

Under the Microscope



Paediatric Gastroenterology Research Team newsletter
Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Trust

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Hunt, aged 10, with help from his brother Charlie!

HELLO!

Issue 13 - April 2026

Welcome to issue 13! Thank you to Teddie and Charlie for guest editing the newsletter this time. We think you will agree they have done a great job! As we move into spring, we have a fun fact about fresh-cut grass smell! It smells so good because it releases special chemicals called Green Leaf Volatiles (GLVs) when it's cut or damaged. These natural compounds help the plant protect itself, by sealing wounds and even sending signals that can attract helpful insects to defend it. It is a clever scientific grass survival trick!

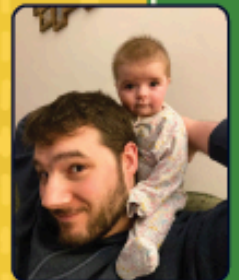


In the lab Ellie has completed her PhD training and is looking forward to her next adventure as Dr Slater! But we will miss her.

Congratulations to Tom and Becky, who welcomed baby Molly to the world.

Jen and Seb were very busy at ECCO this year, while at home Dr Matt held his second conference all about organoids (tiny versions of organs grown by scientists in a lab) at Magdalene college at Cambridge.

Congratulations to Matt's lab for winning the Cambridge Awards for research impact and engagement.



In this issue you can meet Prof Sam Behjati, and read all about the up coming plans for the new children research institute in Cambridge.

And of course you can read all about the family day!



Young Sparks!

Want to learn a fun trick that feels like magic but is actually science?

Try the **Coin Catching Trick!** (it might take practice!)

1. Bend your arm, bring your hand up near your ear.

2. Lift your forearm up so your elbow is pointing straight ahead of you.

3. Carefully place a coin on the flat part of your elbow.

Try slowly first: Move your elbow downward your hand forward gently and try to catch the coin, Did it work? Probably not!

Now try it quickly: Snap your arm forward and downwards fast and try to catch the coin with the same hand. Practice a few times!

This trick works because of something called **inertia**, that means objects like to stay still unless something moves them. When you move your arm quickly, the coin doesn't move right away... so you have time to catch it in your hand before gravity takes effect!!

If you want to learn about this you can look up **Newton's first law of motion!**

Can you catch 2 or 3 coins at once?
Can you teach a friend how to do it?

Which doctor do you think is really good at this trick?
(answer is on the back page!)



Meet our team...



Scan here to see all our newsletters!

**A
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Hi, my name is Anna and I am a paediatric IBD specialist nurse and I have been working with the IBD team at Addenbrooke's for over 10 years. My job is to help support you and your family with all things IBD! I help explain what IBD means and can hopefully answer all your questions (even the ones you might feel embarrassed to ask!).

IBD nurses also do important medical work such as keeping an eye on how treatments are working, helping you to manage flare ups when symptoms get worse and working closely with the rest of our wonderful team such as doctors, pharmacists, dietitians, psychologists and the research team to make sure you're getting the best possible care.

We also understand that IBD is not just about the medical stuff and are here to help with support you with school to make sure that your teachers understand your condition. As you get older and move into adult healthcare services, we help make that transition as smooth as possible.

When I'm not at work I enjoy spending time with family and being outdoors. I live in a very old house (built in 1650!) that takes a lot of looking after. Before it was a house, it was a forge, where a blacksmith would have hammered red-hot metal into tools and horseshoes. That means my kitchen might be standing in the exact same spot where a blacksmith was hard at work hundreds of years ago.

My favourite exercise is bouncing on a rebounder (a sort of mini trampoline!) - it's a great way to keep fit and great fun!

My favourite food is cheese. There are over 1,800 different types of cheese in the world? I haven't tried them all yet...but I'm working on it



I really dislike leeches. When I was trekking through the Sinharaja rainforest in Sri Lanka, a sneaky leech hitched a ride on my leg! Leeches have been used for hundreds of years to help wounds heal, and they are still used in medicine today! Even though they are quite amazing, I prefer to admire them from a distance!



**F
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Hey! My name is Federica, I'm from Turin, in Italy. I have the best job ever! I am a doctor in training for paediatric gastroenterology (and hepatology and nutrition), but I get the chance to do this half of the time, while the other half, I do research. When I'm in the lab, I work on my project about coeliac disease, and I am also involved in all the clinical bits of most of our studies about IBD. I used a platform called REDCap to set up a huge questionnaire to collect clinical information on each of our research patients. We can match molecular data coming from the organoids with the real-life data from our patients about diagnosis, treatments and so on. We often discover that the questions still miss a detail here and there, so I update them as we go to make them fit our patients' paths.

