

Newsletter

Research Centre for Health (ReaCH)

December 2025

Welcome

Welcome to our last newsletter of 2025, highlighting the amazing range of achievements of colleagues in our Research Centre for Health (ReaCH). And this is our final newsletter as we step down as co-Directors of the Centre, after our 3-year stint.



These past three years have been an absolute delight for both of us. Together, we set out with a clear vision: to nurture an aspirational, supportive, collaborative and sustainable research culture—to meet the University's key performance indicators of generating larger, longer grants, high-quality outputs, and meaningful impact—and to communicate our achievements as a centre of excellence.

But ReaCH has always been about so much more than metrics. It is about people, partnerships, and purpose. We've invested to create an inclusive research culture rooted in trust, energy, and fun—where excellent research truly makes a difference to people's lives. We've celebrated success at every level, from our fantastic doctoral to early and mid-career researchers and world-leading academics, through our quarterly newsletters and media coverage. Our Power of Partnership event, attended by over 100 people, showcased the strength of our long-established commitment to patient and public engagement—listening to and working closely with partners at every stage of the research process. We have placed our **ReaCH Research Partnerships Hub**, based on the successful model from the former Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professional Unit, at the very heart of ReaCH.

We're also particularly proud of our researcher development programmes: **Crucible**, empowering early career researchers to work meaningfully with policymakers, media, practitioners, the third sector, communities and those with lived experience; and our new **Propel** programme, supporting our already successful mid-career colleagues to move to the next level of success.

None of this would have been possible without our exceptional ReaCH team. Huge thanks to Karen McDairmant and MarySarah Erickson, whose dedication, expertise and resourcefulness have been invaluable and whose contributions made our meetings so effortless and enjoyable! Special thanks also go to Janice Burns and her Communications Team, for her unwavering support and flying the ReaCH flag with her cutting edge news stories.

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Now, we're delighted to hand over to Professor Gordon Ramage who has secured major funding from EPSRC, Innovate UK, and BBSRC, and whose work has influenced clinical practice and industry innovation. He is exceptionally well-positioned to lead ReaCH into its next chapter. Professor Ramage adds "I am delighted to be taking on this new and challenging role. Taking over the reins from Fred and Carol won't be an easy task. Going into 2026 we will see a new external facing ReaCH identity to help drive our KPIs. I look forward to working with you all to help realise our ambition".

Thank you all for three wonderful years of collegiality, productivity and spirited resilience, especially given the context of an increasingly challenging climate. We very much look forward to continuing to work with you in our new roles as REF leads for Impact (Fred) and Research Culture (Carol).

For now: we wish you and your loved ones a wonderful festive season, and a peaceful, joyful and healthy new year!

*Professor Carol Emslie and Professor Frederike van Wijck,
Co-Directors of ReaCH*

Psychology researcher leads international review on supporting people in mental distress

Glasgow Caledonian University psychology researcher Dr Martha Canfield has led an international review exploring how Police Scotland can better support people in mental distress.

The new rapid review, funded by the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR), brings together global evidence on effective approaches for police responding to mental health crises.



The study was conducted by researchers from Glasgow Caledonian University, the University of York, and the University of Edinburgh. It examined 24 peer-reviewed studies from the UK, Canada, Australia, the US, the Netherlands and New Zealand. The review highlights four key approaches being used around the world to improve the transfer of care from police to health services:

- Co-response teams, where police work alongside mental health professionals during crisis call outs
- Liaison models, led by specially trained police officers or healthcare responders
- Designated places of safety, offering alternatives to busy emergency departments
- Screening tools, which help first responders assess risks and decide on the most appropriate next steps

Across the studies, these approaches were associated with benefits such as reduced time in police custody, fewer emergency department visits and improved experiences for people in crisis. However, the review also points out major gaps in robust evaluation and highlights that the voices of people with lived-experience are still missing from much of the research. The authors underline several priorities for future work, including improving communication between services, clearer handover processes, better trauma informed training, and ensuring that services meet the needs of all communities. Overall, the review offers timely evidence to support ongoing work in Scotland to strengthen mental health crisis pathways and help ensure people receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

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Microbiologists secure oral health partnership deal



Glasgow Caledonian University has secured a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) deal with world-leading consumer health company Haleon for £192,000.

Dr Mark Butcher, is working with Professor Gordon Ramage and Dr Will Johnson, from the School of Health and Life Sciences, as the Senior Microbiome Innovation Scientist with the Haleon team in Weybridge (Surrey).

The project, which is a collaboration between Professor Ramage and Dr Butcher in the Department of Nursing, Community and Public Health, and Dr Johnston in the Department of Biomedical and Biological Sciences, aims to understand the oral microbiome - the collection of different microorganisms in the mouth.

Understanding how bacteria interact in the mouth and respond to different oral hygiene products, such as Sensodyne and Aquafresh toothpastes and Corsodyl mouthwash, will allow Haleon to develop and improve existing formulations to specifically target harmful groups of bacteria. Dr Butcher said: "Building on the success of my four-year Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)/Haleon funded PhD, I have the foundation, skills and expertise to tackle this exciting and important challenge in oral health." The team at Glasgow Caledonian are international leaders in oral microbiology and they will support Haleon by providing of state-of-the-art understanding and knowledge.

[Read more](#)

New study finds stem cell trials for tendon injuries lack critical rehab

Stem cell trials for tendon injuries risk failure without proper rehabilitation, say researchers at Glasgow Caledonian University.



