

OxAAA News

December 2015

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The OxAAA and vascular team at the departmental away day



A word from Professor Ashok Handa

It gives me great pleasure to write to you in this inaugural issue of the OxAAA newsletter.

We are just in to the third year of the study and have already recruited nearly 200 patients. This is much quicker than expected and I have been overwhelmed by the interest shown by patients in the study and the generosity of their time and spirit in participating. We continue to recruit at a steady rate and the pilot results are very encouraging.

We hope to hear from some grant awarding bodies in 2016 to help with future funding for the studies. We have planned an OxAAA aneurysm awareness day for all participants and their families on Saturday 7th May 2016 at the John Radcliffe Hospital.

I hope you will enjoy reading OxAAA News and I look forward to meeting you at the awareness day.

We also plan to send you a questionnaire in the New Year about what is important from your perspective about abdominal aortic aneurysmal disease.

I am also pleased to announce the recruitment of the rest of the team:

Mr Regent Lee has been appointed as Clinical Lecturer in Vascular Surgery in the Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences and we have recruited Mrs Amy Jones as the OxAAA Study co-ordinator. We are also joined by Mr Ismail Cassimjee from Johannesburg as a DPhil student and he comes as the prestigious Naki Hamilton Scholar from South Africa for 3 years. Ms Kirthi Bellamkonda joins us from the USA, also as a Scholar, for a Masters in Research degree and Dr Katie Hurst as an Academic clinical Fellow as part of her vascular surgery training.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for taking part in the study and making this important contribution to our understanding of aneurysmal disease.



Participant story: JAMES TAYLOR

I had two uncles, both surgeons, and also two great uncles who died as a result of aortic aneurysms. I mentioned this to my GP when there were problems controlling my blood pressure 14 years ago. This resulted in her referring me to the Vascular Department where I was scanned. The scan revealed an early abdominal aneurysm and under the care of the then Mr. Handa, I was scanned annually for some years, enabling me to travel widely round the world without concern including to countries like Syria, Iran, and to Asia and Far East. More recently they scanned 3 monthly and then late last year Professor Handa decided that it was time to operate. He explained the advantages and disadvantages of open surgery and endovascular procedures. With the open surgery the procedure was permanent, no further monitoring necessary and a normal life span but three months recovery time, probably a year before being fully recovered and greater risks during and immediately after the operation. With the intravascular procedure the risks were minimal, recovery period a few weeks, scanning annually afterwards, a life span of about ten years. At the age of 79 the choice was obvious and this was done in April this year, the discomfort was minimal and I was back to near normal after two weeks. Looking at life optimistically and if a further procedure is needed in about ten years time I feel sure that medicine will have advanced again.

Research update Dr. Regent Lee



What a year that has gone by! We are now into the third year of the OxAAA study, and almost 200 participants have been recruited! Due to the initial success at recruitment, we have been granted ethics approval to increase the number of recruitment of 400 patients, and we certainly need more participants to help.

Most of you would have met Nick during your scan(s) with the study. Nick has successfully completed his Masters research with us, and has returned to his sunny homeland of Belfast and set up his own shop.

However, this year also see the addition of several new faces to the OxAAA team – and you will get to learn more about them in this newsletter.

Your participation has contributed to interesting findings, and we are in the process of compiling the arm

ultrasound (FMD) data into a research publication in the coming year. Felicity and Kirthi are working very hard on this. We will certainly let all of you know when the results are published.

All of you would remember having donated quite a few bottles of blood during your visit. We have been storing these samples meticulously in the laboratory. In the coming year, I will start analysing these blood samples using a modern laboratory technique called Mass Spectrometry to look at novel signatures in your blood. Because I will be spending quite a bit of time in the laboratory, Amy has taken over my role for co-ordinating the study.

Wishing you all a joyful Festive Season, and cheers to good health!



New OxAAA team members

Kirthi Bellamkonda



Kirthi came to Oxford in September 2015 as a masters student and member of the OxAAA team.

She completed a major in Biological Sciences and minor in mathematics. She graduated Summa Cum Laude in May of 2015 from the University of Illinois.

She is investigating the systemic effects that may result from the presence of an abdominal aortic aneurysm, and will utilize flow mediated dilatation as a measure of endothelial function in the right brachial artery.

Ismail joined the OXAAA team in September 2015. He is a consultant vascular surgeon who has taken time off from clinical practice to pursue a DPhil.

Based in the two major academic hospitals in Johannesburg from 2006 to 2015, he completed his general surgical training in 2011 and his specialist training in Vascular Surgery in 2014.

His research intends to interrogate various factors that lead to the growth of abdominal aortic aneurysms as well as complications of aneurysms that arise as a result endovascular treatment.

Ismail Cassimjee



Amy Jones



Amy joined OxAAA in September 2015 after working in neuroscience research for 13 years. She manages the overall operations of the OxAAA study.

As the first point of contact for the public and study participants she co-ordinates recruitment, liaising with many of the NHS surveillance units, communicating with potential and current study participants - and their families. She assists in the procurement, processing and cataloguing of all OxAAA research samples in the laboratory and biobank.

Felicity joined OxAAA in 2014 and is based primarily at The Jackie Walton Vascular Studies Unit. She conducts the ultrasound component of the research works including FMD measurements and clinical aneurysm surveillance assessments.

