

The Griffin Institute Special Edition Newsletter COVID-19 Update



A Note From The Griffin Institute's CEO Alison Rosen

COVID-19 is having a direct, and potentially long-term, impact on fundraising streams available to charities. As a result, The Griffin Institute (NPIMR) is not only maintaining existing ventures, including our current research projects, and delivery of online virtual training for students, but we have also become a vital organisation to support the scientific work of partners who are unable to continue operating (due to being within closed institutions). Being a generous and partnership-focused charity, we will continue to teach, train, research, as well as lend our expertise and facilities to support the fight against the pandemic, to the best of our capabilities.

There is also a pressing need to further research and develop medical interventions for COVID-19. The Griffin Institute has set up two projects with aims to improve the understanding of the coronavirus, to shed light on how we can help prevent patients from developing severe symptoms, and to establish how further transmission can be avoided.

Staying open for business means that we have to have in place codes of practice for the Institute. These have been developed for training and PPE, and you can find these on our new and updated [website](#). The safety of our staff is also of paramount importance, and we are giving regular procedural updates to staff to ensure that they stay safe.

COVID-19 Research Projects

Project 1 – To research why some patients with the coronavirus go on to develop severe disease and others do not

We intend to partner with a global leader in immunotherapy and biomarkers, with an aim to establish a “blueprint” of the optimum immune response to fight the virus. We will do this by testing blood cells of both children and adults who have tested positive for the virus but have fully recovered. The Griffin Institute is located on the Northwick Park Hospital campus, and so, with the necessary tools and funding, we would be well-positioned to recruit volunteers to donate blood for the pilot study. Northwick Park Hospital is one of the largest hospital campuses fighting COVID-19 in the UK, which will make our research viable and representative of most UK cases. This research may potentially help prevent further escalation of COVID-19 in the UK and globally.

Project 2 – To measure public exposure to areas contaminated with coronavirus

We aim to develop a handheld air-circulating capture pad to trap airborne viral particles. A positive detection of the coronavirus found in air droplets and on surfaces will be observed via a visual colour change. This method will enable a rapid, portable means of COVID-19 detection in public spaces, public transport, and care homes. Further applications include identifying hotspots, monitoring transmission, and informing public health policy for the benefit of pandemic survival and economic resilience.

COVID-19 - Our Education and Training Department

Contribution to International Guidelines and Educational Research

Professor Nader Francis from The Griffin Institute is a part of the 'Corona Virus Global Surgical Collaborative' (CVGSC), a group of surgical leaders from affected countries in active discussions about what has been learnt during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Useful information from the discussion has been collated for the public, and can be found [here](#).

As a collaborative project between the European Association for Endoscopic Surgeons (EAES) and the Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES), Professor Nader Francis co-ordinated the latest publication of international guidelines and recommendations for minimally invasive surgery during the pandemic. Full guidelines can be found at www.sages.org or www.eaes.eu.

In a project involving 10 European research partners, The Griffin Institute is also contributing to the development of a 'Cognition Enhanced Multimodal Skill Learning, Training and Transfer for Robot-Assisted Endoscopic Surgery – MULTIsurge'. The evaluation of the product will be conducted at The Griffin Institute.

Ongoing Research and Development

Wound Healing Solutions

We are creating dermal substitutes for non-healing wounds to replace the traditionally available “sheets”, which do not work well for complex wounds. This research has potential applications across many areas including non-healing diabetic ulcers and wounds in older people who would not tolerate the process of more traditional skin grafts and provide a far better quality of life.

Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) - improving treatment options and technology to treat these pernicious diseases

We are currently working on generating tissue engineered short segments of bowel to develop transplantable tissue for patients who have lost their bowel due to cancer or IBD and face a lifetime with a stoma. We have successfully developed models to grow “mini-guts” in the lab with the aim of studying intestinal diseases and test new drug therapies without endangering patients and reducing pre-clinical animal use for drug screening.

RAFT (Restoration of Appearance and Function Trust) and Breast Reconstruction Project

Approximately 50,000 women are diagnosed with breast cancer each year in the UK and around 40% of whom will undergo a mastectomy. Current methods for breast reconstruction have unpredictable outcomes. We are developing a breast implant made from natural proteins which are already present in the body. This implant has the potential to form a functional breast without having to undergo multiple operations. This work has successfully progressed into a compatible size implant and we are one step closer to our last pre-clinical testing before commencing human trials.

Ongoing CRO Work

Our Contract Research remains open for business. Please see [here](#) for examples of what we do.

Training Department Update

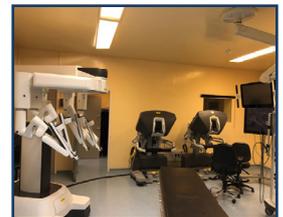
Online Training

The Griffin Institute has developed new models of online teaching and training, so that students can continue to learn from home. We successfully designed and delivered virtual demonstrations of practical skills, and created novel assessment tools for UCL medical students. We continue to actively support our UCL master students.

Upcoming

The Griffin Institute is planning and preparing for our next phase of training, commencing in June 2020. It involves robotic training using 3 robots located in our facilities, as well as a brand-new cadaveric facility. We continue to work towards [Our Vision](#) to transform patient quality of life by the development of a well-established world class training centre at The Griffin Institute that can lead advanced training in England, Europe and beyond.

In response to the current COVID-19 guidelines, we are also running a smaller [microsurgery course](#) to facilitate surgeons based in London and the South.



New Trustees

We welcome four new [Trustees](#) to the Institute Board. Kiran Patel and Grace Tye have stepped down and will remain involved.

Simon Hubbert - A senior International executive and former healthcare professional with more than 25 years of continuous success in the medical device industry. He will be helping with marketing, commercial sponsorship and business development.

Professor Gavin Jell - Associate professor of nanotechnology and regenerative medicine at UCL - A cross-disciplinary scientist investigating biological-materials interface with the aim of creating biomaterials that have reduced failure rates and increased functionality (e.g. that induce tissue regeneration or improved nanoparticle targeting). He is also a passionate educator and involved in improving teaching and learning in higher education.

Professor Anthony Goldstone - A man with a unique portfolio of skills and experience – nearly 50 years in the practice of haematology, an international figure in haematology clinical trials, nearly 40 years of hospital management experience including medical Directorships and Hospital Board Chairmanship.

Bertie Leigh - Lawyer and Charity Trustee - specialises in NHS law and governance. He has lectured on many aspects of the law, medical ethics and risk management.

Closing Statement

[Our Vision](#) is to transform and restore patient quality of life/health, and we endeavour to maintain our research and training to achieve this. Please visit our [website](#) to find out more about our mission statement and aims. You can also connect with us on [The Griffin Institute's LinkedIn Page](#) for regular updates.

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