

Parkinson's Research Centre

# Appointment of Centre Director



Principal funder:



Medical  
Research  
Council



# Welcome

## Centre Director, Parkinson's Research Centre

The UK Dementia Research Institute (UK DRI) is the UK's leading research institute transforming the lives of people affected by neurodegenerative conditions. In partnership with Parkinson's UK, we are seeking to appoint the inaugural Director of our new Parkinson's Research Centre (PRC) to be launched in 2025.

The PRC will adopt a distributed, network structure, with researchers hosted in leading universities across the UK. You will lead and set the scientific direction and vision of the PRC, with the overarching objective of driving research excellence. At the heart of our new Centre, you will hire four new UK DRI Group Leaders (principal investigators) with research primarily focused on Parkinson's, its causes, the biology of initiation and progression, detection, prevention and cure. The PRC will work closely with existing UK DRI Group and Emerging Leaders, contributing to a critical mass of collaborating researchers.

You will provide strategic and visionary leadership and build a culture of collaboration to further develop our strong scientific identity and reputation for excellence in Parkinson's research. This will enable you to create an environment that inspires and motivates research teams to further develop their scientific research expertise and careers. You will also, as a Centre Director, be part of the UK DRI's national leadership team, supporting the Institute Director's vision.

Launched in 2017, the UK Dementia Research Institute (UK DRI) stands as a beacon of scientific innovation. The purpose of the UK DRI is, through research, to transform the outlook for people living with or at risk of all neurodegenerative conditions, including Parkinson's, Lewy body dementia, Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, motor neuron disease and others.

### **Our vision is a future of healthy brain ageing for all.**

Our work is data driven, collaborative and team-based, targeting discoveries that will lead to more effective therapies and better quality of life. We achieve this through three linked pillars of research activity:

**Discover** what causes neurodegeneration

**Develop** new tools, tests and treatments

**Deliver** solutions to maintain brain health in an ageing society

Our unique strength lies in our comprehensive approach, bridging the gap between scientific inquiry and therapeutic innovation.

The UK DRI brings together approximately 1,000 world-leading researchers across multiple disciplines hosted across prestigious UK universities:

- UK DRI at The University of Cambridge
- UK DRI at Cardiff University
- UK DRI at The University of Edinburgh
- UK DRI at Imperial College London
- UK DRI at King's College London
- UK DRI at UCL
- Centre for Care Research & Technology (Imperial College London / University of Surrey)
- BHF - UK DRI Centre for Vascular Dementia Research (UCL / University of Edinburgh)

Each of our Centres is led by a tenured, seasoned professorial-level Centre Director.

In addition to the UK DRI's principal funder MRC, our other major funding partners include the British Heart Foundation, LifeArc, NIHR, Alzheimer's Society and Alzheimer's Research UK.

The UK DRI are delighted to partner with Parkinson's UK to establish a ninth Centre, the "Parkinson's Research Centre".

Discover more:

[www.ukdri.ac.uk](http://www.ukdri.ac.uk)



# Existing Parkinson's research at the UK DRI

The UK DRI brings together a diverse and world-leading range of expertise to explore key questions in the Parkinson's field.

Our research ranges from a molecular and cell biology perspective, developing and utilising state-of-the-art disease models, through to translational studies identifying digital, imaging, and blood biomarkers.

Our researchers leverage innovative technologies including spatial transcriptomics, proteomics, and environmental sensing in the home to address critical challenges in understanding, diagnosing and treating Parkinson's and related synucleinopathies.

Our current Parkinson's research includes:

- Elucidating specific vulnerability of cell types
- Protein structure, protein misfolding and proteostasis
- Mechanisms of alpha-synuclein spread and the gut-brain-axis
- Genetic and epigenetic contributions towards disease
- Biomarker discovery, including digital, imaging, and blood biomarkers
- Synapse and circuitry
- Robotics and environmental sensing
- Novel therapeutics and drug screening
- Utilising cutting-edge model systems e.g. stem cell and organoid models

We currently have a network of 27 Group and Emerging Leaders whose research focus includes Parkinson's (see right). The Parkinson's Research Centre will work closely with our existing researchers, contributing to a dynamic group united in their efforts.

