
BRISTOL HEART INSTITUTE CONSTITUTION^a

Mission statement: to translate basic scientific research into applied clinical practice

A close dialogue between clinician scientists and basic researchers is essential for understanding cardiovascular disease. Likewise devising new treatments relies on translational research that connects scientific innovation to clinical application. The Bristol Heart Institute (BHI) is a major international centre comprised of high calibre scientists and clinicians conducting excellent interdisciplinary cardiovascular research. One key aim is to expand our strength in translational research in order to improve patient health by the training of clinical and basic junior researchers. We aim to nurture high quality researchers in the cardiovascular field from students through to future leaders. As well as developing our existing collaboration between scientists and clinicians within and outside the BHI, we aim to communicate our research findings to the public by engaging them in our research. Sir Ranulph Fiennes has been Patron of the BHI since 2005.

Objectives & Aims

1. To further strengthen links between the University of Bristol and NHS Trusts; only jointly can we achieve our aims of translating basic science into clinical practice.
2. To coordinate and stimulate collaborative research, especially in bridging basic to clinical science, within the university faculties that currently perform cardiovascular research^b. This is facilitated by research away days, workshops, seminars and a new website.
3. To free up time for clinicians to undertake research, including grant-writing and gathering of preliminary data.
4. To facilitate the establishment and expansion of Bristol as an internationally-recognised centre of excellence for cardiovascular research (clinical and basic science)
5. Maintain and develop further a multidisciplinary research environment leading to increased funding, and high impact publications that will attract additional high calibre personnel particularly in areas of strategic importance. Key issues for the immediate future include: physiological genomics, translational biology, stem cell research and imaging
6. Attract capital and personnel investments to: expand research techniques, adopt the newest technologies and further enable cardiovascular research^c
7. To organise cardiovascular involvement and representation on university-wide funding bids, and capitalise on new research initiatives offered by external funding agencies
8. To train a new generation of researchers in an environment of clinical and scientific excellence, where they will learn how to study both fundamental and applied cardiovascular science
9. Increase the awareness of the University of Bristol, funding agencies and general public to the scale of expertise in cardiovascular science by production of high quality publicity
10. Increase the public understanding and awareness of the importance of cardiovascular research through dedicated sections of the website and direct outreach to schools, community groups and the local community at large through delivery of public lectures

Management & Review Mechanisms

In agreement with members of the BHI (defined as anyone involved in cardiovascular research in the University of Bristol, three associated NHS Trusts and the University of the West of England), a cross-faculty steering group was set up in Sept 2005. This included 5 elected members (including the chairperson) and the Cardiovascular Research Facilitator. In 2008, the Head of Specialised Services for University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust (UH Bristol) was asked to join the committee as an *ex officio* member (with agreement of members), and attend all meetings of the steering group. It was subsequently recognised that other *ex officio* appointments were necessary, due to expansion of the BHI. These now include: the head of the cardiovascular division of the School of Clinical Sciences, and representatives from the School of Social and Community Medicine; University of the West of England (UWE), North Bristol Trust and the Bristol Primary Care Trust.; these *ex-officio* members are expected to attend 2-3 steering meetings per year for reciprocal exchange of information and ideas. Any member of the BHI can ask to attend a meeting to discuss any issue, or ask for an item to be raised in their absence. The agenda and minutes of meetings will be made available to all via the BHI website.

The BHI steering group reports to Senior University Management. The Committee has a 2-year rolling membership, with the outgoing Chair remaining on the committee for 2 years to give continuity. To ensure the major cardiovascular departments are equally represented, there will be at least 2 elected members from FMVS, and 2 from FMD, at least 2 of who (from either FMS or FMD) need to be clinically qualified (excluding all ex officio appointments). New members of the steering group and the chairperson are elected by a ballot of all BHI members, with the proviso that a new Chair has to have served two years on the steering group (). In the event of a tie the current Chair has the casting vote. Depending on the structure of the committee, election of new members may have to be restricted (e.g. they may have to be from FMVS, or have to be a clinician). After standing down as Chair and serving 2 subsequent years on the committee, this person may be re-elected to Chair or asked to be an honorary consultant member of the committee. If there is a split decision on the committee on any issues, elected members will vote, with the Chair having the casting vote. An open meeting for all BHI members will be held regularly usually at the annual BHI awayday, to discuss strategy. Other meetings e.g. of special interest groups, will take place throughout the year as needed or requested. Any changes to the constitution will be agreed at the annual strategy meeting, and circulated beforehand.

The BHI Steering Committee will meet approximately bimonthly to plan BHI research strategy including the enhancement of internal communication and collaboration, to identify key funding priorities and opportunities and develop better communication of our research to scientific and healthcare professionals, schools and the general public. The committee oversees the activities of the facilitator, whose role includes: establishing and maintaining the website with news, recent publications, grants etc.; organising awaydays, seminars and workshops; keeping a database of grants, publications, awards etc., for use in annual reports and to produce research brochures. Also to publicise major achievements through the university and NHS press offices and media.

Footnotes:

^a This is an updated (October 2010) version of the constitution and has yet to be approved by all members

^b Current faculties from University of Bristol include: Medicine & Dentistry, Medical & Veterinary Sciences and Social Sciences & Law. NHS Trusts include University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust, North Bristol Trust, and Bristol Primary Care Trust.

^c This includes securing continued funding for the theme facilitator, meetings, research away days, seminars