Congratulations to Karim Labib who has been promoted to Senior Group Leader following a meeting of a Senior Appointments Committee on the 3rd August.

Views were solicited from international leaders in his field and there was overwhelming support for his promotion demonstrating his excellent reputation and international standing.

Karim's research has led to the identification of a new and exciting complex called GINS which is required for DNA replication.

His lab extended these studies to show that GINS is part of a large multi-protein complex which he has termed the 'Replisome Progression Complex'.

This work is very much at the forefront of his field and has resulted in outstanding publications in the highest quality journals.
The panel awarded seven Additional Salary in an Institute such as ours, the support we necessarily trained us well for. It is true that and not one that previous experience has running your own laboratory is often hard the transition between being a postdoc and that is at the international forefront. Making satisfies our commitment to support research is a great credit to the Institute and exempli- for promotion to a Senior Group Leader in Karim who was successful in his application I would like to extend my congratulations to Karim who was successful in his application for promotion to a Senior Group Leader in the Institute. It is really fully deserved – he is a great credit to the Institute and exemplifies our commitment to support research that is at the international forefront. Making the transition between being a postdoc and running your own laboratory is often hard and not one that previous experience has necessarily trained us well for. It is true that in an Institute such as ours, the support we give can greatly facilitate this transition. However, the expectations at the Institute are also very significant and so the pressure is felt from the start. Karim’s approach and dedication to developing his research programme and his independent, international reputation has been exemplary. Following his promotion Karim will be expanding his group over the next year or two.

Following our current recruitment round we have made offers to two outstanding scientists and I am very hopeful that they will join us later this year. Another round of recruit- ment will begin shortly with the aim of iden- tifying additional potential recruits by the end of the year.

The Manchester Cancer Research Centre is progressing well. One of the key groups which inform the research strategy and di- rection of the Centre is the Joint MCRC/Christie Research Strategy Group. This is the group that will coordinate the re- search activities of the different components of the Centre – set priorities for future de- velopment and recruitment and ensure that an integrated approach is taken so that the potential of the Centre can be maximised. A number of the Institute senior scientists (Iain Hagan, Caroline Dive and Peter Stern) are in this important group. A number of funding bids involving the Institute and the MCRC have recently been successful. A bid to be- come an Experimental Cancer Medicine Centre (ECMC) was successful and provides £2.2M funding for translational research in- frastructure support over the next 5 years. A significant beneficiary of this funding is Caroline Dive’s CEP group, where the fund- ing supports the laboratory analysis of early phase clinical trials. In addition, a Clinical Re- search Infrastructure grant has been awarded which provides funding for expansion of the Phase I clinical research facility (Derek Crowther Unit) and support for the develop- ment of clinical proteomics. This involves a capital investment of over £3M and will ensure that the Unit will be one of the largest in the world.

Nic Jones
Director

Performance Reviews

Pippa McNichol

The Performance Review Panel has finished its deliberations for the 2005/06 review year. The purpose of the panel is to ensure that staff are assessed fairly and consistently across the Institute. Currently staff are awarded one of three categories for their performance: ‘needs to improve’, ‘good’ and ‘exceptionally good’.

This year the panel has upgraded seventeen members of staff from ‘good’ to ‘exceptionally good’. This is in addition to the 16 ‘ex-ceptionally good’ gradings given by Group Leaders and Managers. I am delighted to re- port that no ‘needs to improve’ were awarded by either the panel or by Group Leaders and Managers.

The panel awarded seven Additional Salary Progressions (consolidated bonuses), re- jected one and awarded five non-consoli- dated bonuses. Three members of staff were recommended by the panel to be re-banded to higher salary bands. One re-banding has already taken place and was successful and dates are being arranged for the other two.

As you are aware, a new contribution based mechanism will be implemented next year to support the new CRUK Pay and Grading Sys- tem. This will replace the existing perform- ance review system.

We are arranging for Towers Perrin (the con- sultants used by Cancer Research UK who helped to design the new Pay & Grading sys- tem) to facilitate a focus group for staff to design the new contribution assessment forms that will be used next year. Once I have details of the dates of the focus group I will email all staff to request a small number of volunteers to work with the consultants. Once the new form has been agreed by CR- UK, training will be provided in the New Year for all staff, managers and panel members.