Read more about Parkinson's research taking place at the UK DRI at:

[www.ukdri.ac.uk/conditions/parkinsons-disease](http://www.ukdri.ac.uk/conditions/parkinsons-disease)

## UK DRI Group and Emerging Leaders whose research focus includes Parkinson's:

- Professor Gabriel Balmus
- Professor Payam Barnaghi
- Dr Tim Bartels
- Dr Dayne Beccano-Kelly
- Dr Kathryn Bowles
- Professor Tim Constandinou
- Professor Paul Elliott
- Dr Nir Grossman
- Dr Shlomi Haar
- Professor Sir John Hardy
- Dr Soyon Hong
- Dr Jo Jackson
- Dr Valeria Jaramillo
- Professor Sir David Klenerman
- Dr Pete Lally
- Dr Anna Mallach
- Dr Sarah Marzi
- Dr Alexi Nott
- Professor David Rubinsztein
- Professor Mina Ryten
- Dr Cynthia Sandor
- Dr Gregory Scott
- Dr Nathan Skene
- Professor Tara Spires-Jones
- Professor Ravi Vaidyanathan
- Professor Caleb Webber
- Professor Henrik Zetterberg



Parkinson's is the fastest growing neurological condition in the world.

There is currently no cure.

As the largest European charitable funder of Parkinson's research, Parkinson's UK is determined to change that.

We're here to support every Parkinson's journey, every step of the way.

We've invested over £120m in vital research that has delivered groundbreaking discoveries, new medications and better care. And right now, new treatments that can slow, stop or reverse the damage occurring within the brain are within our grasp.

We're delighted to be joining forces with the UK Dementia Research Institute to create a Centre dedicated to better understanding the causes of Parkinson's and to finding new treatments to prevent, halt and ultimately cure Parkinson's.

Alongside this, Parkinson's UK will bring powerful additional support, including:

### Our pioneering Virtual Biotech programme

Established in 2017, the Parkinson's Virtual Biotech is the charity's global drug discovery and development programme dedicated to delivering life-changing new treatments in years not decades.

Our specialist in-house team identifies and invests in projects with the greatest potential to transform life for people with Parkinson's. And the new UK DRI Centre offers an exciting opportunity to fast-track discoveries into this pre-clinical development and testing.

### Patient & public involvement support

Patient and public involvement (PPI) is a collaborative process where patients, carers, and members of the public work with researchers to improve the quality and impact of their research.

Our sector-leading patient and public involvement team will support UK DRI researchers to work in partnership with people with Parkinson's to shape and guide their work.

### A wealth of Parkinson's UK resources

The new UK DRI Centre will be able to benefit from other major Parkinson's UK initiatives including:

- Data from cohort studies which have collected detailed longitudinal data on thousands of patients across the UK
- Samples from the Parkinson's UK Brain Bank
- Insights from our multi-million pound landmark programme which is applying cutting-edge genetic techniques to hundreds of samples from the brain bank

With these combined resources to draw upon, the new Centre will be uniquely positioned to make and translate discoveries to create a future free from the devastating effects of Parkinson's.

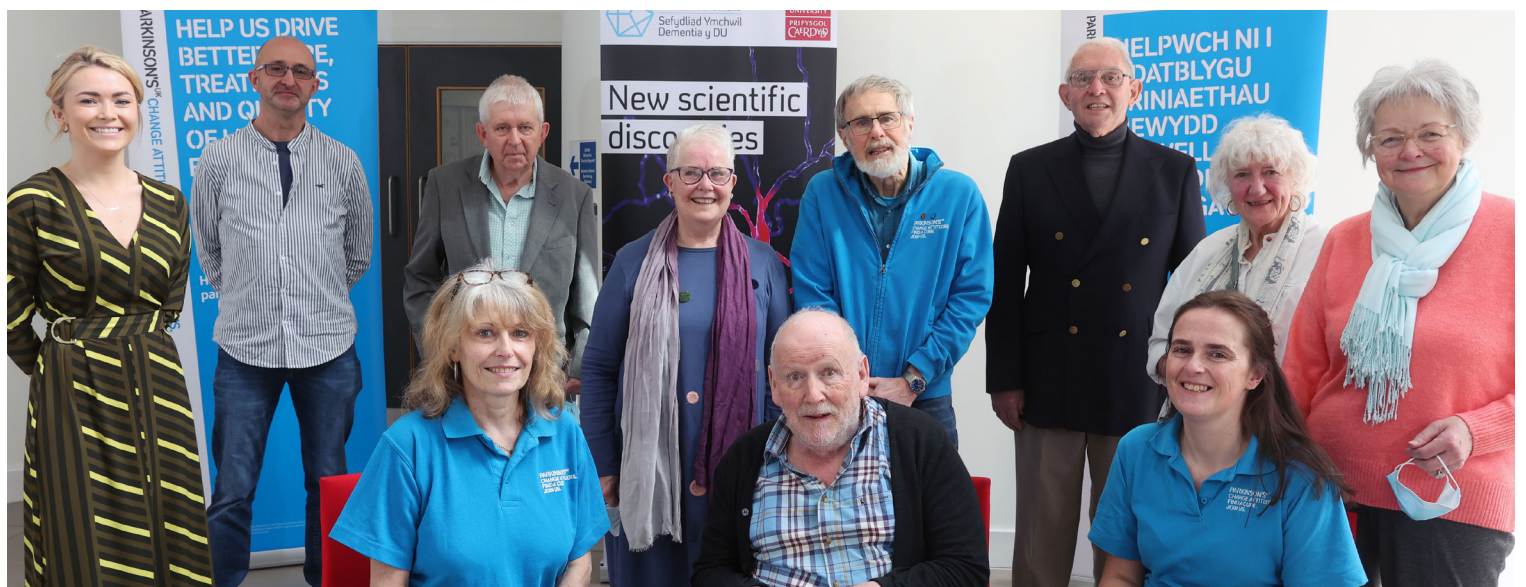
**Together we can find new treatments.**

