

# Centre Director and van Geest Professor of Neurodegeneration Research

UK DRI at King's College London

**Full time, tenured professorial appointment**

Centre Director position funded by the UK DRI, the van Geest Foundation and King's College London for five years in the first instance

[Kings College London](#) is seeking an exceptional Neuroscientist (clinical or non-clinical), to be the Director of the [UK Dementia Research Institute](#) (UK DRI) Centre at King's College London and van Geest Professor of Neurodegeneration Research.

An internationally recognised leader working on disease mechanisms, preclinical studies or fully translational interventions for Neurodegenerative disorders, you will provide strategic leadership to a team of five Group Leaders and circa 60 researchers based in the [UK DRI Centre at King's](#).

The UK DRI has attracted some of the brightest minds in the field of neurodegeneration and given them the best technologies to elucidate fundamental mechanisms and identify new targets for drug development. We are developing diagnostic/predictive biomarkers and new therapies in partnership with biopharma to enable early intervention and disease prevention.

## What we offer

Supported by the UK DRI and generous funding from the van Geest Foundation we offer a highly competitive salary and start-up package.

We offer a permanent tenured professorial appointment at King's; the Centre Director element of the position is funded for five years in the first instance with opportunity for renewal.

A competitive salary will be determined based on achievements, qualifications and experience, and a generous relocation package will be provided to candidates moving to the London area.

We also offer a major start-up package, including a multimillion-pound personal research budget, dedicated funding to support the Centre, and space in the newly built Maurice Wohl Clinical Neuroscience Institute, which has state-of-the-art molecular and cell biology facilities. The successful candidate will also recruit one-to-two new Group Leaders into the Centre to further strengthen its strategic research vision.

## Context

### The UK Dementia Research Institute

Dementia is the biggest health challenge of our century – currently affecting fifty million people worldwide, projected to triple by 2050, with huge financial, emotional, and social impact on people directly affected, their carers, families, and the community.

Dementia is a symptom of several neurodegenerative disorders, with Alzheimer's disease accounting for about 60% of cases. To date there is no way to prevent or even slow the rate of progression of neurodegeneration – there is still a major knowledge gap in our basic understanding of the diseases.

The [UK Dementia Research Institute](#) (UK DRI) is the biggest UK initiative supporting research to fill this gap.

We are a globally leading multidisciplinary research institute of 700 staff investigating the spectrum of neurodegenerative disorders causing dementia, driving a step change in our understanding of neurodegeneration and accelerating the discovery, development and delivery of interventions that will help diagnose, treat and ultimately prevent dementia.

Our laboratory-based research groups are located at University College London, the University of Cambridge, Cardiff University, Edinburgh University, Imperial College London and King's College London.

## **King's College London**

[King's College London](#) is a large multi-faculty Russell Group university located on several campuses in the heart of London. Fourteen people from King's and its associated institutions have been awarded the Nobel Prize. One of the largest institutions training biomedical professionals in Europe, excellence in research and education in neuroscience and mental health is delivered by the [Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience](#) (IoPPN).

At the IoPPN, our staff and students work to understand basic disease mechanisms and to transform care for people who are affected by mental health and neurological conditions, through world-class research, education, and training, and to serve our communities locally and globally. We produce more highly cited outputs (top 1% citations) on mental health than any other centre in the world (SciVal 2019) and on this metric we have risen from 16th (2014) to 4th (2019) in the world for highly cited neuroscience outputs.

