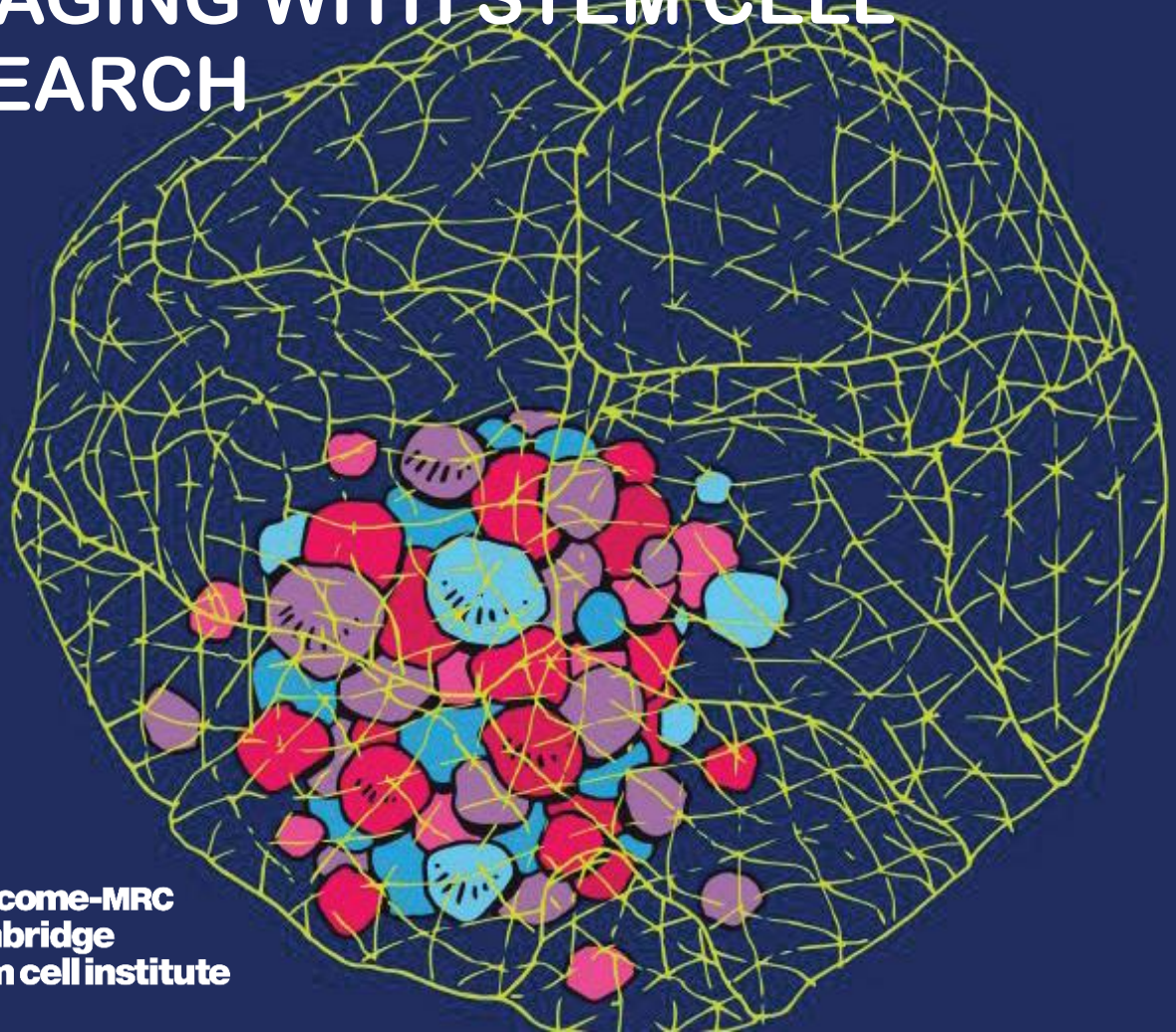


# ENGAGING WITH STEM CELL RESEARCH





## **WHO ARE WE?**

The Wellcome - MRC Cambridge Stem Cell Institute is a world-leading centre for stem cell research with a mission to transform human health through a deep understanding of stem cell biology.

