

NEWSLETTER

Issue 16 2025

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HARNESSING IMMUNE COMPLEXITY

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Director's Update

As I look back over the recent months, I am struck by the incredible momentum building across the Becker. Our community continues to push the boundaries of immunology and inflammation, and this edition highlights the sheer breadth of that impact—from foundational discovery and multi-million pound grants to civic engagement in our local Manchester wards.

I was deeply honoured to recently receive the **Nature Award for Mentoring in Science**. This recognition means a great deal to me personally because it celebrates the success of the scientists I have had the privilege to support over the years. At the Becker, we strive to create an environment where researchers at every level can flourish, and seeing our team members thrive is the most rewarding part of my role.



This spirit of collaboration is further exemplified by our recent success in securing the **£50m MRC CoRE in Exposome Immunology**. This is a monumental achievement and is a testament to the hard work of everyone involved and in particular the CoRE's Director **Professor Judi Allen**. The MRC CoRE in Exposome Immunology represents a new chapter in our ability to tackle complex inflammatory diseases.

We also celebrate significant individual milestones, including **Professor Tony Day's** election as a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences and **Dr Pedro Papotto's** AMS Springboard Award. From the **Wellcome Trust Career Development Award** granted to **Doug Dyer** to the success of the **Ardwick Green Route** public engagement project led by **Sheena Cruickshank**, it is clear that the Becker is making waves both in the lab and in the community.

Finally, I want to thank our Social Committee for maintaining the collegiate spirit that makes the Becker such a special place to work. Whether through our Away Days or our regular socials, it is the people here who drive our success.

Professor Tracy Hussell

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Bill Ford Food (BFF)

In honour of Professor Ford, the Bill Ford Chair of Cellular Immunology was created at the University. The role was recently held by Professor Werner Muller, prior to his retirement, and is currently held by Professor Richard Grencis. Bill Ford started the first immunology seminar series in Manchester and so it is fitting that our weekly lunchtime meeting for scientific discussions on anything immunological is named after him – Bill Ford Food (BFF). The group meet each Thursday for lunch at 1 pm in Room 4.005 in the AV Hill Building.

Previous discussions have ranged from what are the next emerging fields in immunology, global health opportunities in Manchester.

If any PIs would like to join, please contact Mr Ameur Bayar via ameur.bayar@manchester.ac.uk to be added to the list of BFF members.



New £50m MRC Centre to study how environmental exposures cause chronic inflammatory diseases



**MRC Centre of Research
Excellence in Exposome
Immunology**



The environment is increasingly acknowledged to play a critical role in our risk of developing diseases, with [30,000 deaths attributed to air pollution alone in the UK each year](#). [A new research centre](#) based at The Universities of Manchester and Oxford will turn the attention of world-leading immunologists toward understanding how the totality of environmental factors we are exposed to over our lifetimes, known as “the exposome”, rewire our immune systems to cause chronic inflammatory diseases.

Up to £50 million is to be invested in a Medical Research Council Centre of Research Excellence (MRC CoRE) in Exposome Immunology over the next 14 years.

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These environmental exposures, which also include things like microbes and toxins, predominantly interact with our bodies at what we call 'mucosal barrier sites', for example our lungs and intestines. Here, they meet by our immune cells, and can change how the immune system works, pushing some tissues into chronic inflammation, causing diseases such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD) and inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

The centre will embrace AI technology to interrogate large data sets, such as those from UK Biobank, patient cohorts and long-term studies in hospital clinics, and identify common pathways by which environmental factors disrupt the immune system. Findings will be tested through laboratory studies and by exposing healthy volunteers to pollutants and common viral infections, leading to more accurate diagnoses, better prevention, and more effective treatment options.

[Professor Judi Allen](#) is Director of the [MRC CoRE in Exposome Immunology](#). She said: "Globally we're facing a crisis in chronic inflammatory diseases, such as asthma and inflammatory bowel disease. For decades we've been studying how our genes make us susceptible to disease. While very valuable, genetics has only got us so far. We need to understand how our environment interacts with our genes to make our immune system malfunction."

"We will benefit from advances in new technologies to identify which of the many complex factors may be important in driving disease, but what's different about our new Centre is we are going to define how the immune system is altered by these environmental factors and how that impacts inflammation. Changing environments, often made worse by socioeconomic disparities and rising pollution, appear to be increasing the rates of these diseases, making it even more imperative to find the causes."

"We hope to later expand our research to include more environmental factors, such as mould and microplastics, which are growing concerns. An ultimate goal of this research would be to discover the underlying causes of these chronic diseases so we can develop better prevention and treatments."



Professor Fiona Powrie, co-director of the MRC CoRE in Exposome Immunology, from University of Oxford, said: "This is an exciting opportunity to bring together complementary expertise in The University of Manchester and University of Oxford to build a multidisciplinary team to tackle this challenge. Our Centre will train a new generation

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of scientists working across biology and environmental science, future proofing our efforts to combat the health effects of a changing environment.”

Professor Patrick Chinnery, MRC Executive Chair, said: “This new MRC Centre of Research Excellence will transform our understanding of how lifelong environmental exposures shape immune health and cause chronic inflammatory diseases. With chronic inflammatory diseases posing such a large and growing disease burden, the new centre is well placed pave the way for more effective and targeted treatments.

Congratulations

Professor Tracy Hussell Receives Nature Lifetime Achievement Award for Mentoring in Science



A [2025 Nature Award for Mentoring in Science](#) has been awarded to our Director [Professor Tracy Hussell](#) for lifetime achievement. The awards recognise individuals who provide exceptional guidance and support to emerging scientists, foster a culture of collaboration and excellence, and make a significant impact on the careers of early-stage researchers.

As a result of her mentorship, one of Professor Hussell’s mentees, [Dr Madhvi Menon](#), has gone on to receive a [UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship](#) to further develop her independent research programme.

