

Queen awards prestigious Regius Professorship to the ICR

The Institute of Cancer Research, London, has been awarded a highly prestigious Regius Professorship by Her Majesty the Queen to mark her 90th Birthday.

The ICR is among a select group of 12 institutions across the country to be awarded the title.

The Regius Professorships are rare awards bestowed by the Sovereign to recognise exceptionally high quality research at an institution. Prior to these awards only 14 had been granted since the reign of Queen Victoria, including 12 to mark Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee.

The creation of a new Regius Professorship of Cancer Research

at the ICR will be the first associated with efforts to understand and defeat the disease and recognises both academic excellence and the real-world impact of ICR's research.

ICR Chief Executive Professor Paul Workman said: "This is a rare honour that recognises both our outstanding academic achievements in understanding cancer and also the impact of our innovative research on people with cancer and on society as a whole, including business and the economy. It is a tribute to our pioneering research and the many discoveries made by ICR scientists — both in recent years and throughout our history — that have moved us closer towards defeating cancer."

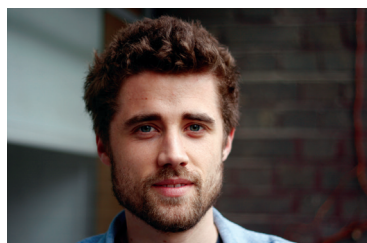
Pontecorvo prize was awarded to Dr Nicholas McGranahan

This year's Pontecorvo prize for Best PhD Thesis has been awarded to Dr Nicholas McGranahan (pictured), an outstanding young CRUK Lung Cancer Centre of Excellence scientist at University College London and the Francis Crick Institute.

The Pontecorvo prize is awarded to CRUK-funded students who have produced outstanding PhD theses and made the greatest contribution to scientific knowledge in their field.

Nicholas is now a postdoc with Professor Charles Swanton, who describes him as a 'rare breed' due to the interdisciplinary nature of his work. With parallel interests in Mathematics and Cancer Biology, he completed his PhD in Cancer Bioinformatics at UCL's centre for interdisciplinary research in the medical and life sciences – the Centre for Mathematics, Physics and Engineering in the Life Sciences and Experimental Biology (CoMPLEX). We recognise that new and innovative ideas emerge when researchers, ideas and methods from disparate fields come together to tackle a question, and we aim to support more researchers like Nicholas who develop a multidisciplinary approach to their research.

Prof Charles Swanton commented, "Nicky is a truly remarkable



individual with a stellar career ahead of him."

The judging panel were extremely impressed when they saw the impact that Nicholas has had, including his striking publication record. In five years he has delivered work that has led to a total of 25 papers and two patents. He has co-authored in journals such as Cancer

Discovery, Journal of Pathology, Nature, Nature Genetics and Science Translational Medicine, with several first author papers resulting from his PhD.

Nicholas's most striking contributions have been through his development of major new insights into mechanisms of cancer branched evolution and genomic instability. He has helped to set novel directions for TRACERx – a multi-million pound programme and our largest single investment in lung cancer research.

Dr Nicholas McGranahan commented, "I felt very privileged to be nominated for this prestigious prize and it was therefore a great honour and pleasant surprise to be selected as the winner. I had a fantastic and rewarding experience working in Charlie Swanton's group during my PhD and was fortunate to be involved in a great deal of exciting work. There is no doubt this work would not have been possible without the generous support from CRUK and I hope I can build upon this research in the future."

Pancreatic Cancer Action invites applicants for research funding

UK charity Pancreatic Cancer Action are once again inviting scientists to apply for one of their Early Diagnosis Challenge Award grants. The purpose of these grants is to encourage more research into improving early diagnosis of pancreatic cancer so that more patients are diagnosed in time for surgery, which is currently the only potential for a cure.

Pancreatic Cancer is the UK's fifth biggest cancer killer and 26 people die a day from the disease. The 5 year survival rate is just 4%, a figure which has barely changed in over 40 years. Most pancreatic cancer patients are diagnosed too late.

Pancreatic Cancer Action exists to save lives by optimising early diagnosis. The Early Diagnosis Challenge Award programme is part of the charity's research strategy that aims to invest at least £1 million into research in the next five years.

The charity, which is a member of the Association of Medical



**early diagnosis
CHALLENGE AWARD**

Research Charities (AMRC), says that successful applicants are likely to be those whose applications are in accordance with PCA's research objectives. All research applications

must focus on improving early diagnosis of pancreatic cancer and the charity encourages applications for projects that:

- Explore a novel approach to diagnosis;
- Investigate areas of unexplored potential;
- Focus on the novel application of technology;
- Grow and access a rich patient/sample cohort;
- Have potential for further funding after proof of concept.

Ali Stunt, founder and chief executive of Pancreatic Cancer Action, said: "We invite applications for projects that offer a unique and experimental approach.

"All applications which fit the eligibility criteria are externally reviewed by our Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) chaired

by Professor Hemant Kocher, Professor of Liver and Pancreas Surgery, Centre for Tumour Biology, Barts Cancer Institute, which is wholly independent of Pancreatic Cancer Action's Board of Trustees or charity administrative staff."