Our purpose built laboratories on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus are home to 28 research groups made up of ~350 biological, clinical and physical scientists. We are supported by 34 affiliated researcher groups across the University of Cambridge, the Babraham Institute, Microsoft Research, Wellcome Sanger Institute and EMBL-European Bioinformatics Institute.

## **OUR RESEARCH**

Stem cells have the extraordinary ability to turn into many different types of cell in the body, a concept known as 'pluripotency'. They are found in developing embryos and in adult tissues including the brain, bone marrow, skin and liver. Unlocking their potential could allow us to repair and regenerate damaged or diseased tissue, with stem cell dysfunction also a known cause of several disorders including blood cancer.

At our Institute, we focus on three key themes, stem cell states, stem cells in disease and stem cells & therapeutics. Across our research groups we have particular strengths in embryonic, blood and brain stem cells, and are contributing to a number of clinical trials to treat diseases such Parkinson's, Multiple Sclerosis, and Arthritis and Cancer.

## Key roles



**Dr. Rebecca Jones**  
Public Engagement  
Manager

Rebecca coordinates an integrated programme of engagement opportunities for researchers and affiliates at the Institute. She is responsible for the strategic growth of engagement.



**Dr. Cédric Ghevaert**  
Academic Champion

Cédric aims to inspire all researchers to treat engagement as an important part of their careers. As a group leader, he represents PE at senior levels and provides an example of best practice.



**Prof. Tony Green**  
Institute Director

Tony ensures that a coordinated, top-down approach to embedding PE is adopted as an essential part of the Institute research culture.

# WHY ENGAGE?

Stem cell research, and the therapies it leads to, are destined to have a direct impact on society. It is important that our scientists are open and engaged about the work they do, and provide opportunities for the public to question and shape our science. We believe such encounters enhance the quality and rigor of the questions we ask, improve skills, and build trust in research.

*'Over the last two decades, stem cell research has received considerable media attention due to its ethical, legal, social and medical implications. Despite the fact that up to 90% of people in the UK have heard of "stem cells", only 34% feel "well-informed" about them'*  
(Public Attitudes to Science Survey, 2014)