[Neuroscience](#) laboratory research is hosted in 10,000m<sup>2</sup> of state-of-the-art dedicated laboratory space on two campuses. The UK DRI Centre at King's is based in the Maurice Wohl Clinical Neurosciences Institute, opened in 2015, which benefits from a wide range of laboratory equipment funded by a £10m UK Research Partnership Infrastructure award. The Maurice Wohl Clinical Neurosciences Institute is co-located on the same campus with the [Maudsley Hospital](#) – the largest provider of psychiatric care in Europe – and [King's College Hospital](#), a large multi-specialty acute and tertiary hospital which includes the regional neurology and neurosurgery centre. The [Wellcome-NIHR Clinical Research Facility](#) (CRF) at Denmark Hill is a large experimental medicine and early-phase clinical trials facility, focused on neuroscience and mental health. Embedded in King's College Hospital and just 200m from the Maurice Wohl Clinical Neurosciences Institute, the CRF provides an exceptional bridge between basic science discovery and clinical translation.

## **UK DRI at King's College London**

Researchers at the [UK DRI at King's](#) use innovative approaches to explore the biological mechanisms involved in neurodegenerative diseases. Their goal is to defeat dementia by uncovering vital new knowledge that will lead to the design of smarter diagnostics and effective treatments.

The UK DRI at King's aims to understand the fundamental biological processes involved in dementia at a molecular level – and uses that knowledge to design new ways to diagnose and treat disease more precisely.

Investigations currently focus on three neurodegenerative diseases: Alzheimer's disease, frontotemporal dementia (FTD) and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). While these are clinically distinct conditions affecting different areas of the nervous system, they all involve the death of neurons and share considerable overlap in their clinical features and molecular causes.

The process of neurodegeneration occurs due to a gradual loss of neuronal structure and function that, during disease progression, ultimately results in cell death. Although the processes behind this aren't yet fully understood, a build-up of toxic proteins and the loss of connections (synapses) between neurons are both intimately involved.

Researchers at the UK DRI at King's use cutting-edge techniques to study the role of key genes and proteins in neurodegeneration, including using advanced imaging tools that allow them to look

at what's going on inside neurons at the level of individual molecules. This builds a better picture of the molecular causes of different diseases, enabling the design and development of innovative new treatments that can tackle dementia.

## The role of Centre Director

Our Centre Directors are key to the success of the UK DRI, providing scientific leadership within the UK DRI community, developing collaborative opportunities within our host universities as well as across the wider neurodegeneration community and industry, and contributing to the growth and success of the UK DRI.

### Key responsibilities

You will lead the UK DRI at King's Centre, developing the scientific strategy and a strong scientific identity for the Centre, and creating a stimulating, inclusive, and developmental environment to encourage excellence in research. You'll have the autonomy to determine and manage the Centre's resourcing needs and will be responsible for the development of talent within the Centre and the Centre's overall performance. You will also lead your own personal dementia-relevant research group and programme of research at King's aligned with the aims of the UK DRI.

As a member of the UK DRI's Scientific Strategy and Operational Board, you will be a scientific leader and role model within the UK DRI community, contribute to the overall scientific mission of the UK DRI and represent the UK DRI at King's community. You will promote an effective working relationship between King's and the UK DRI, creating an interactive and mutually supportive environment that maximises the benefits of co-location.

You will also develop interactions with industry to promote translation of research into drugs, devices, services, and other patient interventions, and support the UK DRI's commitment to building public awareness of and engagement with the UK DRI and its mission.

A [full summary of the duties](#) is below.

### Candidate profile

Applications are encouraged from researchers whose work is synergistic with existing strengths in the UK DRI at King's including mechanistic studies focusing on defective protein folding/aggregation, RNA processing, intracellular transport, and synaptic function. Our disease focus includes amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), frontotemporal dementia (FTD) and Alzheimer's, and our translational work involves AAV and ASO gene therapies. Your research proposal should demonstrably interface and complement the present portfolio and future science strategy of the Centre and the UK DRI.

You will have a PhD/MD or equivalent with a strong record of publications and recognition at national and international level for high quality dementia-relevant research by funding and other awarding bodies and the award of competitive grants. Experience of leading a large research programme, including recruitment, training and management of PhD students and postdoctoral scientists, and managing associated resources (funding, equipment etc.) is essential.

A [full candidate profile](#) is available below.

