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**March 2025**

15<sup>th</sup> edition

# Recent starters



**Tessel Kolk**

Academic Clinical Fellow  
in General Practice

Having grown up in the Netherlands, I studied medicine at the University of Southampton. Whilst there, I undertook a BMedSc, shared between Southampton and University Medical Centre Utrecht, contributing to the set-up of volumetric data extraction of in-utero foetal and neonatal MRI utilising machine learning to review the impact of premature birth.

Wanting to shift my focus to maternal and women's health, I undertook an intercalated bachelors in Women's Health at King's College London. Here I joined the perinatal research team, identifying risk factors and social determinants related to maternal mental health and the interplay of mental health and mother-child bonding in a South London community cohort. I continued this research during my foundation years at St George's Hospital and the wider GESH trust. I have joined City St George's hoping to further explore my interest in women's health and caring for under-served communities in a community-based setting.



**Dr Melanie Coulson**

Academic Clinical Fellow  
in General Practice

Before starting my ACF GPST1 role in August 2024, I worked as a Clinical Education Fellow and an Academic Foundation Programme Doctor (theme: medical education). My background within medical education includes completion of an MSc within education, a PGCert (Teaching and Learning in Clinical Practice), and earning Fellowship to the HEA and membership to the AOME.

Alongside my clinical work, I'm actively involved in several regional and national committees in medical education and leadership. Over the last few years, I've had the chance to present my research at various conferences, both nationally and internationally. My main areas of research interest within medical education are curriculum design and assessment techniques.

I'm looking forward to continuing my research and connecting with others in the field as I explore new opportunities ahead!

# Recent starters



## **Francesco Dernie**

Academic Clinical Fellow  
in Clinical Pharmacology  
and Therapeutics

I joined St George's in August 2024 as an Academic Clinical Fellow in Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics. I studied medicine at the University of Oxford, where I completed an intercalated degree in infection and immunology before staying on to take up an Academic Foundation Programme post.

My research interests are predominantly in the field of pharmaco-epidemiology - using 'real world' and 'big data' sources to better understand the utilisation, trends, safety, and efficacy of medications that we use in everyday healthcare. I am particularly interested in populations who are often excluded from clinical trials, such as older people, people who are pregnant, or those with complex multimorbidity.

I'm looking forward to meeting the rest of the academic community at St George's!



## **William Smith**

Academic Clinical Fellow  
in Infectious Diseases

Dr William Smith is an ST1-level NIHR Academic Clinical Fellow (ACF) specialising in infectious diseases. He completed medical school in 2021, including an intercalated degree in biological anthropology, before undertaking academic foundation training in York and Hull, where he conducted research on the long-term consequences of invasive pneumococcal infections. He then worked as a research fellow at the Oxford Vaccine Group, contributing to a range of studies, including first-in-human vaccine trials for viral haemorrhagic fevers and research into the effects of age on immune responses to vaccination via lymph node aspiration. He is currently planning research projects at St George's focusing on invasive fungal infections and predictors of poor outcomes in tuberculosis infection.

# New SFP doctors



Name: Alex Shipley

SFP research theme: Primary Care

Research interests: *health policy, population health, health inequality*

Name: Sophie Heppenstall

SFP research theme: Paediatric Orthopaedics

Research interests: *epidemiology with a focus on orthopaedics and AI-driven healthcare solutions*



Name: Diego Abelleira Lastoria

SFP research theme: Vascular surgery

Research interests: *Vascular surgery, Trauma & Orthopaedics, Medical Education*



Name: Joshua Erhabor

SFP research theme: Critical Care

Research interests: *Neurosurgery and trauma*



Name: Shehzore T Adil

SFP research theme: Neurosurgery

Research interests: *Surgery and global health*





# Academic Primary Care

## Primary Care Education

[Dr Eliot Rees](#) has joined the education group as Deputy Head of Primary Care Education. Eliot is a Trustee of the Association Study of Medical Education, has recently completed his PhD and is lead editor of recently published [Starting Research in Clinical Education](#). Dr Jacky Driscoll has just completed an Academic Clinical Fellowships and joins our group as a Clinical Teaching Fellow. Last month, she won 'early career educator' for the second time in a row at the SAPC Regional meeting in Cambridge and last year was awarded separate grants from ASPIH (4000\$) and the Medical Protection Society (37K) for studies involving patients in simulation and using simulation to improve learner skills at handover in Foundation practice, respectively. Dr Rafi and AcF Reem Yahia published their [study](#) on case finding rare conditions in primary care using genomics. The SGUL [primary care seminar series](#) continues, co-created by Dr Roaa Al-Baedary, Professor Ibison and medical students (the students winning the medical student prize at the SAPC conference). The education group have innovated to produce primary care teaching for obstetrics and gynaecology, paediatrics and psychiatry within MBBS and are just launching new pilots in student placements in urgent care and prison health care.