**And one day, a cure.**

**Join us.**

Read more about Parkinson's UK:

**[www.parkinsons.org.uk](http://www.parkinsons.org.uk)**





# Parkinson's Research Centre

The PRC will become a recognised centre of Parkinson's research excellence which will substantially increase Parkinson's research capacity in the UK complementing existing research capacity funded and conducted by the UK DRI and Parkinson's UK.

The UK DRI and Parkinson's UK will each invest £5 million over five years to drive forward vital research. The PRC will look to identify and validate targets that drive data/technology-enabled approaches to Parkinson's prediction and prevention, alongside the development and evaluation of effective treatments to prevent initiation, slow progression or to reverse Parkinson's. The PRC will also aim to progress the design of "smart clinical trials", the use of emerging medical and diagnostic technologies and the use of experimental medicine.

## £10M

will be invested in the new Centre over 5 years

At the heart of the new Centre will be five new UK DRI Group Leaders (principal investigators), including the Centre Director, to be recruited via an international search, whose salary and research programmes will be supported by this new partnership.

The PRC will benefit from the established resources at the UK DRI, including the phenomenal discovery-to-patient research community, technology platforms and expertise, partnerships, training and tech transfer, as well as powerful additional support from Parkinson's UK (page 5).

## 5

new Group Leaders will be recruited including the Centre Director

The PRC will adopt a distributed, network structure. The Centre Director (and other PRC Group Leaders) will be physically located at one or more of the UK DRI's host universities (Cardiff University, Imperial College London, King's College London, UCL, University of Cambridge, University of Edinburgh), or the University of Oxford, noting the establishment of the Oxford Parkinson's Disease Centre supported by major investment from Parkinson's UK. These decisions will be based on the optimal intellectual environment, access to critical technology and infrastructure, proximity of intended close collaborators and other tangible benefits offered by the universities.



# Role of the Centre Director

In this newly created role, we are looking for a Centre Director to shape, develop and lead our new Parkinson's Research Centre, and work with UK DRI leadership to develop and implement an Institute-wide, highly collaborative, Parkinson's research vision and strategy.

## Leadership

Bringing your scientific leadership skills and vision to establish, nurture and grow the PRC, you'll develop our strong scientific identity and reputation for excellence in Parkinson's research.

You will lead and deliver a programme of cutting-edge research, and work with others to shape the overall research direction and growth of Parkinson's research at the Institute. Professional relationships are key, and with the support and partnership with Parkinson's UK, you'll ensure that the perspective of people with Parkinson's is placed at the heart of our research so that it is relevant and impactful.

Leading a Centre means providing effective management and leadership of all aspects. From science, logistics, finance and people, notably career development. You'll create a mutually supportive and vibrant environment for Parkinson's research, that is committed to the ethos of an inclusive and welcoming Centre.

## Scientific research

This role provides an excellent opportunity to develop a programme of world-leading Parkinson's research that complements the present research portfolios across the UK DRI, helping to shape future scientific direction. Start-up funds will be available; however, you will be expected to apply for further research funding from other relevant funders to further strengthen your personal and professional portfolio.

It's essential that you have a strong understanding of and commitment to the mission of the UK DRI. Together with a broad and deep understanding of Parkinson's research, you'll bring a strong commitment to supporting and delivering research of the highest quality.

You will represent the PRC and the UK DRI, contribute to scientific progress in the field, and maintain a broad, balanced and informed perspective of current scientific issues and opportunities in Parkinson's research.

## Collaborations & partnerships

You will be responsible for identifying and managing key collaborations nationally across the UK DRI and other relevant UK partners, and internationally with leading Parkinson's researchers globally.