The thing I love most about my job is the people. I like so much talking to patients and their families when I am in the hospital. Parents have lots of questions - that's because we attend to who is most important, their children. I just hope I always have a good enough answer... In my first year, a very senior nurse told me, 'Every time you see a one-day old baby, remember that in front of you are a one-day old Mum and Dad too'. That little piece of advice helped me in countless situations afterwards.

I also love it when in the lab we all sit together to discuss a problem and everyone comes up with their very specific point of view. Then, I feel little sparkles go through my brain!

My favourite things are funny stationery, novels, my bike, my loved ones, ice cream. Maybe not necessarily in this order.

If I wasn't a doctor, I'd probably be a storyteller. Or a tour guide, then I would talk to people all the time and show them beautiful places.

Our research...

(...and interesting research other teams are doing!)



This issue we get to meet **Professor Sam Behjati**. We asked him about his new job at the Children's Hospital, about why research with children and young people is important, and why research takes team work!



Can you tell us a bit about yourself and your new role as Head of the Cambridge Children's Hospital Research Institute and Head of the Department of Paediatrics?

I am a paediatric oncologist and cancer researcher. I am taking on these roles on at a most exciting time for Cambridge. We are just one signature away from getting the diggers started and the first brick laid for the new Children's Hospital and Children's Research Institute. As the Head of both the University Department and the Research Institute, my overall aim is to grow child health research in Cambridge over the next few years.

Why is it so important to carry out research with children and young people?

Children and young people are not little adults, and their health problems aren't miniature versions of adult diseases. So we can't just copy and paste treatments from adults and apply them to children. To be able to find the right treatments for children and young people, we need research dedicated to them – only through research can we learn and understand what we need to do. It is critical that we don't do research 'on' children and young people but 'with' them. The patient always knows best so involving our patients in our research helps us to do more meaningful and ultimately better research.

Does it make a difference when doctors, nurses, and researchers work closely together in the same place? How will this help improve care for children and families?

Research is team work, and for a team to succeed, we need to be in the same place. Think of a premier league football team. It wouldn't make sense to separate the players from coaches, physios, nutritionists, and everybody else who is part of the team. Although the different members of a health care and research team already work closely together at Addenbrooke's, the Children's Hospital will make working together so much easier. We'll be located in a purpose built hospital that combines clinical and research facilities under one roof. That is truly exciting and will let us deliver even better care and research for children and young people.



What are your hopes and ambitions for the future of children's research in Cambridge?

My ambition for the future is that we do even more research for children than we are already doing. Cambridge is one of the best Universities in the world, and I want to focus the amazing minds of Cambridge on solving problems of children and young people. Our paediatric gastroenterology team is an incredible example of how to do cutting edge research that matters for children and young people. If we were able to do that for all subspecialties, that would be an amazing achievement!

Thanks, Professor Sam - we're so excited to watch the Children's Hospital being built, then starting to help children and young people!

Family day!



On the 21st March we held our 3rd Addenbrooke's PIBD family day!

Nearly 100 of you joined the team and a host of lovely volunteers for a day full of fun and friendship.

There were so many activities to take part in, including our popular annual drawing competition, giant Operation and buzzwire games, a variety of craft activities, filming sessions with Seb, and face painting (lovely Clare painted for 4 hours non-stop!).

There were four discussion groups, and we were so proud of the four amazing young people who took part and shared their experiences and opinions so openly.

Our usual picnic lunch and an extra hour at the end of the day left lots of time for chatting and making connections - we love seeing new friendships developing and the generous support families give each other.

A great big thank you to everyone who joined us, to the people who worked hard to make the day possible, to our amazing volunteers and to a very generous man called Leigh who sponsored the event this year!

We can't wait for next year!

"This was my first IBD Family Day, so I was excited and a little nervous. I went with my Mum and Dad.

I loved getting my face painted and the giant operation game, it was lots of fun.

There were lots of craft activities and I made lots of things for me and my family."

Isla, age 11





This year our drawing competition theme was 'Best day ever!'. As always, it was so hard to choose from such talented artists, and lovely stories. Here are our winners and runners up (we've included more of our favourites too!)