Out of 142 studies exploring the use of mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs) to repair tendon damage only eight were randomised trials and almost none included rehab detail.

"Tendon tissue and stem cells both rely on mechanical loading to stimulate repair. Without structured rehab, stem cells won't be able to do what they're designed to do. The lack of consideration of rehab in those clinical trials was very concerning and surprising," said Dr David Hamilton, a leading physiotherapist at the University, who led the review.

The study, published in collaboration with NHS Lanarkshire Consultant Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgeon Professor Graeme Hopper, raises concerns that the effectiveness of MSC therapies - hailed by some as a potential breakthrough for chronic tendon injuries - could be severely limited by inconsistent or missing post-treatment rehabilitation. Tendon injuries are common but notoriously slow to heal. MSC therapies offer hope particularly for patients who don't respond to conventional treatment, but without rigorous rehab protocols there is a risk of failure.

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Pioneering sexual health films win BMA MEDFASH Award

A groundbreaking sexual health project that created innovative films to tackle STI stigma and boost testing among young people has won the 2025 BMA Foundation MEDFASH Award.

The films and the team behind their creation also received recognition on STV News at Six and online - [Call for young people to get tested as gonorrhoea rates rise | STV News](#).



The Limiting Undetected Sexually Transmitted Infections to Reduce Morbidity (LUSTRUM2) project, led by Glasgow Caledonian University Professor Claudia Estcourt and Dr Jennifer MacDonald, received the award in recognition of its significant impact on improving the quality of HIV and sexual healthcare in the UK.

The British Medical Association (BMA) award recognises initiatives that continue the legacy of the MEDFASH charity (1987–2016), which championed evidence-based sexual health care.

The LUSTRUM2 research team brings together leading experts from Glasgow Caledonian University, the University of Strathclyde, University College London (UCL), and Central and North West London NHS Trust.

As part of LUSTRUM2 – a continuation of the original LUSTRUM research programme, a five-year study funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), researchers focused on developing new targeted digital interventions aimed at getting the message out to more young people. The team enlisted the help of 17 talented young people from around the UK, including several former Glasgow Caledonian and GCU London students, to co-produce three short, culturally attuned films, under the leadership of UCL's Dr Melvina Woode Owusu.

The films were designed to reduce stigma, encourage STI testing, and provide relatable messages for diverse communities, particularly Black Caribbean youth, who are disproportionately affected by STIs. The initiative has been formally endorsed by the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH), highlighting its sector-wide credibility. The films are paired with a practical toolkit, making them easy to integrate into sexual health services and online platforms.

The award was collected at the ceremony by Amelia McInnes-Dean, UCL researcher on LUSTRUM2, and André Bright, lay co-applicant and co-investigator, who facilitated workshops with young people of Black Caribbean heritage.

André said: "It was such an honour to be there on the day! Some of the people and research being done were incredible!"

One of the co-producers of the films, Amari Leigh, said she was "proud" to be involved in the project and to see the films being recognised. By creating content that reflects real experiences and speaks directly to our community, we're helping people feel seen, informed, and empowered to take charge of their sexual health," added Amari.

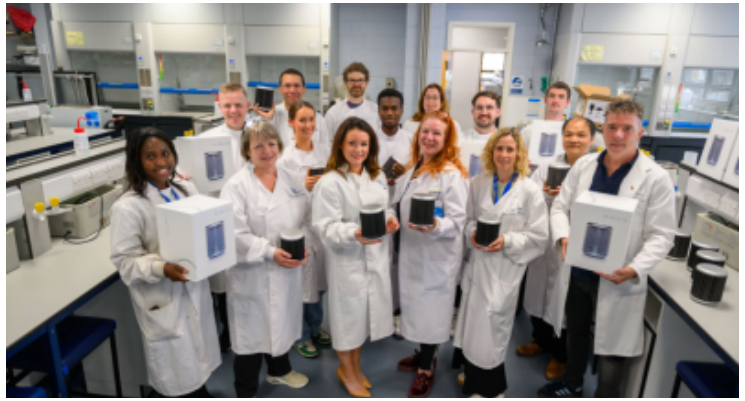
View video of [Pioneering sexual health films win BMA MEDFASH Award](#)

[Read more](#)



New cutting-edge scientific equipment donated to Glasgow Caledonian

Glasgow Caledonian University has boosted its research and teaching capabilities with a major donation of cutting-edge laboratory equipment from biomedical company BioGrad.



The donation of 24 real-time PCR (polymerase chain reaction) machines - vital tools for diagnosing disease and studying genetic material - will be used in the Department of Biological and Biomedical Sciences.

Award-winning scientist Dr Natalie Kenny, BioGrad Group CEO and founder, said: "We are delighted to provide these PCR Machines to support skills development in the next generation of scientists and to strengthen collaborations between BioGrad and Glasgow Caledonian University in the hope of fuelling further partnerships and providing more research opportunities for today's graduates to become the scientists of the future."

The advanced machines will enhance undergraduate teaching and postgraduate research, significantly improving the hands-on experience for students and expanding the department's research capabilities. Professor Linda Scobie, Head of the Department of Biological and Biomedical Sciences, said: "This is an incredible donation of 24 machines that were previously used for COVID testing. They will make a huge difference to our laboratory practical work, allowing students to get hands-on experience with setting up equipment and analysing data directly."