Speaking about her mentorship, her mentees describe Professor Hussell as a visionary guide:

“Tracy has an excellent eye for the bigger picture. [...]. She has pushed me to be ambitious in my research and encouraged me to develop my own collaborations across faculties.”

Commenting on the award, Professor Hussell said, “I am thrilled to be recognised by *Nature* for something that brings me such joy: mentoring others. I have been fortunate to work with many wonderful people, and it has been an enormous pleasure to support them in any way possible throughout their lives and careers.”

Professor Richard Grencis receives BSI Immunology Research Excellence Award



Professor Richard Grencis received the BSI Immunology Research Excellence Award 2025 for his is pioneering work in mucosal and parasite immunology.

Richard has been based at The University of Manchester since In 1987 when he was appointed lecturer in immunology at the School of Biological Sciences. He became professor of immunology in 1998. Richard is also academic lead at the University's Biological Services Facility, and has been a scientific member of the University of Manchester Animal Welfare Ethical Review body (AWERB) for many years.

He said: "I am delighted to receive this award and grateful for the recognition it gives to this crucial area of research.

"Our studies focus on defining the regulation of the immune response to roundworm infections which live in the gastrointestinal tract.

"There is an urgent need to tackle this problem: millions of people living in low and middle income countries, especially children, have to contend with the terrible problems caused by roundworm parasites.

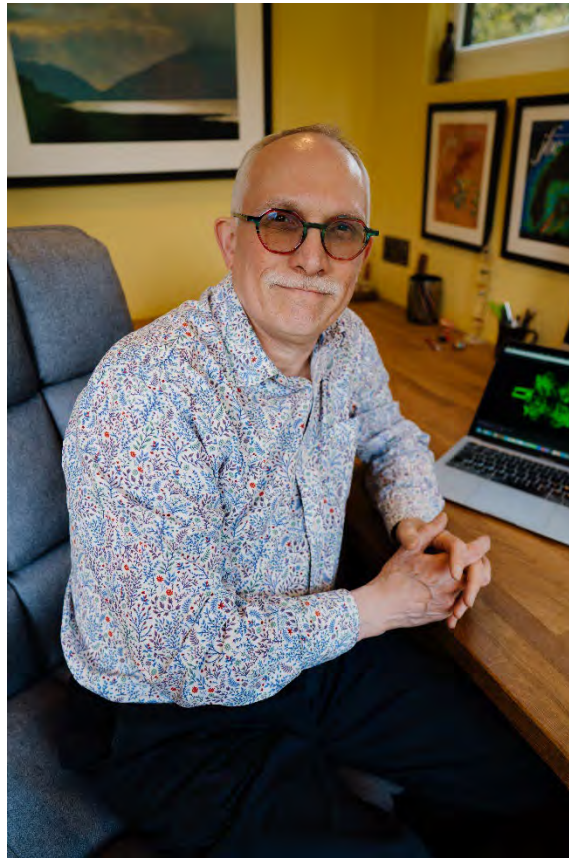
"There are currently no vaccines for these parasites in humans and a deeper understanding of how the immune system deals with roundworms helps us towards this goal.

"An added bonus is that our studies have also helped us make new fundamental discoveries of how the immune system works.

"Much progress has been made in this area, but there is still a long way to go."

Professor Tony Day Elected Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences

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Professor Tony Day, a member of the Manchester Cell-Matrix Centre, who has been elected as a **Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences**. This prestigious honor recognizes Tony's status as a world leader in the study of glycosaminoglycan-protein interactions in both health and disease.

Over a distinguished 30-year career, Tony has pioneered research into how the protein **TSG-6** interacts with **hyaluronan**, a vital component of the body's extracellular matrix. His work has unlocked the molecular secrets of processes ranging from essential reproductive biology to the complex inflammatory pathways involved in lung pathologies.

Tony's commitment to translating basic science into patient benefit is exemplified by:

- **Link_TSG6**: A biological drug developed from his research with wide potential for treating inflammatory and degenerative diseases.
- **Link Biologics**: A University of Manchester spin-out company Tony co-founded to develop treatments for **dry eye disease** and **osteoarthritis**—conditions that impact approximately 700 million people globally.

Professor Day shared his gratitude for the recognition:

"I am absolutely delighted to be elected as a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences and get recognition for my team's research in the fields of matrix and glycosaminoglycan biology."

Dr Doug Dyer Awarded £2.6M Career Development Award



Doug Dyer has been awarded a prestigious Wellcome Trust Career Development Award (CDA) totalling **£2.6M**.

His project will focus on the **cell surface glycocalyx**—a complex layer of sugars and proteins on the surface of cells—and its critical role in how immune cells are recruited to the brain during disease. By exploring the physical and biochemical functions of the glycocalyx, Doug's work aims to provide essential insights into how we might target pathological inflammation in devastating conditions like **stroke**. This substantial funding will allow the team to push the boundaries of how we understand and treat inflammatory processes within the brain.

Dr Andy Greenhalgh and Dr Helen Parker receive MRC Award to Explore Meningeal Immunity and Neurodegeneration



Dr Andy Greenhalgh (PI) and Dr Helen Parker (Co-I) have been awarded an **MRC project grant** totalling **£700,000** over the next three years titled *"Understanding how meningeal immune dysregulation promotes neurodegeneration in Lysosomal Storage Disorders."*

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Lysosomal storage disorders (LSDs) are a group of rare genetic diseases affecting children, for whom there are almost no treatment options. Genetic mutations cause problems in the lysosomes of cells, leading to neurological problems, cognitive decline and ultimately death. Some of these processes are similar to those found in Alzheimer's Disease (AD) and children are often referred to as having paediatric AD. This project aims to address if the immune system may play a fundamental role in exacerbating neurodegeneration in LSDs. Through a combination of preclinical models and patient CSF and plasma samples, we will gain an understanding of whether meningeal immune dysregulation promotes neurodegeneration.