I would like to thank the panel members who have put in an incredible amount of time and effort to the panel this year. They are: Group Leader representatives – Prof Iain Hagan and Dr Crispin Miller, Service Unit Rep – Stuart Pepper, Associate Scientist/Post Doctoral Fel- low Rep – Dr Caroline Wilkinson, Scientific Officer Rep – Stella Pearson, Union Rep – Lynn Disley. Scientific support staff are rep- resented by Professor Jenny Varley and Admin- istrative and non-scientific support staff are represented by me as Chair and the panel was very ably supported by Anna Pearson, HR Manager.
One of the main consequences of becoming a senior group leader in the institute is that I finally ran out of excuses for not writing something for the newsletter…so here goes!

Time has flown by since I first arrived at the Paterson in July 2001, and of course there have been many changes in the institute since then, with seven more groups joining and others leaving along the way.

Setting up a group for the first time is one of those “interesting” experiences that you learn a lot from but are glad not to have to repeat, and I’ve very much enjoyed the fact that my group has been fairly stable for the last few years. But now things are starting to change quite quickly, and I suppose the group will be rather different by this time next year.

Masato Kanemaki joined the Paterson two weeks after I did in 2001, made a huge contribution to the lab, and finally went back to Japan last month to begin a long-term job at Osaka University. Aga Gambus and Vanessa Marchesi submitted their PhD theses in the past weeks, and will both be moving on in the coming months, Aga to Scotland, and Vanessa to Italy. And then we’re recently had a very productive collaboration with Georges’ and Valerie’s group, resulting in the birth of a healthy baby boy (many congratulations to Alberto and Flor!).

When we first started work here, the idea of the group was to search systematically for new cell cycle proteins in budding yeast, taking advantage of the fact that my group has been fairly stable for the last few years. But now things are starting to change quite quickly, and I suppose the group will be rather different by this time next year. Masato Kanemaki joined the Paterson two weeks after I did in 2001, made a huge contribution to the lab, and finally went back to Japan last month to begin a long-term job at Osaka University. Aga Gambus and Vanessa Marchesi submitted their PhD theses in the past weeks, and will both be moving on in the coming months, Aga to Scotland, and Vanessa to Italy. And then we’re recently had a very productive collaboration with Georges’ and Valerie’s group, resulting in the birth of a healthy baby boy (many congratulations to Alberto and Flor!).

By studying the novel proteins identified in the screen that was carried out by Masato, Alberto and Vanessa, we found that a large complex of proteins is built at DNA replication forks around the DNA helicase that is responsible for the progression of the replication machinery. It seems that the many components of this complex will play key roles in mediating much of the interesting regulation of chromosome replication that goes toward maintaining genomic integrity, and understanding how this all works will be the main interest of my group for some years to come.

In the meantime, Alberto began a new line of work for my group a couple of years ago, to study another protein found in our screen that is required for the last part of the cell cycle – the process of cytokinesis whereby a cell finally divides into two after mitosis. This work has gone very well and represents the other main area that my group will study for the next few years.

It seems like an exciting time to be in the institute, especially with all the new plans for the MCRC, and I’m looking forward to the next five years, especially now that I’ve done my bit for the Newsletter…
Focus on Estates

The Estate function in the Paterson is evolving; two new members of staff arrived in July, which after months of very little support has already resulted in a much more responsive service.

They have been employed as building service engineers; Tony Woollam has joined us from the University of Manchester, & Graham Hooley from ADT.

Tony has spent many years in a maintenance environment including the steel & healthcare industries. Graham has had a varied career and has spent the last couple of years at ADT in the building management industry.

Their roles in the institute are diverse; they could be effecting repairs to the building management system one minute, plunging toilets the next (phew).

They are responsible for carrying out the programmed preventative maintenance of the building systems, including ventilation, heating, cooling, domestic hot water, electrical & mechanical plant, plus reactive maintenance, diagnosing & rectifying day to day problems within the PICR & KK.

Staff experiencing difficulties with Estate issues should log the problem on the Estate Fault Report system, which can be found on the front page of the Paterson’s intranet.

Once a report has been filled in, it is quite easy to get feedback on how the problem has been dealt with,

- Open the fault report
- On the right hand side of each fault report there is a flag
- Clear: - still awaiting attention, green: - in progress, further work or parts required, a tick: - indicates it is completed.