Jacky Driscoll and Stephen Woolford with conference organisers Professors Hearn, Stephenson and White.

## Primary care research

This has been a positive time for primary care research within the Population Health Research Institute. Liza Bowen (NIHR Academic Clinical Lecturer) has been awarded an NIHR Research for Patient Benefit grant [Medicines prescribed in pregnancy: assessing safety for mother and baby using routine NHS data - NIHR Funding and Awards](#). Tess Harris (Prof Primary Care research) is a co-investigator and primary care lead on a newly awarded 5-year NIHR Programme Grant MOSAIC2, led by Lindsay Bearne (Prof Physiotherapy & Rehabilitation). Pippa Oakeshott (Prof General Practice) is a co-investigator on an NIHR Programme Development Grant [Increasing uptake of vaccinations in populations where there is low uptake | NIHR](#). We have two current primary care NIHR In Practice Fellows: Dr Felicity Knights, co-supervised by Prof Hargreaves in I&I and Prof Tess Harris PHRI who is working on migrant health research and helped set up the migrant health community research network, which won [Research Image of the Year 2024](#). Lakshmi Chandrasekaran has just started as an in practice fellow and is working with Profs Owen and Rudnicka (PHRI) on their successful ARIAS (Automated Retinal Image Analysis System) programme. Our GP Academic Clinical fellows have been continuing their excellent research. Dr Stephen Woolford is leading [The Hidden Workload Study \(2024 - ongoing\) — Primary care Academic Collaborative \(PACT\)](#) which is recruiting well and he won best early career research presentation at Madingley Society of Academic Primary Care conference in Jan 2025. Dr Selma Audi is progressing her interest in AI research and has submitted a doctoral fellowship application to the NIHR school of primary care research.

# News from our Academic Clinical Fellows

## **Advancing Rapid Diagnostics for the Neglected Tropical Disease Talaromyces in Vietnam: An International Fellowship**

*Dr Lottie Brown BSc, MSc, MBChB*

As part of my NIHR academic clinical fellowship in infectious diseases and microbiology, I undertook a 3-month international research fellowship at the Tropical Medicine Research Centre for Talaromyces in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, supervised by Professor Thuy Le (Associate Professor of Medicine at Duke University, USA, and Co-Director of the TMRC). The purpose of my visit was to evaluate molecular diagnostics for talaromyces, a severe fungal disease that affects individuals with advanced HIV disease living in Southeast Asia. The current diagnosis relies on culture, which is slow and insensitive, and non-culture-based diagnostics are urgently needed to facilitate early diagnosis and reduce the high mortality of up to 30%.

To gain clinical insight into talaromyces and other opportunistic infections in Southeast Asia, I spent three mornings per week shadowing clinicians at the Hospital for Tropical Diseases. Much of my time was spent working in the laboratory at the TMRC, optimising and evaluating a qPCR assay for

the detection of *Talaromyces marneffe* on around 400 blood specimens, with support from two highly experienced laboratory scientists Ms Ha My and Mr Khanh. Drawing on my experience in data analysis and presentation, I supervised junior researchers at the TMRC and at Duke University in manuscript writing and presenting their preliminary research findings to funders of the TMRC. A highlight of my fellowship was travelling to Hanoi with Prof Thuy Le to engage with public health experts and government officials at the CDC, the WHO and Ministry of Health to discuss our research and encourage implementation of our research findings. We also met with several hospital rectors to identify potential trial sites for our planned clinical trial (LAMB-FAST: Liposomal Amphotericin B and Flucytosine Antifungal Strategies for *Talaromyces*) which will be the focus of my PhD.