BBSRC Funding Secured for New UK Proteoglycans and Glycosaminoglycans Academy

[The UK Proteoglycans and Glycosaminoglycans Academy \(UK-P/G Academy\)](#) (funded value £500k) was approved for funding by the BBSRC in July.

This three-year grant will be instrumental in:

- **Strengthening the community** through dedicated networking events.
- **Enhancing collaboration** via new, small funding schemes.
- **Facilitating knowledge sharing** through various institute-wide initiatives.
- **Nurturing the next generation** of scientists with tailored mentorship programmes.

The network will be led by Jessica Kwok and Ralf Richter from the University of Leeds with **Doug Dyer** from The University of Manchester and Cathy Merry in Nottingham. The proposal was supported by **Professor Tony Day** at The University of Manchester.

European Patent Granted to Tony Day and Caroline Milner for Innovative Dry Eye Treatment

The European patent "**TSG6 Polypeptide fragment for dry eye disease**" was officially granted on 19 March, 2025. This patent—invented by **Professor Tony Day** and **Dr Caroline Milner** in collaboration with Joo Youn Oh—serves as the foundational intellectual property for **Link Biologics Ltd**. The University of Manchester spin-out is currently utilising this patented technology to develop **Link_TSG6**, a promising new treatment designed to address the underlying inflammatory drivers of dry eye disease.

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Dr Pedro Papotto Receives Prestigious AMS Springboard Award



Dr Pedro Papotto has been named a recipient of the **Academy of Medical Sciences (AMS) Springboard Award**. This funding is designed to support early-career researchers as they transition to independent research leaders.

With the support of the AMS, Dr Papotto will investigate the biology of **innate-like T lymphocytes** within the skin. Because these cells are situated at the body's barrier, they are the first line of defence in both protective and pathological immune responses. His research will focus on the molecular networks that control these cells and, crucially, how they influence immune responses in distal tissues, specifically exploring the **skin-lung axis**.

Dr Papotto shared his excitement about the impact of this award on his new research group:

"As a new group leader, the Springboard Award will give me the possibility to explore my research niche whilst setting up my laboratory in the vibrant scientific environment found at the Lydia Becker Institute and UoM.

Throughout the course of this project I expect to recruit research staff and students and consolidate important collaborations across multiple departments in-house and outside the UK. Overall, the Springboard Award

will be instrumental in helping me to secure further funding."

Co-Creating a Healthier, Safer, and Greener Ardwick Wins 2025 Excellence in Health Creation Award



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Congratulations to our Eco-immunology Deputy Branch Lead [Professor Sheena Cruickshank](#) and our collaborators at [Ardwick Climate Action](#) on winning the award for 'Best health creation approach to seeking and using community insight' at the [2025 Excellence in Health Creation Awards](#) for the 'Co-creating a Healthier, Safer and Greener Ardwick' project.

This award celebrates a group of individuals or an organisation that by connecting with people and/or communities to deliver new insights, understanding, activities and actions have informed strategies, programmes and services that help reduce health inequity among one or more local communities.

The 2025 Excellence in Health Creation Awards recognised outstanding individuals, teams and organisations who are leading the way in health creation across the UK.

Read more about our ongoing collaborative work with Ardwick Climate Action [here](#).

Dr Matthew Sinton Named IUIS 2025 Rising Star



[Dr Matthew Sinton](#) has been named as one of the prestigious **Rising Stars for IUIS 2025**, an honour awarded by the [International Union of Immunological Societies \(IUIS\)](#).

Matthew's selection follows a rigorous international review process conducted by the IUIS 2025 Rising Stars Programme Committee. Candidates were evaluated based on their scientific achievements, leadership potential, and community impact. This recognition places him among a select group of early-career immunologists from around the world who are making exceptional contributions to the field.

Matthew presented his research at the [IUIS 2025 Congress](#) which took place from August 17th–22nd, in Vienna, Austria.

Dr John Grainger Appointed New Head of Division for Division of Immunology, Immunity to Infection and Respiratory Medicine

Congratulations to our Deputy Director Dr John Grainger who was appointed Head of Division for Division of Immunology, Immunity to Infection and Respiratory Medicine in September following Professor Mark Travis stepping down from the role.

Professor Simon Hubbard, Head of School, commented: "I am delighted that John has been appointed to the position of Head of Division and have every confidence that he will excel in his new role. I have no doubt that John will continue to drive forward the excellent research and teaching strategy of the Division and work hard to provide a collegiate, energetic and supportive environment for colleagues to flourish. Please join me in congratulating John on his appointment!"



The Ardwick Green Route Team Wins Outstanding Public Engagement Initiative



Congratulations to **Professor Sheena Cruickshank** and her multi-disciplinary team for winning the **Outstanding Public Engagement Initiative: Local/Civic Engagement** award at the University's **Making a Difference Awards**.

The [Ardwick Green Route](#) project is the culmination of six years of dedicated partnership between researchers and the residents of Ardwick. Facing some of the highest pollution levels in the UK, the team utilized consultation workshops and participatory mapping to address local concerns regarding air quality and safety.

By identifying pollution hotspots through community site visits and monitoring, the project successfully launched a greener, safer walking path in April. This route is marked by interactive physical wayfinders, providing the community with a practical tool to navigate their environment while minimizing exposure to pollutants.

Congratulations to the entire cross-faculty team:

- **Sheena Cruickshank**
- **Joanna Barrow**
- **Joe Morris**
- **George Adams**
- **Nick Weiss**
- **Olivia Jackson**
- **Ardwick Pollution Action Group**

Professor Judi Allen became the 10th recipient of the Delphine Parrott award and delivered this year's memorial lecture.