Winner!
10 and under



'Arcade in the rain'
by James, 10

Runner up!
10 and under



'A sunset beach day'
by Paige, 10

Winner!
11 - 16's



'My dance show'
by Emily, 11

Runner up!
11 - 16's



'Mother's day'
by Sophia, 14

Winner!
Grown ups



'In a pool drinking champagne while Liverpool win the cup on Christmas day after we win the lottery!'
by Matthew

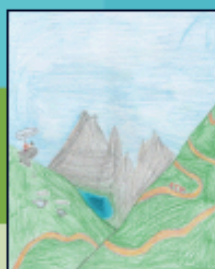
Runner up!
Grown ups



'A day in sunny Hunny!'
by Jo



'Me, my lego, my cola and private jet'
Seb, 11



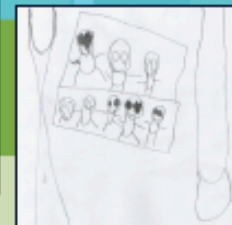
'Summer holidays in Wales'
Lucy, 12



'Disneyland in 2025'
Isla, 11



'Inde the pony'
Ella, 15



'Rock and roll stage'
Levi, 5



'Golf life'
Luke, grown up



'Me & mum in the sun after I came out of hospital'
Anastasia, 11



'When I was born'
Edmund, 9



'Me in my dream house with my dream dog'
Nicholas, 8



'Space'
Charlie, 8



'Skiing'
Pippa, 13



'Me on a boat'
Will, grown up

Over to you...

A space to share your news, talents and things to celebrate!



Emily and her two sisters have been busy rehearsing for their dance show. They do ballet, tap and jazz and have been working so hard on their dances. They do a dance show every other year so there is a lot of excitement building for the performances on the 10th and 11th April. **Good luck girls!**



Holly's been busy with her school performance: 'I really enjoyed performing on stage in Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. The cast was incredible and it was amazing to see the work we all put in over six months pay off. NODA attended one of the performances and wrote a fantastic review. We're also hoping to get nominated for the National School Theatre Awards, fingers crossed!'



Gaby is back with lots of news since the last issue - highlights include a visit to see the big man himself in Lapland where she rode a snowmobile, a husky sledge and a reindeer sleigh. She also had a zoo cadet experience for her 11th birthday and won a year 6 art competition at her local high school!



Zachary completed a 2 mile mini-marathon in school at the end of March.

Well done Zachary!



Edmund had been quite unwell before half term, and had spent most of Jan and Feb away from school - so his family decided to go somewhere hot! They went to Abu Dhabi (and arrived home 24 hours before flights were grounded!). Edmund rode a very noisy camel he called Jeff! - the sun, sea and sand transformed him within 24 hours!! He also did a 10k night walk for his cubs badge, and created a new bowel disease vigilante, **Uste-KILL-unab!**

(you might remember Infixey-Pixey, Azor-Axolotl the rest of Edmund's vigilante gang from issue 11!)



The Children's Gut Health Centre's on Facebook and Instagram!



Scan the QR codes below to follow the centre and keep up with latest news. You can see the first family day video there too - more to be added soon!



Facebook



Instagram

"You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think."

"Winnie the Pooh"

(This inspiring quote was chosen for us by our guest editor)

Teddie's story

Hi, I'm Teddie and I'm 10 years old. I like to play rugby in my spare time and I play for Sudbury. I was diagnosed with Inflammatory Bowel Disease at the age of five. I think of the medication that I have to take as a super power and it doesn't stop me from doing things that I like to do.



My brother Charlie likes rugby too!



When I was first diagnosed I was very ill and I was in a lot of pain, but thanks to the help of the team they put me on a special medication and I felt a lot better in time.

I've also made a few friends during my infusions who I may never have met otherwise. It makes me feel more happy knowing that I have people around me experiencing similar things

When I was younger, I shared my cells to help science. At the time I didn't know what they might lead to, but now I understand they could contribute to discoveries that change lives. It's inspiring to know something from me might help others.

See you soon!

Teddie

(PS: I made a game for you to try - I hope you have fun!)

Would you rather...?

Tick your answer and then ask a friend what they would choose!

Have the power to fly or Become invisible whenever you want

Talk to animals or Understand what trees and plants are saying

Ride the world's biggest roller coaster or Go skydiving

Have a lifetime supply of chocolate or Have a lifetime supply of pizza

Live inside your favourite book or Live inside your favourite movie

Play in the snow every day or Go to the beach every day

Have a friendly pet dragon or Have a magical unicorn

Wake up super early every day or Stay up very late every night

Time to play!

