Department: Clinical and Experimental Medicine/ Neuroscience

Research Assistant in Mechanisms of Chronic Pain and Fatigue

Full time, fixed term for 12 months

Salary range: starting at £28,452 and rising to £32,004, per annum

Expected start date: 1 February 2017

The Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine and the Department of Neuroscience seeks to appoint a Research Assistant scientist to work with other researchers at the Clinical Imaging Sciences Centre on an exciting translational clinically-focused research project funded by Arthritis Research UK which explores mechanisms of chronic pain and fatigue in a clinical population. The post provides an outstanding opportunity to gain first hand clinical research experience and skills in techniques including psychological testing, autonomic psychophysiology, neuroimaging and phlebotomy. These methods will be applied to the understanding of brain-body interactions in pain and fatigue. The post-holder will join a rich research environment within BSMS. She/he will be located at the University of Sussex Campus at Falmer and will work with Professor Kevin Davies, Professor Hugo Critchley, Professor Mara Cercignani, Dr Neil Harrison, Dr Jessica Eccles and Dr Mike Tarzi.

The successful applicant will be expected to have basic computational, statistical and technical skills applicable to human neuroscience and clinical experimental research. Experience with working with patients and in psychological testing is highly desirable, as is previous experience in neuroimaging methods.

For informal queries please contact Dr Jessica Eccles, NIHR Academic Clinical Lecturer j.eccles@bsms.ac.uk or Professor Kevin Davies on medicineAnatomyDA@bsms.ac.uk

Closing date for applications: 2 December 2016

For full details and how to apply see:

www.sussex.ac.uk/jobs  www.brighton.ac.uk/jobs  www.bsms.ac.uk

We are committed to equality of opportunity

The Universities are committed to equality and valuing diversity, and applications are particularly welcomed from women and black and minority ethnic candidates, who are under-represented in academic posts in science, mathematics, medicine and engineering at Sussex and Brighton.
Job Title: Research Assistant in **Mechanisms of Chronic Pain and Fatigue**
Grade: Research Assistant, Grade 6
School: Brighton and Sussex Medical School
Department: Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine and Neuroscience
Location: Trafford Centre, University of Sussex Campus at Falmer
Job Reference: 1329
Responsible to: Principal Investigator, Professor Kevin Davies
Direct Reports: n/a
Key Contacts: Members of research group, members of faculty within the School and University
Role Description: Research Assistant is a pre-Doctoral career-grade research position. Post-holders will be expected to contribute to the work of the research team, and also to develop their research skills with support from more experienced members of staff.

**PURPOSE OF THE POST:**

The post-holder will be expected to contribute to the work of the research team, and also to develop her/his research skills with support from more experienced members of staff.

Specifically, the post holder will work on a programme of clinical research funded through Arthritis Research UK: ‘Viscero-sensory processes and neural responses to inflammation: mechanisms of pain and fatigue in fibromyalgia’.

**PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTABILITIES**

1. To observe and assist with individual and/or collaborative research activity and contribute to the production of research outputs for publications.
KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. **Research, Scholarship & Enterprise**

1.1 With support from the Principal Investigator, develop research objectives and contribute to the planning of the research project.

1.2 Conduct research activity under supervision of the Principal Investigator, and in collaboration with others.

1.3 Assist with the analysis and interpretation of research findings and contribute to discussions on conclusions and outcomes.

1.4 Contribute to the writing of reports and other dissemination activities under the supervision of experienced researchers.

1.5 Contribute to the preparation of research ethics and data management strategies, under guidance from the Principal Investigator to ensure compliance with ethical approval and data protection legislation.

1.6 Present information on research progress and outcomes to relevant bodies under the supervision of the Principal Investigator.

1.7 Plan own day-to-day research activity within the framework of the agreed programme.

1.8 Learn about the publication process and contribute to research outputs for publication in monographs or recognised high-quality journals, or performance/exhibition, as appropriate.

1.9 Continually update knowledge and understanding in field or specialism, and engage in professional development.

2. **Teaching & Student Support**

2.1 Assist in the supervision of student projects and provide guidance to those assisting in the research.

3. **Contribution to School & University**

2.1 Attend and contribute to relevant School and project meetings.
2.2 Undertake additional duties, as required by the Principal Investigator and/or Head of School.

4. Role-specific duties

- Work on an Arthritis Research UK funded project exploring mechanisms of chronic pain and fatigue.

- Collaborate with other team members to work on clinically-oriented research that examines the brain-body interactions in the expression of clinical pain and fatigue. The post provides an outstanding opportunity to gain first hand clinical research experience and skills in techniques including psychological testing, autonomic psychophysiology and neuroimaging. These methods will be applied to the understanding of clinical expression of pain and fatigue. The post-holder will join a rich research environment within BSMS.

- Have basic computational, statistical and technical skills applicable to human neuroscience and clinical experimental research.

- Experience with working with patients and in psychological testing is highly desirable, as is previous experience of neuroimaging.