Professor Matt Hepworth delivered his inaugural lecture in September.



Dr Georgia Baldwin received a prize for her Bright Sparks talk at BSI.



Dr Chiara Tontini was one of the winners of the Best Flash Talks at the EAACI meeting in Glasgow

In April the Allen Lab attended the wedding of **James Parkinson** – congratulations to James and Jess!



Bride Jess, and best men Pedro Papotto & Brian Chan with the groom



Hannah, Lilli, Becky, Beth & Judi

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Congratulations – PhD and Undergraduate students

Congratulations to;

- **Macaulay Turner**, Awarded the prize for best poster for at the Joint Parasitology Spring Meeting 2025
- **Megan Priestley**, Awarded the PGR of the Year Award for the School of Biological Sciences at the DAGS Conference
- **Erin Pallott**, Awarded the Best Contribution to PGR Environment award at the DAGS Conference and the FBMH Outstanding Contribution to PPIE (Student) Award.



Holly Sedgwick, Received a prize for her presentation in the Bright Sparks session at BSI.

Viva:

- **Annie Whelan** for passing her PhD viva in June (Konkel Lab)



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- **Erin Pallott** for passing her PhD viva in November (Grencis and Thornton Labs)

- **Emiliya Seytyagyayeva** for passing her PhD viva in December (supervised by Tony Day and Judi Allen)



- **Connor Lynch** for passing his PhD viva in June (Grencis Lab)
- **Shaun Wright** for passing his PhD viva in June (Lennon and Greenhalgh Labs)
- Congratulations to **Richard Scharff**, supervised by **Tony Day** and **Caroline Milner** (with Simon Clark, Tübingen), who successfully defended his thesis, *Investigating the role of inter-alpha-trypsin inhibitor heavy chain 3 in age-related macular degeneration*, on 27 January. The examiners were Clair Baldock and Cathy Merry (University of Nottingham).
- Congratulations to **Georgia Baldwin**, supervised by **Judi Allen** and **Tony Day**, who successfully defended her thesis on 6th February: *Chitinase-like proteins as regulators of IL-17 in the context of helminth infection and LPS induced inflammation*. The examiners were **Joanne Konkell** and William Horsnell (University of Exeter). Georgia gave a pre-viva talk entitled: *"Unusual partners: Ym1 as a regulator of IL-17 and LPS during helminth infection and sterile inflammation"*.
- **Olivia Shorthouse** (Quintana lab) undertook a 2-month long research internship at the Uganda Schistosomiasis Multidisciplinary Research Centre. There, Olivia gained insights into the lived experiences of those most affected by this devastating parasitic infection, in particular women and girls around Lake Albert and Lake Victoria.
- Congratulations to **Ziyun Zhang** (Hussell lab) who was named Highly Commended for the Best Outstanding Research Contribution Award by the Doctoral Academy.

- Congratulations to **Yiqiao Chen** (Bulfone-Paus lab) who was named Highly Commended for the Best Contribution to PGR Environment Award by the Doctoral Academy.

Invited Seminars and Presentations



Anna Hains (pictured above) attended the **Keystone Lipids in Cellular Function and Disease conference** in Breckenridge, Colorado in April. Anna gave a poster and oral presentation, titled 'Ceramide mediating the resolution of skin inflammation'. **Anna was also awarded a Keystone Symposia Future of Science Fund scholarship** based on her abstract.

Tony Day and Caroline Milner gave a Divisional Update talk (on behalf of the Division of Cell-Matrix Biology and Regenerative Medicine) at the SBS Annual Event on 12th February entitled: *"Developing Link_TSG6 as a biological drug"*.

Emiliya Seytyagyayeva (supervised by Tony Day and Judi Allen) gave a talk at the BSMB Spring Meeting "Extracellular matrix, immunity and infection" (Nottingham, UK) on 14th April entitled: *"Modulation of collagen fibril formation by chitinase-like proteins"*. Congratulations to Emiliya who received a 'best talk' prize.

Dr Helen Parker gave an oral presentation at UK Proteoglycan conference, Manchester, 20th January 2025, entitled: 'Pathogenic 2-O-sulphated heparan sulphate promotes TLR4 dependent innate immunity'.

Dr Matthew Sinton was invited by the Young European Federation of Immunological Societies (yEFIS) to participate in a panel discussion on promoting inclusion in STEM, with other researchers from across Europe.

Dr. Juan F. Quintana presented at the UK Kinetoplastid Consortium held in Lancaster in June.

Dr Jonathan Worboys spoke at The Cancer Immunotherapy Revolution Study Day on the 24th January at the Christie Hospital, giving a talk entitled "Checkpoint Inhibitors – Rationale for Use".

Events

CIM Connect Unites Manchester Researchers Across Cancer, Immunology and Cell-Matrix Science



On **Monday 8 December**, the **Cancer, Immunology, Matrix (CIM) Connect** event brought researchers and clinicians from across Manchester together for an evening of rapid-fire talks, shared insights, and lively discussion focused on tumour-microenvironment interactions.

Hosted at the Oglesby Cancer Research Building, the event showcased the breadth and depth of research taking place across the [Lydia Becker Institute of Immunology and Inflammation](#), the [Division of Cancer Sciences](#), the [Manchester Cell-Matrix Centre](#), and the [Manchester Immuno-Oncology Network](#).

The programme featured a series of short 5-minute presentations that offered a snapshot of the innovative science driving Manchester's cancer, cell-matrix and immunology research. Presentations covered a wide range of topics, spanning how **mechanical forces, inflammation, and the microbiome shape cancer immunity**, to new insights into **tumour-host interactions** in challenging diseases such as pancreatic and brain tumours. Speakers also highlighted advances in understanding **immune-related toxicity**, the power of **cutting-edge technologies for mapping the tumour microenvironment**, and there was an introduction to the recently launched [MRC CoRE in Exposome Immunology](#).