Felicity is a Trainee Vascular Scientist currently enrolled on the National School of Healthcare Science Scientist Training Programme.

As part of this training she is currently undertaking her Masters in Clinical Science specialising in Vascular at Newcastle University.

Felicity Woodgate



Katie Hurst



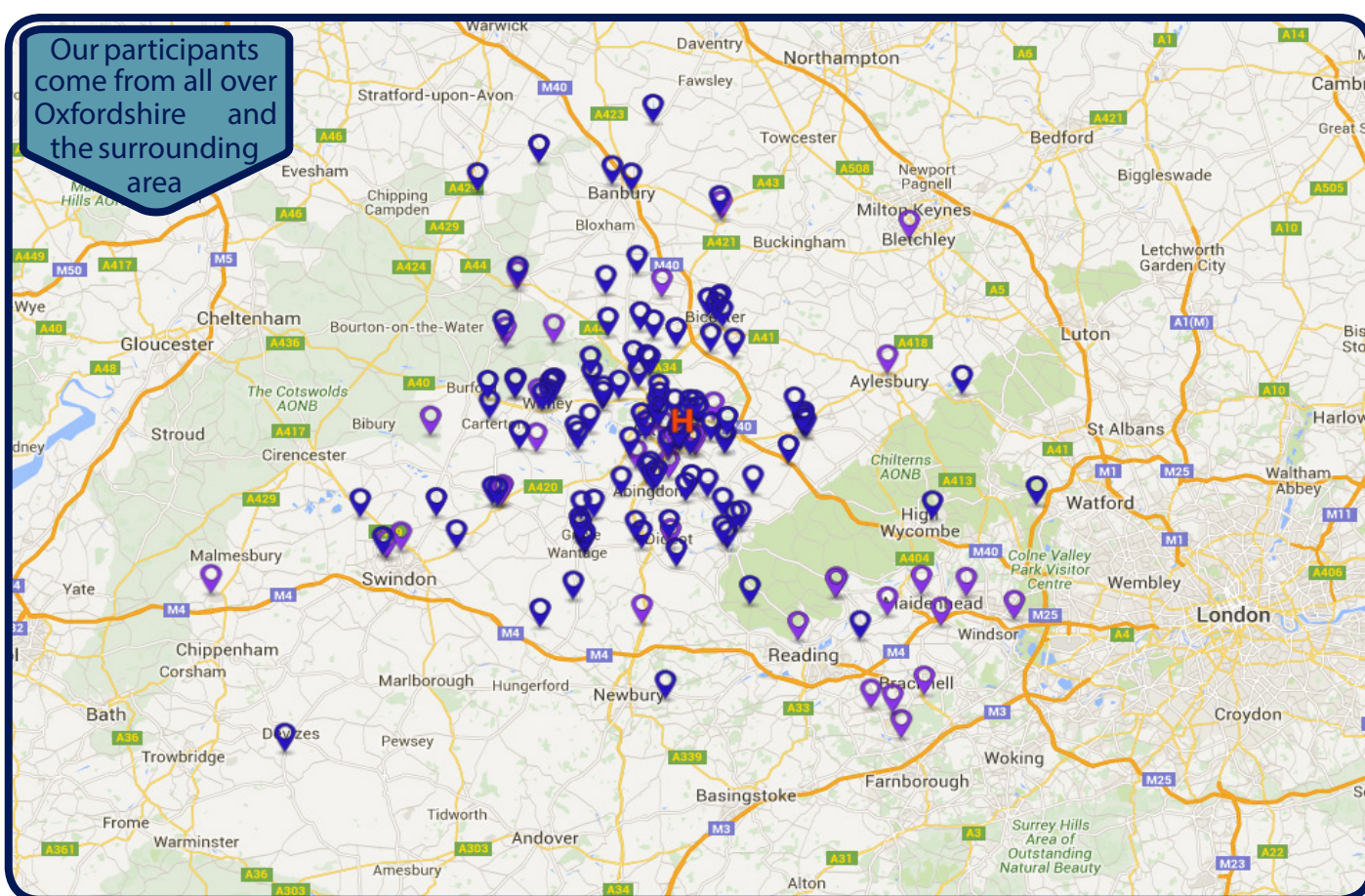
Katie joined OxAAA in September 2014 as an Academic Foundation Doctor. Her preliminary work into vascular diseases gained her an NIHR funded Academic Clinical Fellowship in August. This role allows Katie to run surgical training alongside her clinical research.

She graduated from Cardiff Medical School in 2013, having completed a BSc (Hons) with the University of Sheffield. Her research is predominately in the field of carotid disease and anti platelet medications, and she intends to complete her PhD within the vascular department over the forthcoming years.

OxAAA AORTIC ANEURYSM AWARENESS DAY Saturday 7th May 2016

Saturday May 7th 2016 will see the first OxAAA “Aortic Aneurysm Awareness Day.” Held at the John Radcliffe hospital, there will be a variety of speakers, from members of the OxAAA research team, the surgeons and even patients themselves. There will be an opportunity to talk with clinicians, visit clinical wellbeing stations and have a cup of tea and chat with other participants, patients and their families

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