In terms of research outputs, our new partnership has been extremely fruitful. So far, I have submitted three first-author articles for publication and received invitations to deliver symposiums at ESCMID 2025 and Fungal Update 2025. The fellowship has served as a springboard

to secure four other competitive grant applications and research awards, which will enable me to visit Prof Thuy Le's second laboratory at Duke University in North Carolina, USA to learn cutting-edge techniques in host-based diagnostics.

The fellowship has confirmed my aspiration to pursue a clinical PhD fellowship in talaromycosis in

2026 and fostered what I predict to be a long-lasting and successful partnership between myself at St George's University, my primary supervisor Prof Tihana Bicanic, Prof Thuy Le and her team at Duke University and the TMRC in Vietnam.



**(1)** Lunchtime with my new colleagues at the Tropical Medicine Research Centre for Talaromycosis in Ho Chi Minh City **(2)** Travelling to work during rush hour in Ho Chi Minh City **(3)** Visiting future clinical trial sites in Hanoi **(4)** Team Sushi Dinner with colleagues at the Tropical Medicine Research Centre and partner institutes **(5)** View of the Ho Chi Minh City skyline from my desk **(6)** Working with my lab partner Ms Ha My to develop qPCR diagnostics for talaromycosis **(7)** Learning to ride a scooter on Con Dao Island **(8)** Writers retreat in Hoi An with my fellowship supervisors Prof Ngo Thi Hoa and Prof Thuy Le **(9)** Visiting the CDC in Hanoi to discuss implementation of talaromycosis research **(10)** Meeting future clinical trial collaborators **(11,12)** Clinical attachment at the Hospital for Tropical Diseases in Ho Chi Minh City.



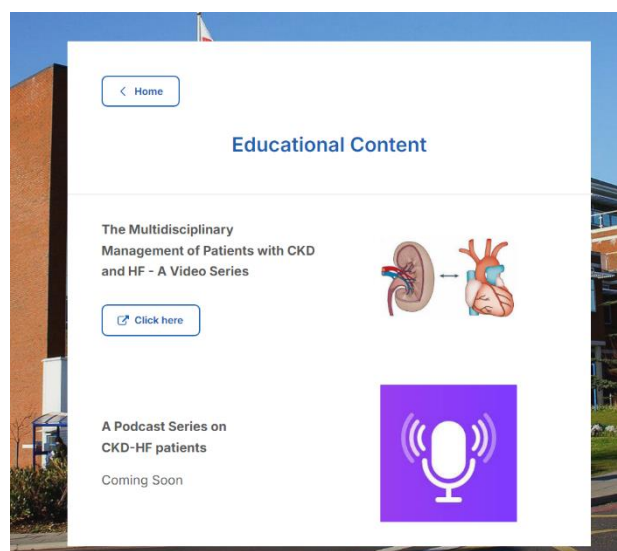
# News from our Academic Clinical Fellows

## The development of a St George's renal website

*Dr Simran Parmar*

Professor Debasish Banerjee (consultant nephrologist) and Dr Simran Parmar (IMT) recently won of the American Heart Association (AHA) “Role of the Kidney in Cardiovascular disease” education tool contest ([The Role of the Kidney in Cardiovascular Disease Educational Tools Contest - Professional Heart Daily | American Heart Association](#)). This contest awarded \$2000 USD to help implement their proposal titled “The Multidisciplinary Management of Patients with Chronic Kidney Disease and Heart Failure: A Video Series”. Their idea was to create a website which will contain a series of case based videos, each 10-minutes long, teaching different aspects around

the management of patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD) and heart failure (HF). Each video will be taught by a different member of the multidisciplinary team and the series will provide a holistic view in managing these complex patients. The website is currently up and running and contains information about the research team, a list of recent departmental publications, and on-going clinical trials. The educational content section will be continually updated as videos are developed. The hope is to develop a platform that will deliver high quality educational content aimed towards medical students, resident doctors, and all clinicians involved in the care of patients with CKD and HF. To find out more please visit <https://stgeorgesrenalresearch.co.uk/>.





# Academic Renal Medicine news

Our recent SFPs who wanted to pursue academic renal training, have been successful in doing do:

- Dr Ella Tumelty, completed 1 year TACRI fellowship, her MD with us and now will be joining an academic renal program in Bristol.
- Dr Tony Lopez, completed Core training and will join the academic renal program in UCL.
- Dr Simran Parmer is currently in the Renal Medicine ACF post at City St George's.



Dr Ella Tumelty



Dr Tony Lopez



Dr Simran Parmer