PCR machines are a cornerstone of modern molecular science, widely used in genetic engineering, cancer research, forensic science, drug development and disease diagnostics. Real-time PCR allows researchers to observe DNA replication as it happens and quantify gene expression levels which is crucial in detecting disease markers such as cancer genes or infectious pathogens.

Dr Boatemaa Ofori-Frimpong, Dr Catherine Wright, Dr David Welsh and Dr Ryan Kean, who were instrumental in securing and co-ordinating the donation for their department, said it will make a huge difference to teaching and research at the University.

After making the donation in person, Dr Kenny returned to the campus last month to give a guest lecture to undergraduate and post-graduate students. Student feedback was very positive with an overwhelming majority saying that Dr Kenny was a truly inspirational speaker.

In addition to the equipment donation, conversations are underway with BioGrad about future joint research projects, particularly in women's health and biobanking, which are key research areas where the University is making national impact. A summer workshop for school leavers is also being discussed as part of a deepening partnership.

BioGrad has also offered a discounted residential course specifically for Glasgow Caledonian students to experience a working laboratory.

The BioGrad Group is the UK's largest human cell therapy manufacturing site for cancer, endometriosis and Parkinson's disease in the north-west of England.

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Ground-breaking VR rehab games project for people with MS wins digital innovation award

A virtual reality (VR) games rehabilitation project that's transforming the lives of people with multiple sclerosis (MS) in Scotland has won a prestigious digital innovation award.



The project - run by Professor Lorna Paul, Dr Elaine Coulter, Dr Amy Webster and PhD student Hannah Milne, from Glasgow Caledonian, and Glasgow School of Art's Dr Matthieu Poyade, in partnership with the MS Society - has scooped the ALLIANCE Self Management Awards - Digital Innovator award. The awards, organised by the Health and Social Care Alliance (the ALLIANCE), present annual accolades in recognition of the achievements of people and projects that have contributed the most to self-management of health conditions in Scotland over the past year.

Professor in Allied Health Science Lorna Paul, who leads Glasgow Caledonian's MS Doctoral Training Centre, said: "It's fantastic to win this award for our project, in partnership with Glasgow School of Art, funded by the MS Society. It's lovely recognition for the on-going work in improving the lives of people with MS in Scotland and beyond. For people with Multiple Sclerosis, improving or maintaining the movement and function in their arms and hands is very important. Together with people living with MS, we have been developing virtual reality rehabilitation games for people who live with MS, to provide a more fun and engaging way for them to self-manage the rehabilitation of their arms and hands."

[Read more](#)



Psychologist is Scotland's Health Awards finalist for her campaign work

Senior Lecturer in Applied Psychology Dr Liza Morton has been named as a finalist in the Volunteers Award category in this year's Scotland's Health Awards in recognition of her tireless campaign work.

Dr Morton was a driving force behind the development of Healthcare Improvement Scotland's national standards for congenital heart disease (CHD) care and services in Scotland. She is passionate about the importance of supporting the mental health needs of those who live their lives with CHD because of her own personal experiences. Dr Morton, who underwent pioneering pacemaker surgery as a baby, has co-authored a book about the impact of living with a long-term heart condition, *Healing Hearts and Minds* - a holistic approach to coping well with congenital heart disease, and a new book *Beyond the Medical Gaze: Practicing Psychologically Informed Healthcare* will be published next month. The Volunteers Award recognises those who volunteer their time to support the health and wellbeing of NHS Scotland. From fundraising to befriending and carer support, it celebrates those whose selfless contributions make a meaningful difference in people's lives.

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Minister praises University's contribution to women's health at campus event

Scottish Government Minister for Public Health and Women's Health Jenni Minto marked Scottish Women and Girls in Sport Week 2025 with a visit to Glasgow Caledonian University in October.

Ms Minto and MSP for Glasgow (Region) Pam Duncan-Glancy were special guests at the University's Sporting a Healthy Pelvic Floor on-campus event, held as part of the awareness week to showcase our world-leading research.



The event was organised by Professor of Nursing Carol Bugge and Professor of Health Services Research Suzanne Hagen, both key researchers in the School of Health and Life Sciences (SHLS) Research Centre for Health (ReaCH).

Ms Minto praised the University's researchers for their pelvic health work and their huge contribution to the Scottish Government's Women's Health Plan (Phase 2) to be launched in January.

Ms Minto told the audience: "This week is about increasing people's visibility to women in sport but also thinking about women's health. It is essential that we can have interactive events such as this to understand and see the variety of information you can get with regards to your pelvic health and the work that is going on around it. Our ambition in the Scottish Government is that women and girls enjoy the best possible health throughout their lives and one of the areas we have been doing that is through the Scottish Government's Women's Health Plan. It's fantastic to see Pam Duncan-Glancy here today too because the Women's Health Plan is a true cross-party piece of work. I also want to recognise what Glasgow Caledonian University has been doing around innovative research and I would like to thank Carol and Suzanne for sharing their expertise and contributing to the rich evidence base which will support the next phase of our Women's Health Plan."

SHLS staff and students set up a number of stalls to help the packed audience understand more about the importance of a healthy pelvic floor through exercise, prevention and research.

NHS Tayside specialist women's health physiotherapist Carolyn Davie also explained to the audience how to do pelvic floor muscle exercises properly.

Other key staff attended the event including Pro Vice-Chancellor Professor Andrea Nelson, Interim Associate Dean Research Dr David Hamilton and Head of Department of Nursing, Community and Public Health Dr Valerie Ness.