The status/resolution on the report can also be informative as to how the work is progressing or completed.

We are also setting up Quarterly Estate User Group meetings to help improve the service, and the first meeting will be held on 4th October at 2pm in the conference room, where Group Leaders/scientific officers or representatives are welcome to attend to air their concerns/views/problems with the service in their areas. We will take all constructive suggestions on board within budget constraints.

As some of you may already know, I’m the Operations Manager for the MCRC. I’ll be working closely with the rest of the team to help establish the new centre by developing project plans, helping to staff the MCRC stand at the NCRI conference, managing the different Boards and groups that have been set up and providing Nic and Pippa with management support.

For the last 6 years I’ve worked for CR-UK in London. My role focussed on co-ordinating the Pay and Grading project but my responsibilities also included running two salary review panels (SPSAP & SSAP) and managing the PhD Studentship schemes.

Anyway, CR-UK sent me off in style with a ‘Manchester Survival Kit’ that included, amongst other things, a Man City scarf, Coronation Street mug and stiletto handbag (don’t ask!) so I’m sure I’ll fit in perfectly up here!

Steve Alcock

A Welcome Addition to the Team

Esther Walker

As some of you may already know, I’m the Operations Manager for the MCRC. I’ll be working closely with the rest of the team to help establish the new centre by developing project plans, helping to staff the MCRC stand at the NCRI conference, managing the different Boards and groups that have been set up and providing Nic and Pippa with management support.

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Tony Woollam & Graham Hooley

Steve Alcock

A Welcome Addition to the Team

Esther Walker
In each issue of the Newsletter, we feature a member of staff who will take the ‘Spotlight’ and answer a list of questions that we have put together. The next lucky individual to be featured is Mike Hughes of Flow Cytometry.

**What is your favourite part of the UK?**
My armchair

**What is your favourite book?**
The Bible

**What is your favourite film?**
Either Ben Hur (the end always makes me cry) or Trading Places which makes me laugh.

**If you had to change careers tomorrow, what would you do?**
I would replace Monty Panesar in the England Cricket team. I would also need to bat at number 3.

**What three things would you save from your burning house?**
My collection of old photographs, my memory key containing my family history information and part of my stamp collection.

**What is your greatest fear?**
I don’t have any fears (except maybe heights); not even death.

**How would you like to be remembered?**
“He served others well.”

**If you could change one thing in your past, what would it be?**
I wouldn’t change anything. I’m happy the way everything has worked out.

**What would be your perfect meal?**
Lamb Chops and Chips followed by treacle sponge and custard. Now you know why I need to go running.

**What trait do you most deplore in others?**
Hypocrisy or more seriously a hatred of custard.

**If you had to spend £1,000,000 tomorrow, what would you do with the money?**
I would buy tickets for all the Paterson cricket fans to see the Ashes this winter and give the rest to charity (if there’s any left). Don’t worry, the Flow Cytometry unit would keep running as Jeff isn’t a cricket fan.

**Which words or phrases do you most overuse?**
“It’s alright”. “What’s up now.” (According to my family)

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**
Heaven. The best is yet to come.

**What keeps you awake at night?**
Nothing at all.

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**Remember, Remember the 4th of November**

Please come into the Institute for a few hours on Saturday November 4th before those bonfire parties begin to warm up as we are hosting our annual Cancer Research UK supporters Open Day and your help is really needed. The day will be starting at 10.00am when over 100 Committee members, shop helpers and individual supporters from Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Lancashire, Shropshire, Derbyshire and North Wales will arrive for coffee and fundraising presentations in the morning. Lunch will start around noon when all members of the Institute and our guests can mingle together before the tours begin at 12.45. I am hoping that all laboratories and facilities can mount 20 minute demonstrations about their work. Groups of 10-12, led by our trained guides, will arrive at 30 minute intervals and each demonstration might expect 4 groups in the afternoon. Don’t worry if you run over time, our guides are asked to politely but firmly indicate this!

Over the years we have proved extremely good at informing but not baffling our supporters with the science we perform. At these annual events, our guests are always impressed with the dedication and enthusiasm of Paterson workers. They are interested in how their often hard-earned fundraising money is spent and will ask lots of questions. Our aim is to fire their enthusiasm to raise even more money for Cancer Research UK.