Speakers included:

- Dr Joan Chang
- Professor Patrick Caswell
- Dr Adam Byron
- Dr Santiago Zelenay
- Dr Evangelos Giampazolias
- Professor Claus Jorgensen
- Professor Mark Travis
- Professor Kevin Couper
- Professor Matt Hepworth



Professor **Rachel Lennon**, Director of the Manchester Cell-Matrix Centre, reflected on the significance of the meeting: *"The Cancer, Immunology, Matrix Connect event was excellent! Clear synergies emerged between these research pillars in Manchester, and I'm confident this meeting will catalyse new collaborations."*

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Professor **Martin McCabe** from the Division of Cancer Sciences echoed this enthusiasm: *“The event was a fantastic opportunity for cross-fertilisation of ideas and expertise in cancer, cell-matrix biology and the immune microenvironment. After some dynamic, engaging talks, it was great to see the energy in the room as academics from all disciplines mingled to discuss areas of commonality for future collaboration.”*



CIM Connect has laid the groundwork for new partnerships, shared projects, and a more integrated approach to understanding and targeting the tumour microenvironment.

WT ICD PhD Programme Student Away Day



Students from our Wellcome Trust ICD PhD Programme attended their annual Away Day, held in July at **Shrigley Hall in Cheshire**. The Away day provided a vital space for our researchers to step away from the lab and focus on professional growth and community building.



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Refining the Art of Communication

The Away Day programme kicked off with a session led by Jamie McDonald titled "**Presentations - structure, design and making things sticky**". Students moved beyond the standard "trial by PowerPoint" to explore how to create memorable, visually effective supports that ensure their research impact lasts long after they leave the room.

The agenda also addressed the personal and systemic aspects of academic life:

- **Overcoming Impostor Syndrome:** In the "No impostors here" workshop, students examined the root of academic self-doubt and developed practical, long-term habits to help stabilise their confidence during challenging periods of their research.
- **Shaping Research Culture:** Led by Julia Schoonover, this interactive session moved from reflecting on the research environment to taking action. Students collaborated to identify small, achievable changes to help foster a more inclusive and supportive environment within the WT ICD PhD Programme and the wider University.



Beyond the workshops, the group enjoyed some downtime with **Footgolf** and local walks, allowing for the kind of informal networking and peer support that is essential for a healthy research community.

Building Trust in Health Research at the Castlemere Community Health Fair



On Saturday 1 November, the Lydia Becker Institute took part in the Community Health Fair at Castlemere Community Centre in Rochdale. The event was co-produced by [Dr Madhvi Menon](#) and [Dr Sean Knight](#) from the Becker, Mohammed Tariq from the Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation, and Hafiz Abdul Malik and Tayyib Tariq from Castlemere Community Centre. The Mayor of Rochdale, Councillor Janet Emsley, also attended.



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Health inequalities remain a significant challenge across Greater Manchester. In particular, communities of Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage experience some of the poorest health outcomes in the region, including higher rates of diabetes, stroke and respiratory illness—issues often compounded by longstanding gaps in trust and access to healthcare services.



Castlemere Community Centre has long played a key role in supporting local residents, many of whom are from South Asian backgrounds and live in one of Greater Manchester's most socioeconomically deprived areas. The Health Fair offered a valuable opportunity to connect directly with the community, share health information, and listen to their concerns and experiences.

During the event, Dr Madhvi Menon delivered a talk on autoimmunity and chronic lung disease. Researchers from the Becker were also on hand throughout the day, speaking with attendees about their work and answering questions on topics such as COVID-19, vaccination, and how the immune system works. A range of interactive activities—including “Splat the Virus”, a pipetting challenge, and the “Build Your Own Immune System” spinning-wheel game—helped make these conversations accessible and fun for participants of all ages. Many attendees also signed up to the Research for the Future database, expressing interest in taking part in future studies. This support helps ensure that research across Greater Manchester better represents the full diversity of its communities.



Mohammed Tariq said, "From the outset, we wanted to ensure that the event was authentically coproduced, which helps build stronger relationships and trust between community members and with service providers and institutions. I want to thank everyone who helped to make this event possible and look forward to working with Dr Sean Knight and Dr Madhvi Menon in the future."

Our Manchester, Our Air: Creating a breathable city



Greater Manchester is the [worst place](#) in the UK for toxic air, linked to 1,200 early deaths each year, and with the highest rates of child asthma hospital admissions. We wouldn't let our children drink dirty water, so why do we allow them to breathe dirty air? How can we positively imagine a healthy and breathable Manchester?

Collaborating with local scientists, artists, and community groups, ***Our Manchester, Our Air*** held on Saturday 22nd March was an exciting community day exploring how to collectively imagine and create a breathable city.

This event was free, family-friendly and open to all. For the first time, Asthma + Lung UK brought to Manchester the exhibition *This is Life + Breath: Stories of Toxic Air* by award-winning photographer [Chris O'Donovan](#).



It was a day of hands-on activities and discussions at [Manchester Art Gallery](#), exploring how toxic air impacts our health. The community heard from life-long campaigner Maksim engage experts on how to tackle air pollution, and got stuck in hands-on activities to create clean air for all.



