Now you can read parts of the staff magazine for the Faculty of Medicine in English. We call it Nerve. In this issue you can meet some of our international staff and read about their thoughts on Swedish life. Tag along to the University of British Columbia (UBC), Vancouver, Canada where Magnus Hillman has been exploring the possibilities to align teaching and learning to an international level.

The editor for English Nerve will be Elisabeth Dawson - a globe-trotting removals expert with a love of interior design magazines and a compulsion for buying notebooks - who has just returned to her native Sweden.

- We are an international workplace, and many of our co-workers don't speak much Swedish. It's important to give them the same opportunities as their Swedish speaking colleagues to read about what's going on within the faculty, says Elisabeth Dawson.

What else are you working on?

- A big project this year will be to improve the faculty's English website, and to make English information more available to our international community. This involves a bit of detective work in finding out exactly what is missing, and which areas we need to prioritize. The co-worker survey we carried out last autumn, and a couple of focus groups we did in February, will help steer us in the right direction.

Give your thoughts on the English communication at the Faculty of Medicine, contact Elisabeth Dawson.

For a copy of the magazine contact Sofia_B.Liljedahl@med.lu.se

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NEUROSCIENCE DAY ON MAY 16th

Neuroscience Day in Lund is an annual event bringing together both researchers and research students in the Lund - Malmö - Copenhagen area to stimulate interaction in an informal setting. This year's program features oral presentations by young investigators from the Lund - Malmö area and invited lectures by Michal Schwartz, Martin Dichgans and Thomas Perlmann.

Neuroscience Day concludes with the prestigious Segerfalk lecture, this year presented by Larry Swanson. His research is focused on the organization of neural networks that control motivated behavior in mammals. The approach is mostly structural, and to display and model results his research group is developing computer graphics and database approaches.

Please, CLICK ON THIS LINK to register for Neuroscience Day. An email confirmation will be sent to you shortly afterwards.

Registration is open until April 26th on a first-come, first-serve basis until all places have been filled. Register early to guarantee yourself a place at this year's Neuroscience Day! Registration for Neuroscience Day is free of charge.

Please contact Andrea.Nord@med.lu.se if you have any questions or concerns.

SEGERFALK MINISYMPOSIUM ON JUNE 5th

The upcoming minisymposium will focus on 'Synaptic Dysfunction in Neurodegenerative diseases'. Synapses are increasingly viewed as the site of vulnerability in neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer, Parkinson and Huntington diseases. There have been many clues suggesting that synapses were under attack in these diseases, but only more recently is it becoming clear that synapses are the site where pathology initiates in neurodegenerative diseases of aging. Proteins prone to misfolding in neurodegenerative diseases are known to be enriched in synapses (a-synuclein, prion, APP and huntingtin), which has complicated the task of understanding their normal function.

The invited speakers are Jochen Herms, Daniel Choquet and Tiago Fleming Outeiro. The event will be chaired by Gunnar Goura and Jia-Yi Li.

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER

SRC GENERAL CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

The Swedish Research Council is a government agency that provides funding for basic research of the highest scientific quality in all disciplinary domains. In the link below you can read about the various forms of grants that will be announced during 2013. There may be further announcements during the year, as a result of special subject-specific efforts, or through government mandates.

The conditions for the various forms of grants are still not completed. They will be available when the application period for the specific grants open.

The 2013 general call for applications will include Project Research Grants in all subject areas.

CLICK HERE TO READ MORE
The recently published book the Atomized Body, written by contributors from Bagadilicos Cultural Research Team, was the starting point for a seminar that placed visitors at a crossroads between neuroscience and culture. The book examines relations between culture, society and bioscientific research, making the larger point that our singularized atoms are undeniably socially and culturally embedded.

The book argues that the rapid progress in the biosciences over the past decades have, in many instances, replaced social psychology as the leading explanatory model for human conduct. As neuroscience continues to map out the processes of the brain in greater detail we are left with a feeling that we can take control of our biological fate. However, increased knowledge of the multiple intricate biological systems at work may also produce an emotion of disconnectedness as our bodies are deconstructed into their smallest parts.

One person who is eager to tie researchers together across disciplines is keynote speaker Torkel Klingberg, professor of cognitive neuroscience at the Department of Neuroscience at Karolinska Institutet. He believes that brain research produces yet unexploited opportunities when it comes to education. Collaborative efforts between neuroscientists and researchers in education are still in their infancy and greater efforts to coordinate such attempts need to be stimulated, he told the audience, acknowledging that it takes time to bring together areas of research with such different traditions.

His own research examines how learning and the brain’s development interact with the working memory - that is, our ability to retain information while using it. An effective working memory is fundamental if we are to focus on a task without being distracted.

Professor Klingberg stressed that the basal ganglia, an area in the brain severely affected in Parkinson’s disease, is not only important for the control of motor function but also for cognitive activity, such as working memory. With rather simple exercises he has shown that it is possible to improve plasticity connected to the dopamine systems in the brain and by doing so boosting your working memory capacity.

Tests are yet to be done on Parkinson’s patients but Torkel Klingberg believes that there might be an opportunity to seize here since working memory has also been shown to be impaired in Parkinson’s disease.

The seminar continued to focus on the potential benefits of science across disciplines and ended with a lively discussion, sparked by Elin Bommenel’s talk on the conditions for interdisciplinary research in our universities today. It became clear that although money for collaborative projects was often readily available, prestige in most scientific circles is still defined by one’s ties to a core discipline. Bridging the gap seems to be no easy task, with changes in attitude among “traditionalists” seemingly moving at a glacial pace. However, the spirit of the discussion here may play a small part in the shift from glacial pace to snowball effect.
A research pharmacist by training, Helene Hall is somewhat of an accidental experimental neuroscientist. Her bug for the brain, and Parkinson’s disease in particular, was planted in a lab in Australia where she first worked on a rat model for PD. Her thesis is focused on the role of cognition in PD. By examining dopaminergic and cholinergic cells in human brains and rat models she was able to show unique results relating to impairment in learning and memory in PD.

How does it feel to have finally reached the finish line?

I feel relieved and completing my PhD gave me a great sense of accomplishment. Although I am not sure I have completely realized it is all over yet. The last few months have been particularly intense but I enjoyed working hard to get to the finish line.

What has inspired you to pursue a career in neuroscience?

Being a research pharmacist by training, I have always been attracted to disease-oriented research. But working in neuroscience, at the preclinical level in particular, started off as some sort of coincidence, as often in science I guess. Following an odd chain of events, I ended up working in a small CRO in Australia to complete my PharmD training. My project revolved around the implementation of a rat model of Parkinson’s disease (PD) for pre-clinical drug testing. That’s how I got hooked on neuroscience, and PD research in particular. The brain is an amazing and complex organ and I am fascinated by how degeneration or changes of small parts of it can affect so many aspects of an individual’s life. Millions of people worldwide suffer from neurodegenerative diseases for which there are no cure, and I think it is crucial that scientists from as many different backgrounds as possible combine their expertise and knowledge to benefit these patients.

Who have been important to help you get this far?

So many people have inspired me and pushed me to get here, it is hard to narrow it down to a few people only. It started perhaps at my university back in France where a few professors really encouraged us to explore what we really wanted to do, even if it meant going off the beaten track and doing things that did not fit into the mainstream university program. That is how I got into preclinical research and gave working abroad a chance.