### How to apply

Please send the following documents to [ioppn@minervasearch.com](mailto:ioppn@minervasearch.com) by Friday 10 September 2021:

- A current CV.
- A cover letter (maximum five pages) outlining your motivation for applying, your vision for the UK DRI at King's Centre, and your personal research proposal.

## Who to contact

- For a confidential discussion please contact Head of the King's School of Neuroscience, Prof Mark Richardson ([mark.richardson@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:mark.richardson@kcl.ac.uk)), UK DRI Director, Prof Bart De Strooper ([b.strooper@ukdri.ucl.ac.uk](mailto:b.strooper@ukdri.ucl.ac.uk)) or UK DRI Director (Operations), Dr Adrian Ivinson ([a.ivinson@ukdri.ucl.ac.uk](mailto:a.ivinson@ukdri.ucl.ac.uk)).
- For questions regarding the application process please contact [ioppn@minervaserach.com](mailto:ioppn@minervaserach.com).

## Duties and Responsibilities

The Centre Director leads the UK DRI at King's Centre, is a member of the UK DRI's senior leadership team, the Scientific Strategy and Operational Board (SSOB), and drives the partnership and collaboration between King's College London and the UK DRI.

The Centre Director will set the Centre's scientific direction, vision, and leadership, promoting the UK DRI's objective of excellence in dementia research. They will also direct their own internationally competitive research programme in dementia or neurodegeneration and be a scientific leader within the UK DRI community, developing collaborative opportunities across both King's and the wider neurodegeneration community and industry, and contributing to the overall growth of the UK DRI.

### Main duties

- Lead a major dementia-relevant research group and programme of research at King's and plan the scientific direction of the research programme, addressing key questions within the overall scientific remit of the UK DRI and being accountable for presenting the programme for peer review, as part of the Institute's scientific assessment, in accordance with the funders' procedures.
- Supervise and mentor doctoral students, early career postdoctoral researchers, other senior researchers, technicians, and professional support staff.
- Identify and act on opportunities to create intellectual property, cooperating in patent protection and in exploitation according to UK DRI and King's policies.
- Develop interactions with industry in order that we are ready and able to translate the results of UK DRI and UK DRI at King's research into drugs, devices, services, and other patient interventions, and ensure that appropriate intellectual property is created and protected according to UK DRI Ltd policy for the benefit of the UK DRI, the UK economy and benefit of people affected by dementia and their carers.
- Contribute to the UK DRI's commitment to build public awareness of and engagement with the UK DRI and its mission through engagement with people affected by dementia and the broader public, to communicate the excitement of research to the public in an accessible way and to help raise the profile of the UK DRI.
- Work as a scientific leader within the UK DRI community, acting as a role model within the Centre and more widely, and supporting the UK DRI objective of excellence in dementia research by providing vision and leadership.
- Contribute to scientific progress in the field by, for example, membership of expert committees, editing specialist journals and refereeing funding applications.
- Actively maintain and manage the relationship and interaction between the UK DRI and King's, and develop, maintain and nurture significant, open, and productive relationships with the King's community.
- Generate and manage collaborations within the UK DRI at King's Centre, the UK DRI, King's and with external programmes, institutions, foundations, and companies.
- Contribute to teaching programmes within King's.
- Maintain a broad, balanced, and informed perspective of current scientific issues, especially those pertaining directly to the field of research.
- To represent the UK DRI at King's Centre on university committees and working groups as required.