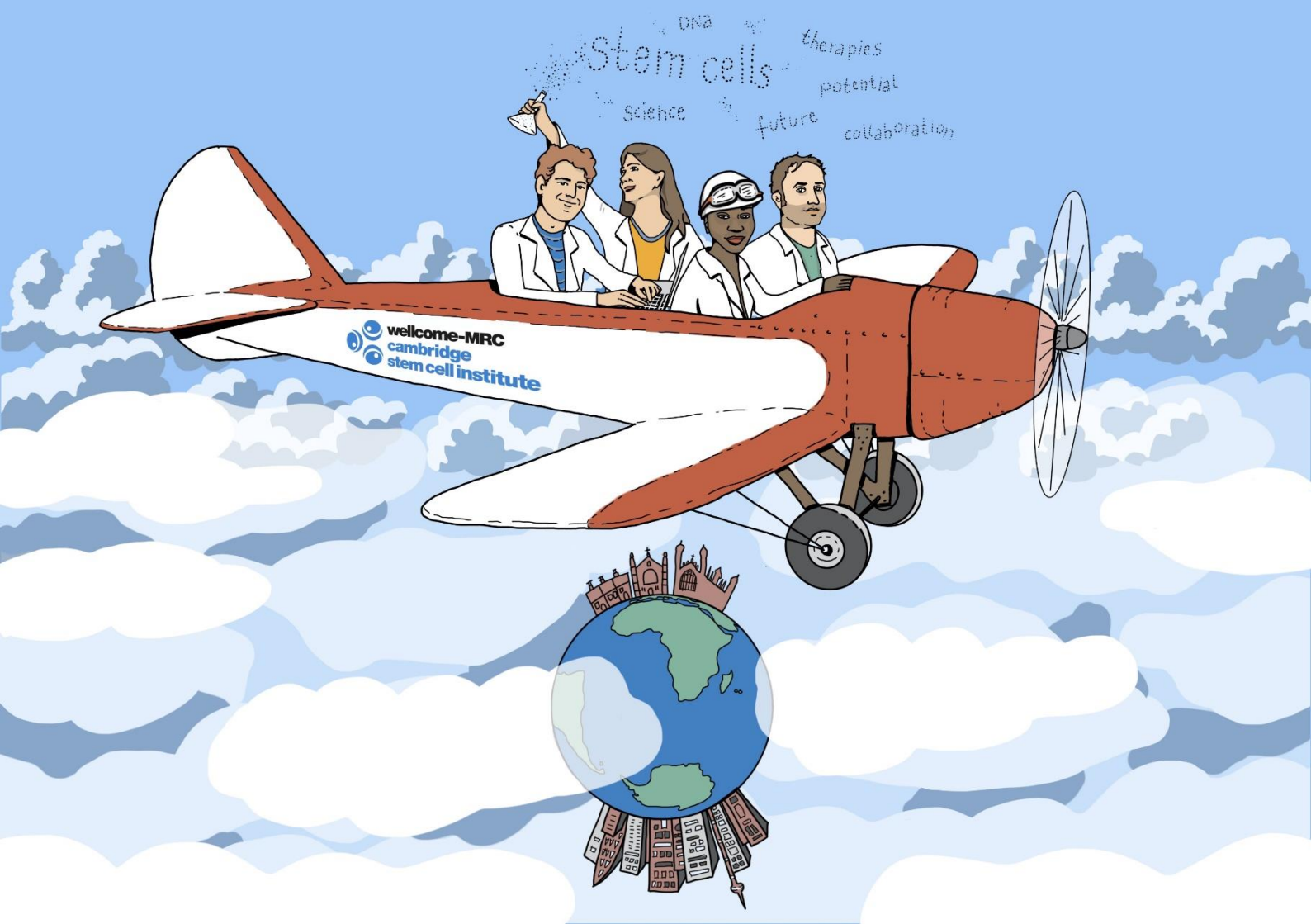
# ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Our public engagement strategy mandates our commitment to engagement at an Institute level in support of Centres strategic mission. Our four aims are to:

1. Reach **beyond Cambridge** to raise awareness about stem cells on a national and international level
2. Connect to **local under-served communities** and empower them to access stem cell research
3. Give **patients a voice** in our research and engagement activities which is valued and utilised
4. Create an open and engaged **research culture**

In the following pages we outline why we chose these goals, and how we plan to deliver them.





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wellcome-MRC  
cambridge  
stem cell institute



# Aim 1: Reach beyond Cambridge to raise awareness about stem cells on a national and international level

## Why?

- 66% of UK public do not feel well informed about stem cell research and only 57% feel the benefits outweigh the risks (Public Attitudes to Science Survey, 2014)
- Stem cell research and regenerative medicine will affect global communities and impact global health. It is important our engagement work enhances the debate at this level.

## How?

- We will grow our digital and online presence to allow our researchers to engage geographically dispersed groups, co-creating content to enhance the relevance of our films, podcasts and social media to our target audiences.
- We will build UK, European and International partnerships to collaborate on new and existing engagement initiatives.
- We will utilise our researcher's global networks to engage communities with the people, and in the places, that best represent them.

## Outcomes

- Awareness of basic stem cell biology concepts increases.
- Trust in stem cell research and scientists increases.
- Tailored resources are available for people to interpret stem cell research and its therapeutic potential.