Earlier this year, the charity awarded £180,000 for four research grants to a variety of unique and exciting projects in the UK. One of the award recipients, John Timms, who is leading A Novel Approach to the early detection of pancreatic cancer project, at University College London said: "Receiving the award from Pancreatic Cancer Action is fantastic news. The funding will allow us to build and test novel biomarker models as blood tests for the early detection of pancreatic cancer. We are using a completely novel approach to combining candidate biomarker data from a unique set of blood samples taken prior to the diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. We hope to translate the findings of this exciting work into a rapid diagnostic pathway for pancreatic cancer."

Pancreatic Cancer Action is determined to get more patients diagnosed early and in time for life-saving surgery, by funding research into early diagnosis, educating medical professionals and raising awareness of signs and symptoms.

Ali Stunt, chair of Pancreatic Cancer Action, said: "Pancreatic cancer has the worst survival rate of all common cancers due to late diagnosis. This is why we are determined to support projects that will ultimately get us closer to getting more patients diagnosed in time for surgery.

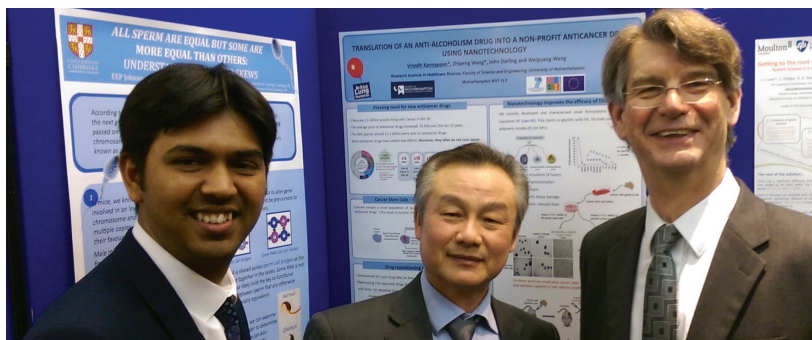
"We are very much looking forward to receiving this next round of applications."

Full details of the grants and how to apply can be found online at: <https://pancreaticcanceraction.org>

Grant applications for the 2016/17 round of funding will close on 31st October 2016.



Cancer researcher celebrates silver award for excellence



Dr Vinodh Kannappan, aged 30, a postdoctoral research associate at the University of Wolverhampton, celebrated winning a Silver Award for biomedical research excellence – walking away with a £2,000 prize.

Vinodh presented his research to dozens of politicians and a panel of expert judges at the House of Commons as part of the poster competition SET for Britain, earlier in 2016.

His research, which focuses on "Translation of an anti-alcoholism drug into a non-profit anticancer drug using nanotechnology" was judged against 59 other shortlisted researchers' work and came out as one of the three winners.

Vinodh said: "This win highlights the importance of our work nationally. It was a great honour to receive the Silver Award on behalf of our hardworking research team – especially considering the caliber of the Universities competing in the competition.

"This national recognition will encourage the team to continue in its endeavours to provide cancer patients and the NHS with an economical, affordable and effective treatment. I am very grateful to the RIHS, University of Wolverhampton and the funding bodies who believed in our research capabilities. I would also like to extend my thanks to the event organisers for such a fantastic opportunity for all scientists in Britain."

Team leader, Professor Weiguang Wang, said: "This is the second time the University of Wolverhampton Cancer Research Group has been shortlisted for this extremely prestigious competition and it's an honour for our collective work to be nationally recognised at SET for Britain in the company of our local MPs and the wider audience.

"We are at a very exciting stage in our research following collaboration with scientists in Europe, the USA and China

which has resulted in our invention being patented by the University. Hopefully this will be translated into treatment in the near future providing cancer patients and the NHS with an economical, affordable and effective treatment."

Rob Marris, MP for Wolverhampton South West, said: "I'm very proud of Vinodh and the team from the University of Wolverhampton and was honoured to be able to celebrate with them. Although they were competing with the likes of Oxford and Cambridge, I was delighted that the team won a Silver Award – high praise indeed after four rounds of tough judging and examinations."

SET for Britain aims to help politicians understand more about the UK's thriving science and engineering base and rewards some of the strongest scientific and engineering research being undertaken in the UK.

Stephen Metcalfe MP, Chair of the Parliamentary & Scientific Committee, said: "This annual competition is an important date in the parliamentary calendar because it gives MPs an opportunity to speak to a wide range of the country's best young researchers. These early career engineers, mathematicians and scientists are the architects of our future and SET for Britain is politicians' best opportunity to meet them and understand their work."

The Parliamentary and Scientific Committee runs the event in collaboration with the Council for Mathematical Sciences, the Institute of Physics, The Physiological Society, the Royal Academy of Engineering, the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Royal Society of Biology, with financial support from Essar, the Clay Mathematics Institute, Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG), the Institute of Biomedical Science, the Bank of England and the Society of Chemical Industry.