You will seek and develop industry partnerships, including Parkinson's Virtual Biotech, to facilitate translation of the Centre's research into drugs, devices, tests, services, and other deliverables. Working with the relevant university and UK DRI teams, you'll identify and capitalise on opportunities for the creation of intellectual property and the exploitation of commercial potential, including cooperating on patent protection and exploitation in accordance with the UK DRI and university policies.





# Role of the Centre Director

## **An ambassador for the UK DRI and Parkinson's research**

You'll positively champion and, build public awareness of the importance of Parkinson's research and engage with people affected by Parkinson's and the broader public. You will play a key role in communicating with the media, the public and politicians to raise the profile of Parkinson's research locally, nationally and internationally. Being an ambassador for the UK DRI and Parkinson's research will be key to attracting external funding to the Centre.

Research outputs will be disseminated by encouraging publication of results, presentations at scientific meetings and responding to media enquiries, working with UK DRI and Parkinson's UK communications teams to ensure that achievements are widely publicised through all suitable media outlets.

## **Reporting, regulations & policies**

All research within the Centre will be conducted in accordance with good practice and compliance with legal and regulatory requirements with the UK DRI and host university, in respect of equality and diversity, data protection and information governance, copyright and licensing, security, financial and other university policies, procedures and codes as appropriate, is required.

With Centre administrative support, you will be responsible for recording all UK DRI activities and compiling submissions for annual reports and quinquennial reviews.

## **Academic role**

As a Centre Director, you will adhere to the generic expectations of a senior academic role. Depending on your host university, and by agreement, you may have additional teaching, management, or administrative responsibilities within their university. Other academic duties may include those consistent with the role of a senior academic, on an occasional basis, and by agreement. Whilst there are currently no clinical sessions confirmed for this position, we envisage supporting the successful candidate to maintain clinical work if required.



# Selection criteria

## Essential criteria

- Proven record of senior academic and strategic leadership, including proven capacity to develop partnerships and collaborations with Clinical, Academic and Industrial partners
- Proven communication and networking skills, evidence of successful relationship building, collaboration, and project management
- Commitment to the involvement of people with Parkinson's in research
- Proven sustained and substantial record of publications in national and international journals and/or other quantifiable research outputs
- An established international reputation within the academic field of Parkinson's research
- Proven record of winning competitive research funding along with a strong portfolio of research grants
- Understanding of the UK DRI's mission; the capacity to develop a clear vision for the PRC and the ability to develop, plan and implement the relevant UK DRI's strategic aims
- Evidence of commitment to nurture and support the development of the next generation of researchers

## For clinical applicants

- Relevant registration in accordance with University requirements

## Desirable criteria

- Proven capacity to translate research into new tests or treatments for Parkinson's

# Apply

The UK DRI's structure provides that the Centre Director and Group Leaders at the PRC are employed by the university at which they are based. The successful Centre Director applicant will be granted a tenured professorship with a highly competitive salary at that university, and resources to fund a personal research programme.

As part of the application, please identify and tell us which university would be best suited to this position; providing a justification for such request. You may choose to be based at the following universities: Cardiff University, Imperial College London, King's College London, UCL, University of Cambridge, University of Edinburgh, or University of Oxford.

Each request will be reviewed, and the requested University will be engaged as part of the recruitment process should your application be taken forward.

To apply, please [visit the official UK DRI job application page](#), and provide:

- A **cover letter** that explains your motivation for joining the UK DRI and for leading the PRC. Include your preferred host University.
- A **description of your vision for the PRC**, including science priorities and research themes that you and the PRC's other Group Leaders will pursue. Also describe your past and future (next five years) research plan and the optimum university host for your research programme. This must be no more than six pages, including references and all material.
- A **full curriculum vitae** and **details of three referees**.
- A **lay summary of your application**. This must use appropriate lay language, avoid technical language, and give a realistic representation of the scientific sections. With advance notice, support can be sought from [Parkinson's UK's patient and public involvement programme](#).

## UK DRI is committed to equal opportunities

The UK DRI embraces diversity, inclusion and accessibility for all of our people. We are committed to building a diverse organisation that represents the communities we serve and ensuring inclusion in everything we do. This means ensuring our recruitment processes are barrier-free and as inclusive as possible to everyone. We will make adjustments for people who have a disability or long-term condition.

## Closing date for applications: 23 April 2025, 5pm (BST)

**In-person interview date: 21 May 2025**

For informal enquiries, please contact:

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UK DRI Director and CEO  
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**NIHR** National Institute  
for Health Research