Professor Bugge said: "The purpose of the event was to share the innovative and sector-leading work that we do here at Glasgow Caledonian's Research Centre for Health around pelvic floor health. We are delighted to be part of the Scottish Women and Girls in Sport Week 2025 and it was fantastic to have Minister for Public Health and Women's Health Jenni Minto and Pam Duncan-Glancy supporting our event."

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New international project will transform AI into a force for social good

A new international project, led by data researchers at Glasgow Caledonian University, is taking a fresh approach to artificial intelligence by using it to help people and communities.



This autumn, 13 PhD researchers from around the world will join [Datavysts](#), a new EU-funded programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions initiative. Based at Glasgow Caledonian, TU Dortmund University, Ghent University, Politecnico di Milano and the Jožef Stefan Institute, the fellows will work together to explore how AI can be used to solve real societal challenges. They have a bold but simple mission - they want to make data and AI more inclusive, responsible and beneficial to everyone. The Datavysts will combine academic research, advanced technology and community-led projects to rethink not just how AI is built, but why, and who it truly serves. Over the next four years, the group will create new tools and frameworks to help social enterprises, health organisations and environmental groups use AI to expand their impact. They also plan to co-design apps with community partners and launch a free Academy of AI for the Common Good to share knowledge and training resources. Ultimately, the Datavysts hope to spark a global movement - one that uses AI not as a tool of power, but as a force for fairness, democracy and social progress.

[Read more](#)

Childhood myopia module for eye care professionals is changing young lives

Vision health researchers have found that a childhood myopia management module for eye care practitioners at Glasgow Caledonian is improving children's lives and boosting workplace satisfaction.



Myopia, or short-sightedness, is where the length of the eye increases and distant objects appear blurred. Wearing spectacles or contact lenses makes vision clearer but left without these it can affect a child's ability to learn and play sports. Spectacles typically need to be made stronger until late teenage years and greater amounts of myopia can lead to an increased risk of eye diseases later in life.

The number of children with myopia has more than doubled in the last 50 years with one in five children in the UK affected by it. It is estimated that almost half of the world will become myopic by 2050. Myopia is also occurring at a younger age and those who develop myopia between 6 and 13 years are more likely to have high myopia as an adult. The Myopia Management CPD Module at the University is designed to equip eye care practitioners with the knowledge and confidence to manage children with myopia in communities. A recent study titled - Impact of myopia management university-based learning on self-reported clinical practice - carried out by eyecare researchers Drs Stephanie Kearney and Mhairi Day, found that practitioners who completed this module now felt more confident and knowledgeable when discussing myopia management with patients. The study also revealed an increase in the number of children receiving interventions and perceived workplace satisfaction among practitioners as well as a decrease in perceived risk of patient complaints as a result of the module.

[Read more](#)



Professor tells Government inquiry about benefits of structured and tailored exercise for older people

A Glasgow Caledonian University academic spoke in the House of Commons on Wednesday, November 12 as part of a discussion on how physical activity can improve the health and wellbeing of older adults.

Professor Dawn Skelton, Professor of Ageing and Health, Ageing Well Research Group, Research Centre for Health (ReaCH), was invited to contribute to the Health and Social Care Committee's inquiry into Healthy Ageing: Physical Activity in an Ageing Society alongside Professor Elizabeth Orton, Professor of Public Health, The University of Nottingham, and Professor Chris Todd, Deputy-Director, NIHR Policy Research Unit in Healthy Ageing.



The inquiry is focusing on ways that physical activity can prevent and reduce ill health in older age, and how structured, progressive and tailored exercise can be an effective treatment to reduce the risk of falls and other age-related risks. Professor Skelton told the inquiry that it was important to educate health professionals such as medical students and physiotherapists as well as care-home staff early in their training about the benefits of exercise as an effective treatment to make a difference to the outcome of falls, frailty and sarcopenia (the loss of skeletal muscle mass and strength as a result of ageing). The panel told the inquiry about the importance of making sure the Falls Management Exercise (FaME) programme – a cost-effective falls prevention programme – is more widely available to reduce falls and the fear of falling, and increase confidence in older people. FaME is a six-month, face-to-face group exercise programme aimed at improving strength and balance in people aged 65 and over.

[Read more](#)



Six in a row – Professor Sebastien Chastin awarded for research in social sciences

For the sixth year in a row, Sebastien Chastin, Professor of Health Behaviour Dynamics: People, Places, Systems, Department of Allied Professions, has received the Clarivate Award in Social Sciences.

Clarivate's Highly Cited Researchers programme identifies and celebrates individuals who have demonstrated significant and broad influence in their field of research. Each researcher selected has authored multiple Highly Cited Papers that rank in the top one per cent by citations for their field and publication year in the organisation's Web of Science Core Collection over the past 11 years. This indicates exceptional influence in their respective disciplines. Clarivate is a leading provider of global transformative intelligence, offering enriched data, insights and analytics, workflow solutions, and expert services in the areas of academia, government, intellectual property, and Life Sciences & Healthcare.

Professor Chastin said: "I am delighted to receive this prestigious award and to celebrate it with my research group, the School of Health and Life Sciences, ReaCH, and the University community. This is teamwork and shows that GCU can play amongst the biggest Universities."



University social work researchers contribute to anti-racism action plan

Dr Natalia Farmer, Assistant Head of Social Work at Glasgow Caledonian University, was one of the key researchers involved in developing Scotland's first action plan to combat racism in social work.