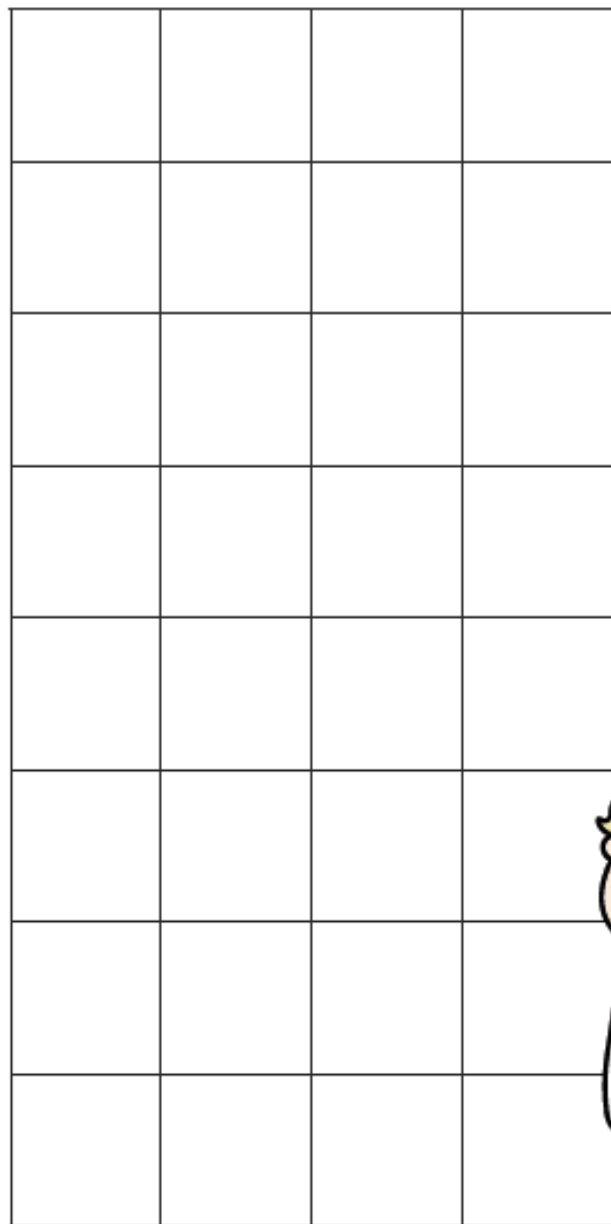
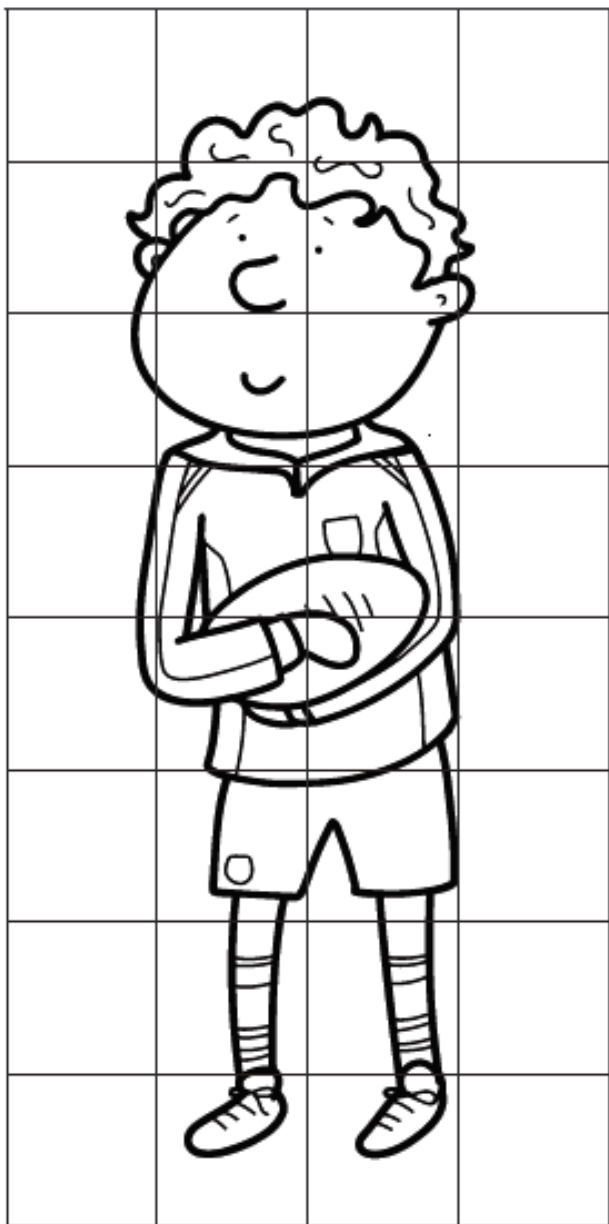


calling all young journalists!

Would you like to write, or draw, or share something for our newsletter? Or tell us what you'd like to see in the newsletter! We'd love to hear from you.

We'd also love to know what you enjoy about our newsletter, and what could be better (You can ask us to stop sending you our newsletters here too). Your feedback is super important to us.

To get in touch, scan this QR code or email: claire.glemas@nhs.net



Dr Matt is the coin trick master!



Can you copy the rugby player in the other grid?

To make it easier, try copying exactly what is in each grid space into the same grid space on the empty grid.

Why not colour the rugby player's kit in your favourite colours - you can add a background too!

Would you like to be our guest editor and help create a future newsletter? Let us know:

claire.glemas@nhs.net