I need your help so please e-mail me with your offer of support. Start thinking about your area’s demonstration and who will man it. Guides are always needed and those non-scientists who have acted as guides in previous years have always found it an amazing experience, learning more about the work of the Institute in one afternoon than in the time that they have worked here.
Congratulations to:

Catherine Bentley (Cancer Studies) and husband Graeme on the birth of a second strapping son Francis William on 4th August 2006. Francis weighed in at a very healthy 10lb 8oz (ouch!) and is a welcome playmate for big brother Aidan.

Jim Gillies (RTI) and his wife Liz on the arrival of their beautiful baby girl Caitlin Aisha (5lbs 12oz) on 17th August 2006.

Flor Perez-Campo and Alberto Sanchez-Diaz on the birth of their first child, a son, on August 22nd. Mum, Dad and baby all doing fine!

Sacha Howell, Sarah Danson and Aga Gambus who have all recently passed their PhDs here at the Institute.

Eyad Elkord (Immunology) whose article in Immunology in February 2005 was included in the ‘Highlights of 2005 for the Immunology Journal’ and this is based on its citation, as can be seen at the following link:
http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=0019-2805&site=1

Andrew Greaves (son of Martin Greaves from CEP) completed the 60 mile Manchester to Blackpool cycle ride to raise money for Christies Against Cancer on Sunday, 16th July. Andrew, who is studying for his A-levels at the Deanery Sixth Form College in Wigan is not a very experienced cyclist but he managed to finish the distance in 3½ hours which is pretty good going – an average of 17 mph – and he also managed to raise £80 in the process!! Andrew was accompanied by his ‘old Dad’, who made sure that on such a hot day he drank and ate enough in order for him to get to Blackpool in not too much distress. Very well done!!

Grateful thanks are extended from the Newsletter Committee to Steve Royle (IT) for all his efforts in producing some great photos for the Newsletter each issue, very often at short notice. May we also take the opportunity to thank everyone else (too numerous to mention) who has supplied us with photos for past issues, whether it be of individuals, groups of people, buildings or technical equipment – we really appreciate your contributions.

A warm welcome to:-

Juliana Bales Scientific Officer CEP
Ruth Board Clinical Fellow CEP
Fouziah Butt Scientific Officer CEP
Catia Caetano Placement student Carcinogenesis
Alastair Grey-stoke Clinical Fellow CEP
Stephen St George-Smith Quality Assurance Scientist CEP
Andrew Lloyd Central Services Assistant CEP
David Moore Postdoctoral Project Manager CEP
Natalia Rukazenka Placement student Carcinogenesis
Catherine Smedley Central Services Assistant Medical Oncology
Nicole Yan Placement student

A very big welcome to David Jenkins who joined the Finance Team in July 2006 as Purchasing Administration Officer assisting Denise in all aspects of Procurement. He has settled in really well and already we can’t imagine how we managed without him. He is responsible for turning all your requisitions into orders on the new University Finance System (an achievement in itself). He is working closely with Denise in all areas of Procurement so please contact him if you have any queries regarding orders, sourcing of goods, etc.

David relocated to Manchester from Leeds earlier this year where he worked at Bombardier in Wakefield as an Accounts Assistant. He is looking forward to continuing his studies towards a diploma in Purchasing and Supply. David can be contacted on 446 3145 or email djenkins@picr.man.ac.uk.
Writing this article has brought back wonderful memories of the past four years; and how that time has flown! For the past three years I have been working towards a PhD on the microarray analysis of embryonic stem cells, supervised by Peter Stern and Crispin Miller. Before leaving however I’ve been asked to share some of my experiences during my time here.

In January 2002 I applied for what was then the new four year PhD course, consisting of three rotations in the first year followed by three years of thesis research. What I didn’t know at that time was that my introduction to graduate study would be a fairly hazy couple of days in Ambleside and involve arm-wrestling in the early hours of the morning.

The rotations provided me with three main things: a broad understanding of cancer research at the Paterson, lab skills, and invaluable advice from the many different people I worked with in that year. One of the real advantages of being on the rotation system, in my view, is meeting so many people in one year; and the inevitable trips to the Red Lion (or the establishment that was the Golden Lion) after finishing for the day.