The Scottish Government and the Scottish Association of Social Work (SASW) and sector partners established the Social Work Anti-Racism Oversight Group in 2023 to tackle systemic racism in social work – and Dr Natalia Farmer has provided her expertise.

The Oversight Group commissioned a groundbreaking national survey on anti-racism in social work that was published on August 15, along with an action plan to address racism within the profession and foster more equitable and inclusive social work in Scotland. IRISS, a charity that promotes positive outcomes for people who use Scotland's social services, carried out the survey. The Anti-Racism Action Plan for the Scottish Social Work Sector provides advice and resources to help employers cultivate an anti-racist workplace culture and to support social workers and those who use services who have experienced racism. This plan will create lasting change by improving incident management, embedding anti-racist policies, breaking workforce barriers to ensure a more inclusive profession and promoting cultural competence. And it will enable meaningful progress across the sector by fostering a culture of zero tolerance for racism, supporting diverse leadership representation, and refining recruitment and retention practices.

[Read more](#)



Psychology lecturer's research cited by Scottish Justice Secretary in reforms debate

Psychology lecturer and researcher Dr Lee John Curley's research on the not proven verdict was cited by the Scottish Justice Secretary Angela Constance during reform discussions.

Ms Constance has steered justice system reforms through the Scottish Parliament including the scrapping of the not proven verdict which was approved by MSPs earlier this month. In a paper to Parliament discussing the Bill, she cited Dr Curley's research findings that there was a significant reduction in conviction rates in homicide trials when the not proven verdict was removed but this did not extend to rape trials. Ms Constance commented in the paper: "This finding has been most prominently set out in the independent Scottish jury research - the largest and most realistic of its kind ever undertaken in the UK - as well as in recently published research by Curley et al. (2022). These two studies are considered to be the most robust within the existing literature, on account of their stimulus material being more realistic than alternative studies, as set out in a recently published analysis by Jackson et al. (2024) that considered the evidence base as a whole." Dr Curley, from the School of Health and Life Sciences' Department of Psychology, is a leading expert on the psychology of the courtroom and has had many research papers published on jury biases, forensic cognition, legal psychology and decision science. "It has been great to see our research have such an impact in this area," he said of the recent citing of his research to the Scottish Parliament.



Other news

Glasgow Caledonian recognises excellence in NHS healthcare at awards

School of Health and Life Sciences Dean Professor Anita Simmers presented the Allied Health Professional Award to winner Claire Yerramasu at this year's Scotland's Health Awards.

[Read more](#)

New training module empowers frontline NHS staff to better support autistic people

An innovative new module designed to improve and support the healthcare needs of autistic people has been launched through a unique collaboration between Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of Strathclyde.

[Read more](#)

New Community Nursing programme launched to meet future healthcare needs

Glasgow Caledonian University's Department of Nursing, Community and Public Health has launched Scotland's very first dedicated community nursing Master's-level programme to meet future NHS healthcare needs.

[Read more](#)

Macular Society Support Group visit Glasgow Caledonian Vision Centre

Vision Science students from Glasgow Caledonian University assessed the eyesight of more than 30 people with low vision during a visit to the campus.

[Read more](#)

University announces new psychology counselling and training partnership

Glasgow Caledonian University's Department of Psychology has signed a new Memorandum of Agreement with ACT Counselling and Training Services, marking the beginning of an innovative collaboration that will transform access to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) education in Scotland.

[Read more](#)

Glasgow Caledonian launches new AI online module for health and social care practitioners

Glasgow Caledonian University is offering a new online module designed to help health and social care professionals understand the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on their practice.

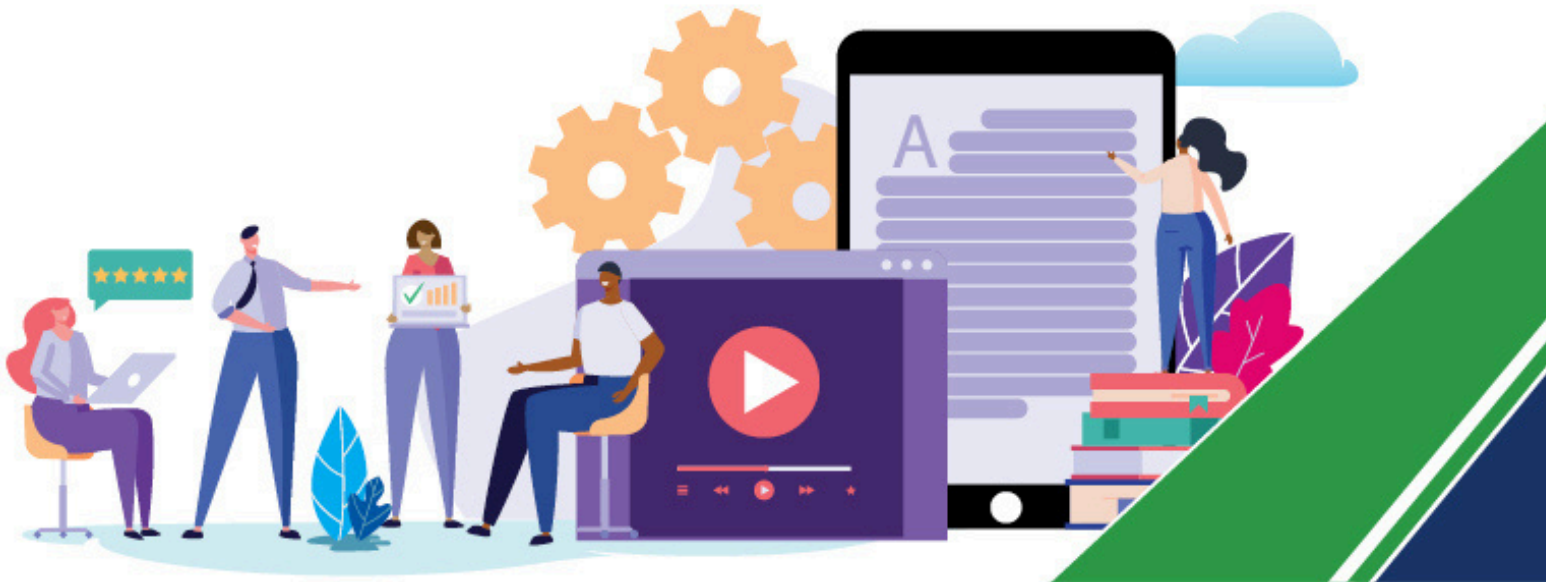
[Read more](#)