The event included:

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- Free community lunch
- Interactive discussion featuring clean air experts Dr Binita Kane, Prof. Sheena Cruickshank, Layla Siebert (co-founder of Kidical Mass), Lynda Stefek (Air Quality & Environment Senior Manager – TfGM), and local campaigners Julia and Maksim Kovaliova
- Health advice and air quality scientists – discover what air pollution is, how it affects us, and what we can do to take action!
- Hands-on activities from Ardwick Climate Action, Lydia Becker Institute, and Steady State Manchester
- Creative arts visualising clean air Manchester with Mum's for Lungs
-

A big thank you to Becker volunteers:

- Holly Sedgwick
- Iashia Mulholland
- Ziyun Zhang
- Dr Chiara Tontinu

British Science Week Science Fair – Manchester Museum

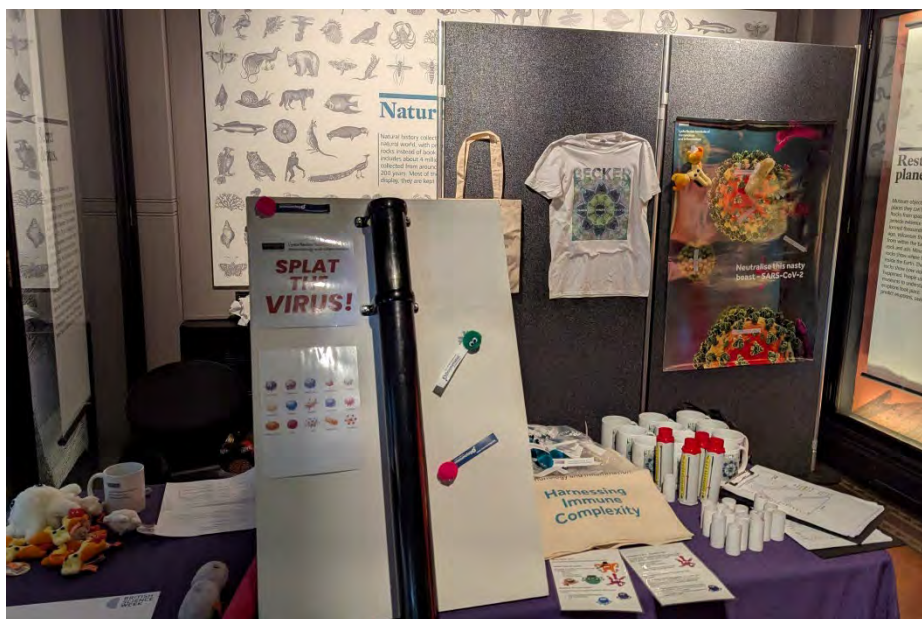


In March, the Lydia Becker Institute took part in the British Science Week Science Fair at the Manchester Museum. This unforgettable event welcomed over 1,140 pupils across two days and featured 47 unique engagement opportunities led by University of Manchester scientists and researchers.

Our team showcased the critical role different immune cells play in protecting the body from viruses through a series of interactive, high-energy games:

- **Neutralise a Virus:** A crowd favorite where pupils threw giant "soft microbe" white blood cells at a targeted SARS-CoV-2 virus poster to simulate an immune response.

- **Splat the Virus!:** An immunology-themed adaptation of "splat the rat," challenging players to catch and "splat" a virus as it exited a tube before it could spread.
- **Build your Immune System!:** A spinning wheel game where pupils had five chances to collect a full set of immune cells needed to successfully fight off an infection.



Players who excelled at these challenges were rewarded with Becker-branded prizes, including mugs, "bug eyes," and t-shirts.





Reflecting on the event, Becker PhD student **Jacob Parkes** said: ““It was a privilege to represent the Lydia Becker Institute at the BSW Science Fair. I found that it was an enlightening experience, speaking with enthusiastic students who wanted to learn more about how our immune system works, as well as just wanting to win prizes in general. I guess the latter shows their determination also!

I find that interacting with the public, as a budding PhD student, is a great way to get across complex concepts in a more concise form. Seeing them being able to understand how white blood cells tackle

infections, and how important these cells are, can lead to further enthusiasm for science, hopefully leading to future scientists! Applying and talking openly about science in general is a great way of raising awareness of these subjects and building a greater public understanding.

Outreach at Great Moor Junior School Stockport

In March Becker PhD student [Iashia Mulholland](#) from our [Wellcome Trust Immunomatrix in Complex Disease Programme](#) attended a Careers Fair at her former school [Great Moor Junior School](#) based in Stockport.

The event was aimed at children in Years 5 and 6. Iashia spoke with pupils about what made her want to pursue a career in science, what being a PhD student entails and gave an overview of the research conducted at the Lydia Becker Institute.

Pupils also got the opportunity to play the Becker game ‘Neutralise The Virus’ (where players aim to throw antibodies at a SARS-CoV-2 virus), see how a lung function test is conducted and learned how to use a pipette.



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Reflecting on why attending the Science Fair was so important to her Iashia said: "I think for me my main focus is that science is open to anyone. I remember growing up thinking that university and science were for other people and totally out of my reach and it hindered me in so many ways when I was younger. So if I can help in any way to try to challenge that narrative in schools (or any area) then I'm happy to do it!"

DIIRM Socials



Beyond the lab, our regular DIIIRM social events throughout the year—culminating in our annual Christmas party—play a vital role in strengthening our community. These gatherings offer a relaxed space for our researchers and PGRs to interact and network, directly contributing to a more collaborative and supportive research culture.





We would like to extend a huge thank you to our dedicated social committee members—**Isabelle Blair, Argyro Olympitis, Kat Laverty, Ivy Usansky, Clara Whiteley, and Olivia Shorthouse**—whose hard work in organizing these events makes this vibrant environment possible.

Welcome to Dr Erin Pallott – Science Communications Officer



Dr Erin Pallott has joined the Becker as a Science Communication Officer. Throughout her PhD in the Grencis and Thornton labs, Erin joined and led many public engagement and science communication initiatives. In 2026, Erin will be programming several training sessions to pass on what she has learned and help researchers build their confidence in sharing research with the public.

Upcoming Seminars, Meetings and Events

Becker Research Culture Chats



We host regular meetings with Becker affiliated staff and students on the topic of research culture. These include informal conversations on aspects essential for researchers and that extend beyond lab work, such as building resilience, imposter syndrome, and neurodiversity, to networking, reproducibility, career progression.