Towards the end of the third rotation I became aware of a new project using microarrays to study embryonic stem cells and the 5T4 oncofoetal antigen. This was a novel and exciting area of study which I have pursued for my PhD. Two people whom I am indebted to for their help during the early stages of my PhD are Chris Ward (now based at the University) for his help in the lab and Claire Wilson (now at Epistem) for her bioinformatics expertise.

My time in Manchester has been great fun, and much of my time when not in the lab or the Red/Golden Lion has been spent in a sporting pursuit in one form or another. This started with the 5-a-side night at the Armitage Centre. Many since departed members of the Paterson would spend one hour a week gasping for breath, or in the case of Karim Labib darting round non-stop. Between autumn 2003 and summer 2005 the majority of my spare time outside the lab was spent training and competing with the Manchester University Boat Club. Despite the early mornings, dodging fireworks on the Bridgewater canal and the Manchester weather it was all worth it for the results and (more importantly!) the social side.

I’ll be leaving the Paterson in October, but will take with me great memories of arm-wrestling, bar-crawls and the students, post-docs and group leaders who have made my time here really enjoyable. Thanks!
Breast cancer is the second most common cancer in the UK, with over 41,000 new cases being diagnosed each year, accounting for almost one in three of all cancer cases in women, with 300 men also being diagnosed with the disease each year.

Fortunately, due to earlier detection and better treatment than ever before, the mortality rate of this disease has dropped by a fifth over the last decade. This achievement has been helped by the work of Cancer Research UK, and the money raised by the charity's supporters.

This October, Cancer Research UK is aiming to raise even more money for research into breast cancer with Breast Cancer Awareness Month; a whole month of fundraising activities and events raising money for breast cancer research.

Start thinking pink by organising your own ‘pink’ fundraising event for Breast Cancer, such as a pink party, an auction night or pink dress day at your work, school or club.

As part of the month, Cancer Research UK is holding ‘All Walk Together’ events in October; sponsored walks right here in the local area. These walks, of varying lengths, are being held through attractive parkland, with stunning views, making them an ideal fundraising activity for the whole family to get involved with.

The walks are being held in three different locations across the North West region:

- **Tatton Park, Cheshire**, 10km walk, Sunday 22nd October 2006, 11.30am start
- **Heaton Park, Manchester**, 5km or 10km walks, Saturday 28th October 2006, 11am start
- **Williamson Park, Lancaster**, 6km walk, Sunday 29th October 2006, 11am start

Entry before the event is £6 for adults and £3 for children or under 18s.

To register for the walks, or to register your fundraising event, visit [www.cancerresearchuk.org/breastcancer](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/breastcancer) or contact your local Cancer Research UK office on 08701 60 20 40.

Relay for Life is a unique event that provides the community with the opportunity to celebrate the lives of those who have been touched by cancer, whilst raising vital funds for Cancer Research UK.

The Relay lasts for 24 hours, and always takes place overnight at a park, running track or field. Teams of 8-15 supporters take turns to walk around a ‘track’ for the duration of the event. The whole community is invited to come along on the day to give support and participate in the ceremonies that take place.

This year the charity has held successful Relay for Life events in Cheadle, Salford and Ashton-Under-Lyme, contributing to the £152,760 that these events have raised across the western region, and next year we are aiming to raise even more for vital research.

To find out more about Relay for Life or get involved with organising one of these unique events visit [www.cancerresearchuk.org/relay](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/relay) or call the local Cancer Research UK office on 08701 60 20 40.
As I’m sure you are all aware there have been a few changes to the portering personnel over the past few months.

Unfortunately we lost Ken, our ever-cheerful afternoon porter to retirement - after his heart bypass he decided not to return to work. More recently we have also seen the retirement of Colin and Gordon. In losing these 3 we lost almost 25yrs of portering experience and 75% of our portering team. As we knew that the lads would be leaving, I proposed a plan of restructuring the porters and lab services to create a ‘central services team’.

The idea behind this is that the lab aides and new porters became trained as central services employees and are trained in all aspects of the service (both portering and lab aides) so that they can cover when the need arises, such as during holiday and sickness absence, in either department.

Maurice Cowell has joined us as the new Central Services Assistant Manager and he is fully responsible for the service in my absence. We are also joined by two new central services employees in Catherine Smedley and Andy Lloyd.

