nightline and the Chaplaincy, as well as external organisations which included SAMH, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Alcohol and Drug Action, and NHS Grampian Sexual Health, among others.

While perusing the stalls, students could enjoy a free bowl of porridge or healthy smoothies from Campus Services. They also had the opportunity to make lip balms while talking to Choices Aberdeen, cuddle one of the Pets as Therapy dogs at the event, or have their body mass scanned by the Rowett Institute.

The students and stall holders seemed to really enjoy the event, with stall holders commenting on how valuable their conversations with students are, and students appreciating the opportunity to engage with the variety of services in a relaxed atmosphere.

Vascular Access Course

The Vascular Access Course is held at the Suttie Centre 3-4 times a year. The course is open to all foundation and core trainees across Scotland. It is based on use of ultrasound for peripheral and central access and covers the basic principles, indications and complications of ultrasound. The course also includes practical demonstrations, practice in small groups and videos to reinforce the ideas taught.

The course is facilitated by the Department of Anaesthesia in Aberdeen Royal Infirmary and is approved by the Royal College of Anaesthetists for 2.5 CPD credits. It has had consistently excellent feedback from delegates and has gained a good recognition in Aberdeen. Feedback from delegates who attended the most recent course in January 2018 included:

"Very useful course especially in terms of live demonstrations and hands on experience" and "Great way to learn skills as opposed to on-ward in a hurried environment".
Aberdeen’s Own Global Health Conference

On the 3rd and 4th February, Students for Global Health (SfGH) Aberdeen were honoured to host the National SfGH Conference at the Suttie Centre. The Conference focused on medications and drugs in the context of global health, with a particular emphasis on three areas; illegal drug policy, big pharma and access to medications.

These themes were delivered through talks, panel discussions, workshops, training and advocacy sessions. There was also an all important Ceilidh on Saturday night.

Over 140 delegates from across the UK and abroad attended the event, many of whom commented on how much they learned and how much fun they had. One delegate remarked that it was “by far one of the best organised conferences I’ve been to” with another delegate noting that it was “really engaging and with informed speakers”. The weekend ended with a Moving Forward session where conference attendees were encouraged to develop ideas on how they can campaign for change in their local area. This session ended with delegates promising to write letters to their MPs, start campaign groups in their Universities and join national groups that advocate on these issues.

It was also excellent to see how many students who had never been to a global health event before wanted to join SfGH or work on a campaign in their local area. We hope that, with the momentum the Conference has generated, the group can build upon its success and help establish Aberdeen as a known centre of global health excellence.

NHS/UoA PACES Course

With staff retention and trainee value being an essential element in the future of the NHS, national surveys of Core Medical Trainees (CMT) have asked for more formal PACES teaching. The Membership of the Royal College of Physicians diploma (MRCP UK) exam is often seen as a most formidable task a CMT must undertake. Studies have shown the 3rd and final test, the Practical Assessment of Clinical Examination Skills (PACES) is the most daunting and stressful challenge.

In line with the mission to maintain NHS Grampian at the forefront post-graduate education, a joint venture with University of Aberdeen, NES Scotland and NHS Staff lead to the inaugural ARI MRCP UK (PACES) Course that ran on the 27th and 28th of January. This was lead by Dr Ian Gillanders and Dr David Wandless.

This pilot course, was a 2 day coaching course - utilized local expertise in examination and the renowned facilities to provide a local option for staff. In a survey, candidates and local trainees felt that this initiative may not only help them feel more valued, but also may persuade them to stay in the locality.

It is the hope and aim to offer the course as a normal part of the CMT training in NHS Grampian, and to help our trainees excel and progress into specialist training; improving lives and careers of doctors living and working here in NHS Grampian.
Securing the Bronze Award for the Institute of Education for Medical and Dental Sciences was just the start of our Athena Swan journey - an appraisal of our culture from HR data and staff perceptions. Now work on implementing the Action Plan has begun. By 2021, we will need to decide whether to re-apply for bronze or take a leap and apply for silver—by demonstrating the impact of our actions on our culture. Yet another tick-box exercise? Not really; achieving these awards can provide immense good for the Institute and all of our staff and students. Here are three reasons why these awards matter, and why it is important for you.

1. **It’s not only about women**: Notwithstanding the name (SWAN stands for Scientific Women’s Academic Network), it is about equality for all genders and underrepresented groups, for all staff and students.

2. **It’s about Positive Action, not Positive Discrimination**: It doesn’t tackle gender imbalance through quotas for admissions, promotions or recruitments (positive discrimination) but instead by positive action: supporting underrepresented groups, e.g. ensuring maternity/paternity leave does not impact careers, that meetings are scheduled during core working hours, and promoting flexible working and networking opportunities like the Parent’s Network. It stands for equity and fairness.

3. **The leaky pipeline**: Figures suggest that numbers of women decrease as we move up the career ladder from a 55% female workforce to only 24% professors being female. (Higher Education Statistics Agency, UK, 2016). Our Institute trends are similar (69% of staff, but only 37% Professors are female). It aims to stem this leak by providing support such as a Family Support Award for junior academics to attend and present at conferences, mandatory discussion about career progression at Annual Review, training and mentoring opportunities and positive role modelling.

If you would like to find out more, please contact a.venkatesh@abdn.ac.uk. You can also read our Bronze Award submission and our four-year Action Project SEARCH is an internship programme that supports young people with additional needs. It helps them to gain knowledge, skills and experience they may need for future employment. The programme is hosted by the University along with local and national partners at the King’s College Campus.

A section of the programme allows the interns to undertake a number of placements within the University and NHSG during the year. There are various internships to choose from.

The Suttie Centre is just one of those choices for interns to gain additional skills, knowledge and experience in the workplace. On three occasions throughout the year we have interns who apply to work alongside our staff for 10 weeks.

We have hosted a number of interns over the two years we have participated in the programme and hope that this will continue for many years to come.

While the interns are here you will see them around the building (identified with their Project SEARCH logo jumper/t-shirt) checking and tidying rooms, tending to printers and helping with administration tasks amongst various other jobs.
Monday evenings prove to be a lively affair in the Suttie Centre as NHS and University of Aberdeen students and staff arrive for their weekly dose of Zumba.

Zumba is a Latin inspired cardio workout, exploring different rhythms and styles to a mix of original Zumba songs and covers of chart hits and classics. The variety means that there is something for everyone, and singing, whooping and hollering is encouraged throughout so that this class feels like a party instead of a workout.

The class has been running for almost two years now and is still a big hit with staff, with many of those from the very first session still attending every week. However, new faces are always welcome and will soon feel like part of the Zumba family!

Zumba appeals to people of all backgrounds, and Monday’s 6.15pm class sees PhD students and nurses, medical secretaries, nutritionists and consultants all come together for their weekly hour of dance and fun.

However, dance experience is not essential as participants work to their own pace and intensity, with options provided to ensure that everyone gets something out of the class. All that is required is a sense of fun, and you are guaranteed to go home with a smile on your face!