These informal chats allow Becker researchers to learn from their colleagues, share perspectives on challenges and ultimately help to shape a more positive research culture at the Becker.

Full details are circulated via the Becker mailing list, so keep an eye on your inbox and we hope you'll join us.

MIG Seminar Series

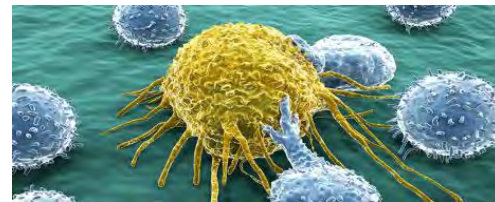
Please contact Andy Greenhalgh
andrew.greenhalgh@manchester.ac.uk or the
DIIIRM PS Team diiirm@manchester.ac.uk if
you would like to be added to the MIG seminar
mailing list.

British Society for immunology		
Greater Manchester Immunology Group Seminar Series 2025-2026		
All seminars at 12-1pm unless otherwise stated Contact: andrew.greenhalgh@manchester.ac.uk , madhvi.menon@manchester.ac.uk , diiirm@manchester.ac.uk		
Date	Speaker	Institute
Thursday 5 February	Alexander Clarke	University of Oxford
Thursday 12 February	Johan Duchêne	Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität
Thursday 19 February	William Hill	CRUK Manchester
Thursday 26 February	Andreas Wack	The Francis Crick Institute
Thursday 5 March	James Edgar	University of Cambridge
Thursday 12 March	Quentin Levrolle	University of Bordeaux
Thursday 19 March	Sara Valpione	CRUK, Manchester
Thursday 26 March	Elizabeth Cooper	CRUK, University of Cambridge
Thursday 2 April		
Thursday 23 April	Sergio Castro-Gomez	University of Bonn
Thursday 30 April	Maria Yazdanbakhsh	Leiden University
Thursday 7 May	Carlos Minutti	
Thursday 14 May		
Thursday 21 May	Sean Lim	University Hospital Southampton
Thursday 11 June		
Thursday 18 June		
Thursday 25 June		
Thursday 2 July		
Thursday 9 July	Sarah Mundt	University Hospital Zurich

Newsletter

MION Network

The Manchester Immuno-Oncology Network (MION) fosters interactions between Clinicians and Scientists with an interest in immuno-oncology within Manchester, with an aim to bring people together to maximise collaborations and provide educational opportunities.



MION hosts quarterly interactive workshops covering topics such as:

- T cell immuno-oncology
- Pre-clinical models
- Immuno-oncology biomarkers
- Moving from pre-clinical data to clinical trial development

If you would like to join the Network and hear about our future events and opportunities for collaboration please email the-christie.Mcr-IONetwork@nhs.net.

Becker Profiles

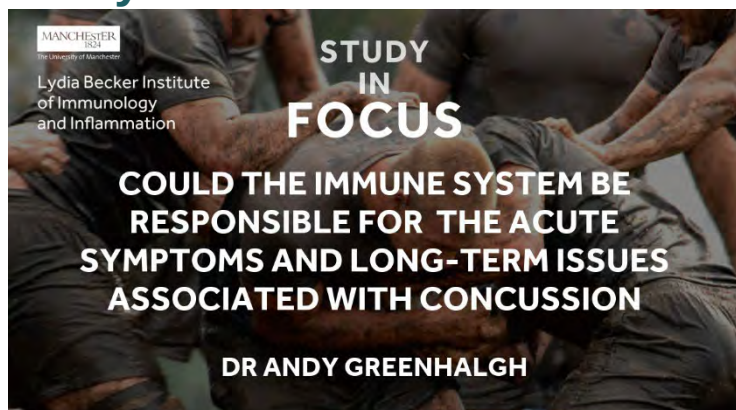
Find out more about the fantastic Research Fellows, Postdocs, Research Assistants, Technicians and PhD students affiliated with the Lydia Becker Institute by taking a look at our '[Becker Profiles](#)' series.

More profiles to come in the new year, so keep an eye on our [website](#)

Photos: [Brian Chan](#)