Catherine and Andy are being trained in the basics of portering and lab services - working in the porters area in the morning and the lab services area on the 3rd floor in the afternoon, thus hopefully freeing up more time for the lab aides to come into the labs.

The eventual idea is that lab aides will be able to offer more to their labs, and spend more time there than on the 3rd floor. As services such as the media and plate pouring take off, it may mean that lab aides who specialise in these areas have to spend more time on that service, but now if the lab needs more help, then others will be trained in their lab so they can be on hand to assist. We certainly hope that there will be better cover provided than in the past.

With the new members of staff, we are now able to offer more from the service provided by the porters, such as a delivery system for the onsite freezers and two glassware collections; an additional one in the afternoon as well as the existing morning collection. I certainly hope to increase these services and spend more time with the labs, finding out and facilitating their needs more appropriately from a lab aide point of view. This may mean changes; from having lab aides popping down for an hour or two every day instead of set times in a week, to having them help out around the lab more from an experiment point of view.

I would also like to increase/hold more items in stores and see it used to greater effect by the labs, as well as increasing and adding more to the services we provide.

Basically over the next year or so we would like to see some changes in central services to greatly facilitate the needs of the Institute. I certainly hope with the new changes, central services will become an even more efficient and reliable service.
Robot Wars - A Day in the Life of the MBCF

Emma Saunders

I have been asked to write this piece to give you all an insight into what we get up to in the Molecular Biology Core Facility on an average day. I am going to focus on the role played by myself and Michelle in providing the day-to-day services within the facility; minipreps, sequencing, genotyping and quantitative real-time PCR.

I joined the facility in 2003 to provide the sequencing and genotyping services. During my second year I started looking at various aspects of quantitative real-time PCR and in summer 2005 I began to focus on that full-time. Michelle joined us in August of that year to provide the sequencing and genotyping services, with the added joy of looking after the minipreps.

A typical day is structured around the miniprep and sequencing services. These are timed so that users can get their preps back in time to sequence them the same day. The first job of the day is to collect the cultures from the shaker, check for any which haven’t grown and centrifuge them. We usually hope there are not more than 96 as this means two lots of centrifugation and two runs on the robot! The smell from the cultures can be quite overpowering first thing, so it is best not to have too much wine on a work night! While the cultures are spinning we get the robot ready for the run.

Another job for the morning is to check the previous day’s sequencing and put the results into the appropriate folders for you to find. Once the cultures have finished spinning, the media is discarded and the BioRobot 8000 does the rest, at least that is the theory! Regular users of the service will know that we have had a rather “rocky” relationship with the robot. We had various problems getting it to do as it was told, as soon as our backs were turned it would start stacking random bits on top of each other or dropping things! We were beginning to consider offering the engineer a bed in the lab! We did manage to resist the temptation to hit it with a big hammer while Stuart wasn’t looking. All this culminated in Michelle doing the minipreps by hand for a few weeks around last Christmas. Luckily, she didn’t resign and after some negotiations with Qiagen we now have a working robot and a consistent service. The preps are returned to users by 11:30 giving two hours to get them ready for sequencing.

The deadline for sequencing is now 1:30 and we start processing the samples after lunch. Everything is carefully scheduled to fit around lunch and tea breaks! The sequencing service runs pretty smoothly, we just have to send out the occasional “mystery sequences” email if someone hasn’t filled in the book or spend some time interpreting the handwriting on the tubes! After PCR and clean-up, the sequencing reactions are usually ready to go on the 3100 by 4pm. The 3100 can process 96 samples by the time we arrive for work the next day, any more are completed across the day, the maximum we can do is 144 in 24 hours. To give you an idea of throughput, in June this year we processed 1076 minipreps and 1694 sequencing reactions.

In addition to these services, we also provide a genotyping service. Michelle receives the genotyping samples on a Thursday, does DNA extractions, PCRs and analysis and usually has the results back within a week. This service can be demanding; we receive as many as 300 samples requiring up to four different PCRs. On top of that, there is also an MHV testing service which is busier than ever. All this is fitted around the other services keeping Michelle pretty busy.