## Centre leadership

- Provide research leadership to the UK DRI at King's group, and work with faculty and staff to develop a short- and long-term scientific strategy and a strong scientific identity for the UK DRI at King's Centre, in line with the UK DRI mission.
- Create a stimulating environment within the UK DRI at King's Centre—one that is inclusive and diverse, fosters talent, and encourages and supports excellence.
- Determine and manage the resource requirements needed to sustain the UK DRI at King's Centre, including the staffing structure required for taking forward the programmes of research to success.
- With operational support, maintain oversight and responsibility for the recruitment, management, training, and career development of group members, including line management and performance management, in accordance with the UK DRI and King's policies and procedures.
- Organise and manage the UK DRI at King's Centre's science, logistics, finances and personnel, and accept ultimate responsibility for the development of talent, financial management, and overall performance of the Centre.
- Direct the activities of the Centre by supervising some projects personally and overseeing projects delegated to other staff members. You will be expected to provide the intellectual energy and independent thinking necessary to lead and deliver a programme of cutting-edge research and to shape the overall aims and success of the Centre.
- Be part of the UK DRI Directors' Scientific Strategy and Operational Board, contributing to the overall scientific mission of the UK DRI and representing the UK DRI at King's community.
- Work with senior King's leadership to create an interactive, mutually supportive environment so that both can maximise benefit of co-location.
- Ensure all research within the Centre is conducted in accordance with good practice and in compliance with UK DRI and King's policies and legal requirements.
- Disseminate the research outputs from the Centre by encouraging publication of results, presentations at scientific meetings and responding to media enquiries, working with King's and UK DRI communications teams to ensure that achievements are widely publicised through all suitable media.
- Ensure the UK DRI at King's Centre contributes to the harmonious and successful running of the UK DRI and King's and ensuring that members of the UK DRI at King's Centre do the same.

## Section criteria

### Research

- PhD, MD or equivalent.
- An understanding of the mission of the UK DRI, an interest in its research work and a strong commitment to supporting high quality research.
- Recognised at a national and international level for the high quality of dementia-relevant research by funding and other awarding bodies and the award of competitive grants.
- Strong record of publications, with emphasis on quality.
- Proven scientific leadership and productivity, with a track record of internationally competitive scientific research that you wish to apply in a UK DRI core programme.
- Proven experience of presenting and defending the results of research.
- A research proposal that demonstrably interfaces and complements the present portfolio and future science strategy of the Centre and the UK DRI.
- Experience of independently planning, developing, and leading successful projects or programmes of research.
- Demonstrable scientific innovation, enabling apparently intractable problems to be successfully tackled and overcome.
- Experience of having influenced knowledge or wider practice in previous research field.
- Experience in building, strengthening, and sustaining successful collaborations both within the home institute and externally, influencing outcomes and/or direction.

- Experience in identifying and capitalising on opportunities for the creation of intellectual property and the exploitation of commercial potential; cooperating in patent protection and other mechanisms used by home institute to protect intellectual property (desirable).
- Experience with translational science and interactions with clinical and commercial partners or collaborators (desirable).

## **Leadership**

- Experience leading a large research programme.
- Experience of leading a multi-PI collaborative research community (desirable).
- Experience of managing resources (funding, equipment and people).
- Experience in recruiting, training, and managing PhD students and postdoctoral scientists. Experience of managing other research group leaders/professors is highly desirable.
- Committed to building an inclusive and welcoming Centre through the promotion of diversity across all areas, particularly recruitment, development, and collaboration activities.
- Experience of communicating and engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including the press and the public.

## **Personal attributes**

- Excellent interpersonal, social and diplomacy skills with an ability to work co-operatively in a multidisciplinary setting.
- Resourceful and able to act on own initiative.
- Ability to communicate and deal effectively and professionally (i.e., with tact, diplomacy and sensitivity) with a wide range of people at all levels in and outside the university.
- Ability to lead people within a research programme group in an inspiring manner, building them into an excellent research team.
- A collaborative and proactive mindset, with the ability to seek appropriate input and make critical and timely decisions.
- Dynamic and forward thinking in your approach to work, with strong problem-solving abilities.
- Meticulous and accurate in all aspects of work, with the ability to work in a fast-paced environment, to meet deadlines and handle stressful situations.
- Demonstrable organisational skills, with a methodical approach to workload and time management.
- Commitment to active and ongoing personal and professional development.