Study in Focus

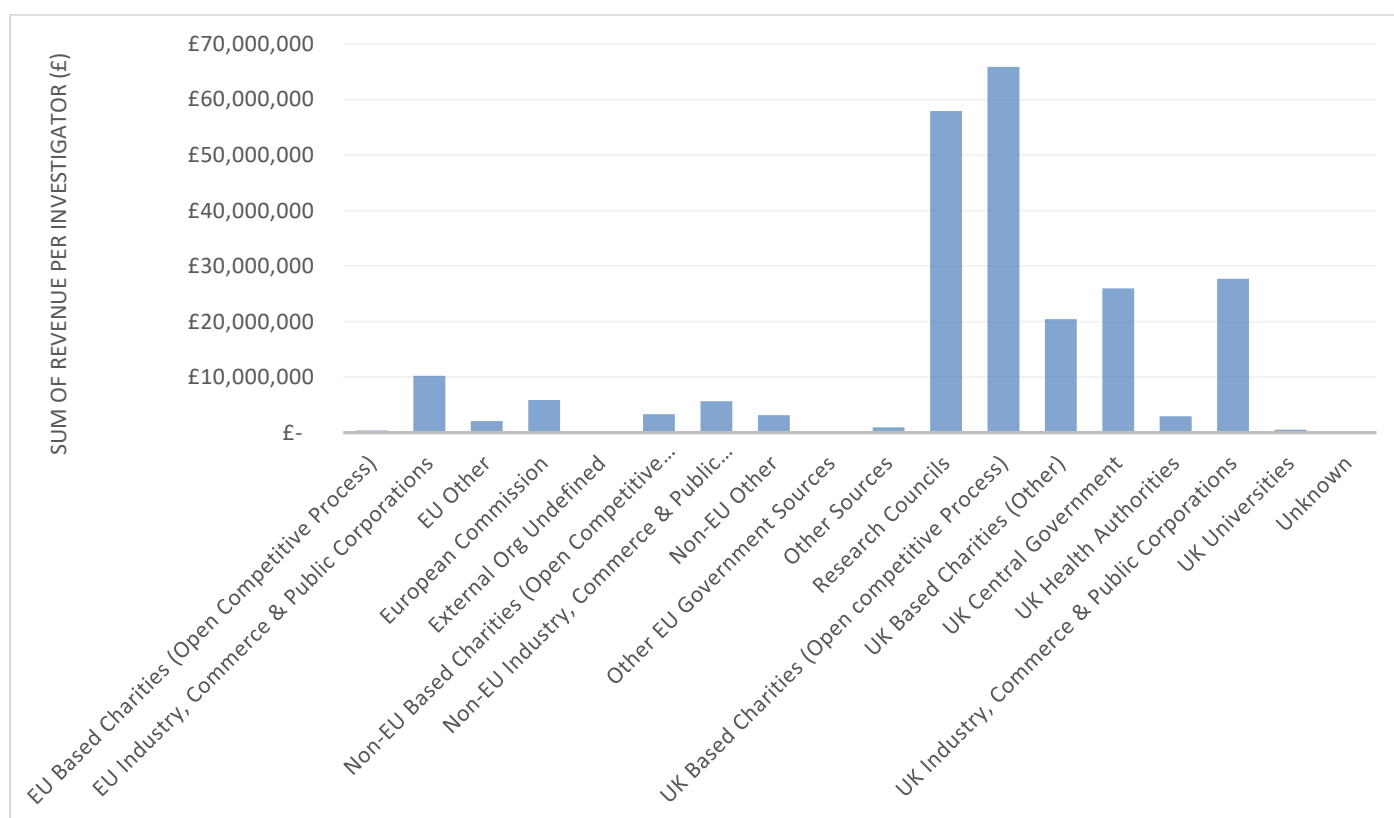


To take a closer look at the fascinating work conducted by Becker researchers and communicate this to a broader audience we launched a series called '[Study in Focus](#)', where our researchers discuss a recent study conducted by their lab, provide an overview of the current research landscape and give their view on what the future might hold for further research and clinical treatments for patients.

Our latest [entry](#), written by our Neuro-immunology Branch Lead [Dr Andy Greenhalgh](#), looks at his lab's research on concussion and the role the immune system might play in those suffering from acute symptoms and long-term issues. You can read it [here](#).

Grants

Since its inception PIs in the Lydia Becker Institute have been awarded over £233M in grants.



Publications

Selected publications from Lydia Becker Institute affiliated researchers

January 2025

Antibodies and Inflammation: Fecal Biomarkers of Gut Health in Domestic Ruminants Burton AM, Else KJ, Irving J, Mair I, Shultz S. *J Exp Zool A Ecol Integr Physiol*, Jan 2025 PMID: 39840509 | DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/jez.2896>

CTx001 for Geographic Atrophy: A Gene Therapy Expressing Soluble, Truncated Complement Receptor 1 (Mini-CR1) Rathi S, Didangelos A, Pisarenka S, Green R, Zafeiri S, Emery-Billcliff P, Patel N, Whalley P, Zamiri P, Tilakaratna V, Szula E, Hasan R, Munye MM, Unwin RD, Bishop PN, Keefe D, Clark SJ. *Ophthalmol Sci*, Jan 2025 PMID: 41377064 | DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.xops.2025.100980>

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Mgl2(+) cDC2s coordinate fungal allergic airway type 2, but not type 17, inflammation in mice Cook PC, Brown SL, Houlder EL, Furlong-Silva J, Conn DP, Colombo SAP, Baker S, Svedberg FR, Howell G, Bertuzzi M, Boon L, Konkel JE, Thornton CR, Allen JE, MacDonald AS. *Nat Commun*, Jan 2025 PMID: 39843887 | DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-024-55663-3>

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The effect of dupilumab on caregiver- and patient-reported outcomes in young children with moderate-to-severe atopic dermatitis: Results from a placebo-controlled, phase 3 study Paller AS, Silverberg JI, Simpson EL, Cork MJ, Arkwright PD, Chen Z, Bansal A, Prescilla R, Wang Z, Marco AR. *J Am Acad Dermatol*, Jan 2025 PMID: 39349183 | DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaad.2024.09.039>

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B cells are important for the control of Mycobacterium tuberculosis in the lung Bain CC, Allen JE. *Cell Rep*, Mar 2025 PMID: 40061386 | DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.celrep.2025.115403>

Defining the landscape of CD4(+) T helper cell plasticity Wong FS, Grainger JR. *Science*, Mar 2025 PMID: 39825554 | DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.adr7840>

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April 2025

Brain sensing of metabolic state regulates circulating monocytes Cavalcanti de Albuquerque JP, Hunter J, Domingues RG, Harno E, Worth AA, Liguori FM, D'Alessio A, Aviello G, Bechtold D, White A, Luckman SM, Hepworth MR, D'Agostino G. *Sci Immunol*, Apr 2025 PMID: 40184437 | DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciimmunol.adr3226>

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A systematic review of the clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of dupilumab for treating moderate-to-severe atopic dermatitis in children aged 6 months to 5 years Arkwright PD, et al. *Health Technol Assess*, May 2025 PMID: 40389012 | DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3310/hta2025.045>

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Defining the role of IL-1 in the pathogenesis of chronic inflammatory diseases Brough D, Allan SM. *Immunol Rev*, May 2025 PMID: 40344567 | DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/imr.13456>

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