PhD viva success

Congratulations to the following students on successfully defending their PhD theses:

- Ebuka Aniето, Co-creation of an intervention to increase physical activity in individuals with peripheral arterial disease and intermittent claudication
- Julia Clayton, Post-Traumatic Growth Following Secondary Trauma in Practice Education: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis of the Lived Experiences of Student Paramedics
- Mira Vogelsang, Co-creation in practice: Planning, adapting, and evaluating a co-creation approach to reducing workplace sedentary behaviour in Scottish SMEs





Conferences and events

A round-up of all the latest and forthcoming event news from the Research Centre for Health.

Data for Common Good researcher takes to international stage

Glasgow Caledonian University Data for the Common Good researcher Quentin Loisel was selected to compete in the prestigious International Falling Walls Lab Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) competition.

This is a significant achievement that reflects the high quality of research being conducted at the University through the School of Health and Life Sciences' Research Centre for Health (ReaCH) Health CASCADE project.



Quentin joined an elite group of early-career researchers from across Europe at the competition in Lyngby, Denmark, in September and gave a presentation entitled *Breaking the Wall of AI Human Co-Creation*. His innovative research conducted through the award-winning social enterprise Health CASCADE project, led by Professor Sebastien Chastin, focuses on developing collaborative frameworks between humans and AI systems to tackle complex societal challenges, which aligns with the University's mission of research for the Common Good.

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) Presidency Conference 2025 is organised by the Technical University of Denmark (DTU), in collaboration with the Danish Ministry for Higher Education and Science, with the support of the European Commission and the Novo Nordisk Foundation. The Falling Walls Lab is a world-renowned three-minute pitch competition that attracts the most promising young researchers globally. Being selected for the MSCA-specific competition places Quentin among Europe's top emerging research talents.



Podiatry team contributions to the RCPod Conference

The podiatry team had a vast and formidable presence at the national Royal College of Podiatry (RCPod) Conference, which took place at the Scottish Event Campus (SEC) in Glasgow in November. The team collectively delivered on a range of 'sold out' practical workshops, presentations (including an opening plenary session) and research posters, with a further presence in the exhibition hall, with an exhibitor stand.

Plenary Presentation

Mandy Abbott (Dept of AHPs) had the honour of opening the conference with her plenary talk "Pathomechanics first, orthoses second: the clinicians in sports discussion". Drawing on her extensive clinical and research expertise in sports biomechanics, Mandy shared insights alongside Consultant Orthotist Nick Gallogly, setting the tone for a dynamic and thought-provoking event.



Award-Winning Research

Congratulations to Level 4 podiatry student Heather MacDougall, winner of the People's Poster Prize for her Carnegie Trust-funded study on podiatrists' knowledge and practice around foot problems in restrictive eating disorders (RED). Her research identified a critical knowledge gap and the need for RED-specific training that integrates mental health awareness. Heather's dedication and originality make her an outstanding ambassador for GCU Podiatry.

Exhibition Stand & Networking

Thanks to Mandy Abbott for securing funding for GCU's exhibition stand, which showcased our postgraduate pathways—including medical ultrasound and advanced practice—and highlighted our active research portfolio. Staff members connected with alumni and international delegates, creating valuable networking opportunities and promoting GCU's reputation for excellence. David Lambert, Mandy Abbot, Debbie Wilson, Jackie Locke, Ruth Barn and Lisa Wright represented the GCU podiatry programme.



Workshops & Skills Development

The team organised and delivered a series of interactive and practical workshops throughout the conference, showcasing expertise in musculoskeletal diagnostic ultrasound and common foot and ankle taping techniques:

- **Musculoskeletal Ultrasound:** Dr Lisa Wright led on a series of foot and ankle ultrasound workshops in collaboration with Canon Imaging and NHS partners. The sessions offered live ultrasound demonstrations of key foot and ankle anatomy and provided opportunity for hands-on practice. Undergraduate podiatry students volunteered their time to assist in these sessions.
- **Foot & Ankle Taping Techniques:** Mandy Abbott, Dr Ruth Barn, and David Lambert alongside clinical partner Louise Fisher, delivered workshops on common taping techniques for a range of MSK conditions of the foot and ankle, including sports injury, in separate workshops for both students and professionals.





