

Distinguished Achievement Awards

29 June 2012

Postgraduate Students of the Year 2012

The criteria against which their nominations were judged state:

"The nominee should be an outstanding postgraduate student who has excelled in some significant manner for example after the presentation of a thesis based on the recommendation and judgment of the external examiner; or has had a major research achievement during a PGR programme, eg high quality journal publication; research spin off etc."

Dr Siddharth Banka, School of Biomedicine, Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences

Dr Siddharth Banka, from the School of Biomedicine in the Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences, is a Clinical Genetics Trainee who has recently completed a PhD as a Manchester BRC Training Fellow. In the past year, he has discovered a completely novel form of metabolic disorder which is caused by deficiency of an enzyme called dihydrofolate reductase.

Children affected by this disorder suffer with anaemia, epilepsy and developmental delay, but early treatment can make an enormous difference to their health.

His study has been published in the prestigious American Journal of Human Genetics, recognised by international awards and is already stimulating interest among many international clinicians, researchers and pharmaceutical companies due to the importance of this enzyme as a target for cancer and anti-inflammatory treatments.

Dr David Birks, School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Humanities

Dr David Birks, who was in the School of Social Sciences within the Faculty of Humanities, is described as having been an outstanding PhD student who excelled academically and played a leading role in the postgraduate and political theory communities at Manchester.

David successfully defended his doctoral thesis on 'Wellbeing, Reasons and Paternalism' in September 2011. His research challenges dominant liberal theorizing that delegitimizes treating a patient without his or her consent.

David argues that, under certain conditions, it is morally required to administer either non-voluntary or involuntary medical treatment.

His scholarship is of exceptional quality, evidenced by his PhD examiners' report, his 2011 publication in the internationally renowned journal *Bioethics*, and papers at high-ranking conferences such as the Rocky Mountains Ethics Congress.

Dr Annette Allen, Faculty of Life Sciences

Annette Allen from the Faculty of Life Sciences is described as having been an excellent PhD student. Annette studied the visual system, using laboratory mice to explore how the retina encodes the light environment and how that is impacted by diseases of the eye.

She submitted an outstanding thesis within three years of first registration and is said to have 'breezed through her viva'. Her thesis work will yield three first author and three co-authored publications, including some in the highest impact journals in the field.

She has been a great ambassador for our University, winning prizes at conferences and leading a new interaction with industry.

Dr Mike Vesterinen, School of Physics and Astronomy, Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences

During his PhD, Mika Vesterinen, who studied in the School of Physics and Astronomy in the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences, developed novel data analysis techniques enabling tests to be made of aspects of the Standard Model of particle physics with unprecedented precision using data from the DZero experiment at the high energy "Tevatron" proton---antiproton collider at Fermilab, Chicago.

Mika's measurements of the production of Z bosons have exposed deficiencies in the current state---of---the---art theoretical predictions for vector boson production at hadron colliders. These techniques are now being used in the experiments at CERN's Large Hadron Collider (LHC) and have stimulated considerable interest in the theoretical particle physics community.