# **Aim 2: Connect to local under-served communities and empower them to access stem cell research**

## **Why?**

- Everybody should be able to use and influence scientific research, regardless of their background or interests.
- Stem cell related diseases and future therapies do not discriminate.
- Certain communities are often overlooked or excluded when delivering our engagement through the traditional channels e.g. science festivals.
- We limit the impact our engagement can make by not engaging in surrounding towns, cities and rural areas.

## **How?**

- We will create and market a funding scheme to local organisations to work with us on an engagement project that meets their communities needs and interests.
- We will experiment with novel activities, unusual locations and targeted invitations to reach new people in the Cambridgeshire region.
- We will monitor our success in reaching new local audiences from under-served communities using demographic data and measures of 'science capital'.

## **Outcomes**

- New communities gain access to our research including our laboratories.
- Researchers evolve new mechanisms and skills to engage diverse audiences.
- Communities feel valued and more informed.





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# **Aim 3: Give patients a voice in our research and engagement activities that is valued and utilised**

## **Why?**

- 60% of our research groups are investigating stem cell behaviour in a disease scenario, yet the majority of our researcher's have never met a patient suffering from the condition they study.
- Valuing a patient or carer's lived experience, and using these insights in our research will ensure our key scientific goals are people-centred and responsive to the society they seek to serve while also helping us maximise our impact.

## **How?**

- We will build relationships with both local and national patient organisations and charities and explore new ways to collaborate.
- We will develop and market targeted campaigns to engage patients and carers resident to the Cambridge Biomedical Campus to visit our bespoke public space and café.
- We will introduce a patient governance framework including specialised patient representation to review our science and engagement strategies.
- We will pilot a co-developed research programme between a patient group and one of our clinically focussed research teams.

## **Outcomes**

- Relationships between patients and researchers are sustained and deepened.
- Mutual respect leads to a change in established hierarchies.
- Patients lived experience is valued and utilised by researchers.
- Design and delivery of stem cell research is more people-centred.



# Aim 4: Create an open and engaged research culture

## Why?

- Delivery of aims 1, 2 and 3 are reliant on the proactive involvement of our research community. The public and the science benefit most when it is the researchers who lead engagement.
- Engagement should be recognised as an integral part of researcher's work so that they can dedicate time and expertise to excelling.
- Staff and students must be confident and supported to engage the public effectively.

## How?

- We will run a varied and challenging engagement programme to provide a testing ground for researchers to build their experience and confidence.
- We will offer advice, support and training to develop researcher-led engagement projects, including applications for funding and seed funds.
- We will create a lab champion network to inform and share our engagement approach and build a community of practice.
- We will celebrate success through annual engagement awards and support efforts for wider accreditation for engagement at a University-level.
- Our academic champion will chair our Public Engagement Steering Committee, with appropriate PI, postdoc and PhD representation to ensure embedded academic oversight of engagement



# VISIT US

Our building on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus has a purpose-built exhibition space and café on the ground floor, which is free and open to the public Monday – Friday all year round.

We have a number of art installations for you to explore, plus a giant, hands-on pinball machine for visitors to experiment and play with stem cell behaviour.