Invited Speaker Sessions

Dr Lisa Wright chaired a concurrent session on MSK ultrasound, featuring updates to RCPod guidelines and practical advice on mentorship and education pathways. Dr Andrew Brown presented his professional doctorate research from GCU with a presentation on 'Barriers and facilitators for podiatrists in implementing ultrasound in practice'. Jackie Locke delivered a well-attended refresher on local anaesthetic safety, dosage calculations, and record-keeping—reinforcing GCU's role in advancing clinical standards.

Research Contributions

GCU researchers presented a diverse range of studies through posters and short papers, including:

- Is foot disease activity in rheumatoid arthritis really ubiquitous? (Sarah Jane Walls, PhD student)
- What facilitators and barriers exist to foot care for people with advanced stage dementia living in care homes in Scotland: A mixed methods study (Alison Scott, professional doctorate student)
- Disease burden of Charcot neuro-osteoarthropathy in a population-based diabetes registry (Victoria Milbourn, DIALECT project team)
- Comparison of the plantar soft tissue morphology between recently healed and non-ulcerated sites in diabetes (Dr Benedictine Khor, GCU PhD alumni)

These contributions underline GCU's commitment to research that informs practice and improves patient outcomes.



Strengthening Professional Links

Debbie Wilson led, alongside Emeritus GCU Professor Stuart Baird, the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Faculty of Podiatric Medicine from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow and the Royal College of Podiatry. The agreement provides a formal structure for collaboration and professional advancement between the two bodies.

PhD researcher wins prize for stroke research at international conference

Dr. Elena Ierardi, who was recently awarded her PhD (supervised by Dr. Fiona Coupar (DoS), Dr. Myzoon Ali and Prof Frederike van Wijck of the Stroke and Neurological Rehabilitation Research Group - SYNERGY), presented her poster entitled 'Post-stroke severity levels of upper limb motor impairment and activity limitation recommended for research: an international e-Delphi study' at the prestigious World Stroke Congress in Barcelona in October.

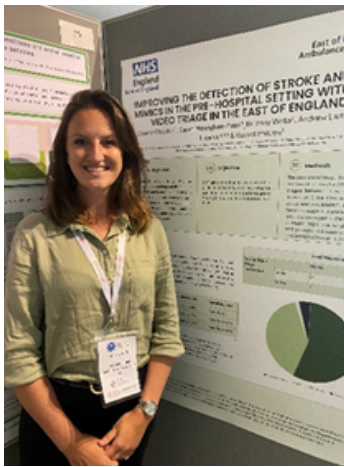


This study sought consensus on the classification of severity of arm and hand problems after stroke, which are common and disabling. Elena's systematic review, comprising 45 years of literature, had shown a lack of consensus, which affects the pooling of clinical trial data, which in turn affects guideline recommendations and ultimately patients' outcomes after stroke. Results of her e-Delphi study are anticipated to inform the development of a standardised, interest holder-informed classification that is meaningful to clinicians, stroke survivors, and researchers to ultimately improve stroke recovery. Furthermore, Elena was awarded the €1,000 Parma-Piacenza Research Prize (funded by the physiotherapy board of Parma-Piacenza provinces) for her research on the 7th of November.



PhD researcher addresses sex inequalities in acute stroke care

A Glasgow Caledonian University researcher shared her findings about sex inequalities in acute stroke care at an international conference.



While working as a paramedic, Brittany Wells was keen to learn more about sex differences in pre-hospital stroke medicine.

High-quality prehospital management of patients with suspected stroke is fundamental in the acute stroke chain of survival. Brittany, a PhD researcher, found evidence indicating sex inequality disfavours females in acute stroke care, and female patients are known to have poorer stroke outcomes compared to males.

She said: “While working as a paramedic alongside Professor Silke Walter, consultant neurologist and vice-chairman of the Department of Neurology at Saarland University, Germany, my passion for understanding more about sex differences in prehospital stroke medicine grew.

Following the European Stroke Research Workshop in 2022, I was fortunate to meet Professor Frederike van Wijck. Professor in Neurological Rehabilitation Sciences at GCU and embark on my PhD at the University.” Brittany was invited to return to Edinburgh this year for the European Stroke Research Workshop 2025 as a speaker. She also presented research at the European Stroke Organisation Conference as a co-author of [‘Challenges in Prehospital Diagnosis of Acute Stroke in Women: A Case-Based Reflection’](#), which was published in *Stroke* in 2024.

“This year our systematic review [‘Sex differences in prehospital stroke medicine \(SESAME\): A systematic review and meta-analysis’](#) was published in *Stroke*, representing a huge milestone in my research and a proud achievement,” she added. “With the support of my supervisory team, Professor Frederike van Wijck and Dr Nina Teasdale at GCU and Professor Silke Walter, it is my ambition to better understand sex differences in prehospital stroke medicine and the role of Emergency Medical Service clinicians. “I hope our research will raise awareness of sex inequities in acute stroke management and guide future prehospital education to ensure women with acute stroke are recognised, triaged and managed with comparable accuracy and quality to their male counterparts.

Professor Frederike van Wijck said: “Brittany is the first paramedic to join our Stroke and Neurological Rehabilitation Research Group (SYNERGY). She has opened our eyes to prevailing sex inequalities in the pre-hospital stroke pathway that she aspires to address to save lives. It’s a privilege to work with Silke Walter, who is a pioneer in this area, while working with Nina Teasdale from WiSE Centre for Economic Justice at GCU is transformative as her insights place a completely different lens on entrenched societal bias in stroke care. This teamwork enables us to begin to address an important problem in a group that is already marginalised in our society.”





Selected Publications

Some of the latest selected publications from GCU staff are listed below. To view an article, please click on the title.