Quantitative Real-Time PCR is one of our expansion areas. Although we have had a machine on site for several years now, demand for this technique is increasing. To keep up with this we acquired a 384 well block for our 7900. Anyone looking at the wells of a 384 well plate would realise that pipetting into it and remaining sane would be almost impossible, a perfect excuse for buying some cool robotics! We have a handy (and cute!) little robot from Eppendorf. Like all robots, it has the occasional tantrum but performs pretty well. It also seemed to be a hit on the open day! We also have a library of labelled probes from Exiqon for use in qPCR reactions covering most of the human and mouse genomes. The majority of my workday is now split between helping users with their qPCR projects and doing development work, I am learning more about the technique all the time. We aim to offer users help and guidance through every aspect of their project from experimental design to data analysis. I spend a lot of time discussing projects, giving lessons on the robot and helping set-up initial experiments.

This is an aspect of the job I really enjoy as I get an insight into what people are working on. We have some ongoing projects of our own too, including a joint project with Bioinformatics. A new and exciting area we are looking at is MicroRNA profiling using qPCR. We are in the early stages of evaluating some new assays from ABI and this is something I will be spending a lot of time on in the near future.

As you can see, there is plenty going on down here and there is always something new on the horizon! We are a pretty friendly bunch so please come and see us if you would like to know more about any of our services.
This month I wanted to clarify the interpretation of what constitutes a formal or informal meeting, specifically who should be present at an informal meeting between a manager and member of staff. All managers and others responsible for the supervision of staff are reminded that they will be required to adhere to the following principles:

- If you wish to talk to a member of staff about an area of concern connected to their employment, for example, capability, absence or conduct issues, but do not feel that the use of a formal procedure is required, the Institute would expect that this is done on a one to one basis.

- There may be instances where you feel that it is essential or beneficial that a third party, possibly another colleague directly involved in the situation, is involved in all or part of the meeting. In all such cases, it is expected that you will confer with the individual regarding the appropriateness of the other person’s involvement and that agreement is reached prior to the commencement of the meeting.

- It is not expected that a member of the HR Department would be present at such meetings until a formal stage of any procedure has been reached. However, managers requiring advice and guidance can obtain this by contacting the HR Adviser in advance of any meeting. In all cases where a member of the HR Department is present, the individual concerned should be offered the chance to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or colleague.

Any questions regarding the above information should be directed to Anna Pearson, HR Adviser on ext 3231 or apearson@picr.man.ac.uk who will be happy to help.
News about progress on the Manchester Cancer Research Centre (MCRC) will be pushed out to an international audience next month when the development team decamps to Birmingham for a few days.

The occasion is the second National Cancer Research Institute Cancer Conference, which aims to build on the success of last year when 1,700 delegates from the UK, Europe and the USA attended.

An exhibition stand (Hall 3, Stand 6) will be staffed at the event from October 8 to 10, with members of the MCRC team giving out literature and other material to promote the aims of the new Centre and highlighting the key message: “Creating a world leader in the fight against cancer by 2015”. The literature will include a generic MCRC booklet which will be available over the next few weeks.

Those taking part include Pippa McNichol, who has the dual role of Director of Operations for the MCRC as well as being Operations Director for the Paterson; Esther Walker, who recently became the MCRC’s Operations Manager after transferring from Cancer Research UK; and David Wiggins, who is working part-time for the MCRC project as a communications consultant. The exhibition effort is benefiting from the design expertise of Mark Wadsworth, the MCRC’s (and Paterson’s) designer and web developer.

The Conference is an opportunity to arouse interest amongst the cancer research community in the concept of the MCRC, and how it will bring together the expertise and ambitions of the partners – The University of Manchester (including, of course, the Paterson Institute plus other cancer-related research within The University), the Christie Hospital NHS Trust and Cancer Research UK.

Paterson Director Professor Nic Jones, the inaugural Director of the MCRC, sees the Conference as just one of the ways which will be used over coming months to start to raise the profile of the new Centre.

“At Birmingham we will have a captive and interested audience, and while it’s still early days with the MCRC development we can start to talk about our goals and some of the progress we have made.

“Key to the MCRC’s success will be engaging the research community and attracting the research stars of today and more junior team members who will be the stars of tomorrow”.

If you are attending the NCRI Cancer Conference you might also be interested to note that the Paterson Institute is sponsoring a lecture on Monday 9 October starting at 09.10:

“Dissecting tumour suppressor gene networks in vivo”,

by Scott W Lowe, Watson School of Biological Sciences, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, USA.

Paterson Institute Mailing List

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