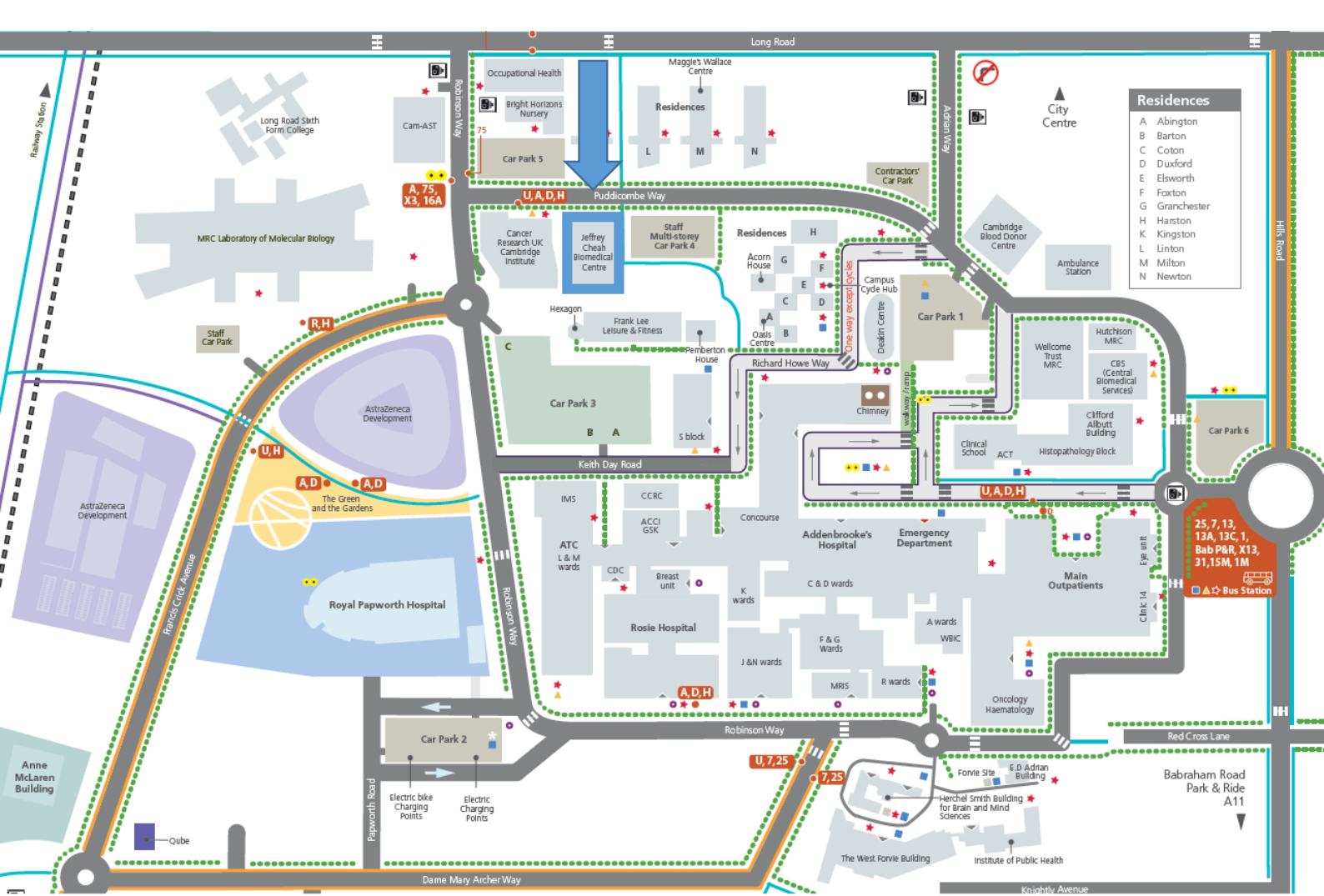
If you're on campus or fancy a special visit, please do drop by.

For those interested in arranging a tour of our research laboratories please keep an eye on our upcoming public open events or get in touch with us to arrange on [enquiries@stemcells.cam.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@stemcells.cam.ac.uk)



**Address:** Jeffrey Cheah Biomedical Centre, Puddicombe Way, Cambridge, CB2 0AW  
Further information: [www.stemcells.cam.ac.uk/about-us/jcbc](http://www.stemcells.cam.ac.uk/about-us/jcbc)





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For further information on our public engagement strategy, upcoming events and past projects.



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[www.stemcells.cam.ac.uk](http://www.stemcells.cam.ac.uk)



[engage@stemcells.cam.ac.uk](mailto:engage@stemcells.cam.ac.uk)