- [Commentary on NICE guidance 249-falls: assessment and prevention in older people and in people 50 and over at higher risk](#)
- [Mediators implementation and delivery: the falls management exercise programme \(FaME\)](#)

Professor Dawn Skelton appeared in the Telegraph in article on [Falling can be fatal. Here's how to reduce your risk as you age.](#) [Read the full article here](#)

GCU Psychologist launches new book at free online author talk

Glasgow Caledonian University Senior Lecturer in Applied Psychology Dr Liza Morton officially launched her groundbreaking new book at an online Author Talk hosted by The Polyvagal Institute in December. The book, [Beyond the Medical Gaze: Practicing Psychologically Informed Healthcare](#), published by Oxford University Press, is a call to embed a psychologically-informed approach to healthcare for patients and practitioners. [Read more](#)

University launches new research magazine

The first edition of the new GCU Impact magazine created by the Communications team with support from the Marketing team and staff across the University launched last week. The digital magazine showcases how GCU is making a difference to business, communities and society - from AI in healthcare to widening access to justice - there's plenty to explore. [Read an online version of Impact magazine](#) or [visit its online platform](#).





A guide to developing allied health professions placements

Researchers from Glasgow Caledonian University have collaborated on a new book that offers guidance for delivering practice-based learning in allied health professions. [New Practice-based Learning in the Allied Health Professions: A Toolkit for Innovation and Excellence](#) provides strategies to deliver positive placement experiences.

A collaborative endeavour with contributions from GCU's Department of Allied Health Professions (AHP), the book features international contributions from educators and practitioners and brings together new models and ideas. These include evidence-informed evaluation on long-arm supervision, peer-assisted learning, and technology-assisted placements, and simulated and interprofessional placements. A resource to shape high-quality, impactful placements in allied health education, the book is for educators, practitioners, and students across the allied health professions.

The authors are Emma Green, Senior Lecturer in Occupational Therapy, Anita Volkert, Senior Lecturer in Occupational Therapy, Eric Nkansah Opoku, Lecturer in Occupational Therapy, all Glasgow Caledonian University, and Katrina Bannigan, Research Assistant in the Department of Mental Wellbeing, University of Glasgow.

[Read more](#)

How to support people with a learning disability and autistic people

Staff and students working in health and social care services across the UK will benefit from a new pocketbook by a Glasgow Caledonian University academic. The UK Health and Social Care Act (2022) has been transformative by introducing mandatory training for all staff working in Care Quality Commission-registered services. Supporting People with a Learning Disability and Autistic People in Health and Social Care complements and supports mandatory training.



Nine adults with a learning disability, autistic people and parents contributed their experiences, as experts on their own lives, to the book by Dr Janet Finlayson, Senior Research Fellow, Department of Nursing, Community and Public Health. This book provides practical advice, using real life examples, to ensure staff and students are providing accessible and inclusive services, to meet the communication and support needs of people with a learning disability and autistic people. Chapters include inclusive communication, making reasonable adjustments and understanding behaviour.

Dr Finlayson said: "I decided to write this book because lack of awareness among health and social care professionals is a recognised barrier to people with a learning disability and autistic people accessing appropriate services, and having their needs met." Dr Finlayson is a Registered Mental Health Nurse, who has 25 years' experience of conducting research with people with a learning disability and autistic people, and their supporters. The book is available on Class Professional Publishing's website (including free academic inspection copies) [here](#) or on Amazon.



Podcasts & Good News

Some of the latest news and blogs from GCU staff are listed below.



Professor Claudia Estcourt spoke to STV News about latest health statistics that say rates of gonorrhoea have reached record highs in Scotland. A report by Public Health Scotland states there has been a 59% increase in the number of diagnoses of the STI between 2019 and 2023 – with young people most affected. Students at GCU have produced a short film about why it should be normal to get tested. You can see Professor Estcourt speaking on TV [here](#).

Physio expert shares expertise on BBC's Morning Live - twice in one week

Leading physiotherapist Dr David Hamilton has showcased his expertise to millions of viewers after appearing twice in one week on the BBC's top-rated TV magazine programme, *Morning Live*. Both segments were filmed at the University's Glasgow campus, where Dr Hamilton joined *Morning Live*'s resident GP Dr Punam Krishan to discuss practical ways to manage and prevent common musculoskeletal conditions. In his first appearance, Dr Hamilton answered viewers' questions on osteoarthritis of the knee and hip, offering evidence-based advice on prevention and self-management strategies. [Watch the segment on BBC iPlayer](#). Dr Hamilton's second slot focused on reducing back and neck pain, with simple, effective exercises demonstrated by Esther, one of the University's physiotherapy students. [Watch the segment on BBC iPlayer](#). Dr Hamilton is Interim Associate Dean Research in the School of Health and Life Sciences and a Reader in Musculoskeletal Health within the Research Centre for Health. His appearances highlighted the University's commitment to improving public health through accessible, research-informed advice. [Read more](#)



SHIP Blog

[Catch-up on the latest blogs](#) from the Safeguarding Health through Infection Prevention (SHIP) research group including:

- Impact of fungal biofilms
- Global Handwashing Day 2025

NESSIE Blog

[Read the latest blogs](#) from the NIHR Synthesis Scotland Initiative (NESSIE) including:

- Interventions for improving upper limb function after stroke
- What are the impacts on health and well-being of mandatory non-custodial drug and alcohol treatment orders?