- Work according to an agreed plan to implement the funded patient-focused research in collaboration with researchers in Psychiatry at BSMS, the Psychoneuroimmunology group at BSMS, the Sackler Centre for Consciousness Science and with clinical and research Staff within Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust.

This Job Description sets out current duties of the post that may vary from time to time without changing the general character of the post or level of responsibility entailed.

INDICATIVE PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- Under the supervision of the Principal Investigator, conduct experiments/research to assist with project aims, with emphasis on training.

- Undertake research by preparing, setting up, conducting and recording the outcomes.

- Manage and analyse data, and prepare written reports and summaries.

- Maintain and store project files and equipment as per health and safety and data regulations.

- As part of career development, contribute to the preparation of journal articles based on the research with support from the Principal Investigator.
PERSON SPECIFICATION

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA

1. Normally educated to degree level, or other equivalent qualification, or relevant level of experience, as appropriate to the discipline (see role-specific criteria below).

2. Good presentation skills, with the ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, with colleagues and external audiences.

3. Ability to work independently (under supervision by the Principal Investigator), and as part of a team.

4. Ability to exercise a degree of innovation and creative problem-solving.

5. Excellent organisational and administrative skills.

6. Ability to prioritise and meet deadlines.

7. Excellent IT skills.

8. Ability to follow guidance of team leaders.

ESSENTIAL ROLE-SPECIFIC CRITERIA

1. Ability to manage and analyse quantitative data sets

2. Ability to work with people with illnesses

DESIRABLE CRITERIA

1. Experience of conducting research experiments.

DESIRABLE ROLE-SPECIFIC CRITERIA
1. Knowledge of literature regarding pain and fatigue

2. Knowledge of neuroimaging

3. Experience using standardised psychological assessments including questionnaires

4. Experience of neuroimaging

5. Experience of phlebotomy and centrifuging

6. Relevant MSc in Psychology or Biological Sciences or equivalent qualification or experience

This Job Description sets out current duties of the post that may vary from time to time without changing the general character of the post or the level of responsibility entailed.

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<tr>
<th>Skills and abilities</th>
<th>Essential</th>
<th>Desirable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to work independently</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to follow guidance of team leaders</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to manage and analyse quantitative datasets</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to conduct systematic testing and interviews</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to work with people with illnesses</td>
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<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Essential</th>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of literature regarding pain and fatigue</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of neuroimaging</td>
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<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Essential</th>
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<tr>
<td>Experience of working with patients</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Experience of human experimental research</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undergraduate degree or equivalent qualification, or relevant level of experience in Psychology or the Biological Sciences with a significant human research component</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relevant MSc in Psychology or Biological Sciences or equivalent qualification or experience</td>
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<th>Personal attributes and circumstances</th>
<th>Essential</th>
<th>Desirable</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to work as part of an integrated research team</td>
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<td>Good organisational abilities</td>
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<td>Practical and flexible</td>
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<td>Ability to complete assessment in a variety of settings including clinical sites</td>
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<td>Ability to learn new skills</td>
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**Senior leadership and management**

The Vice-Chancellor is the senior academic officer and, as Chief Executive, is responsible to the University Council for management of the University. He is supported by an executive group which includes the three Pro-Vice-Chancellors, the Registrar and Secretary, the Director of Finance and the Director of Human Resources. The Heads of the Schools of Studies at Sussex report to the Pro-Vice-Chancellors.

The Registrar and Secretary heads the Professional Services of the University. In addition, under the University Statutes, the Registrar and Secretary is Secretary to the University Council. The Director of Finance reports to the Vice-Chancellor. The Director of ITS reports to the Registrar and Secretary, and the Librarian reports to one of the Pro-Vice-Chancellors.

**The Medical School**

The School is an equal partnership between the Universities of Sussex and Brighton together with NHS staff throughout the South East Region. The arrangements for the School's governance reflect this approach and students are awarded joint degrees of both Universities.

The School is fully committed to the principles of *GMC: Standards of Promoting Excellence*; it endorses the value of medical education in a multi-professional context, and promotes the highest possible standards in its three pivotal components of teaching, clinical practice, and research (both fundamental and applied).

There is an annual intake to undergraduate medicine of approximately 138 students. BSMS has proved exceptionally popular and has regularly achieved one of the highest application rates of any UK medical school. Students spend their first two years primarily on the universities' campuses at Falmer; thereafter the focus shifts to the associated teaching hospitals in Brighton and the surrounding area. There are purpose-built teaching facilities in all areas.

The curriculum emphasises early clinical involvement, a broad range of experience and a firm foundation in basic science. A wide range of teaching and learning approaches are employed, tailored to the particular circumstances; we are not committed to a single method of delivery. Feedback from the National Student Survey has demonstrated an exceptionally high level of student satisfaction, with BSMS being consistently amongst the top 10 performing schools in the country with scores of over 90%.

The research undertaken at BSMS aims to make a genuine contribution to the evidence and science underpinning clinical practice, and to benefit people and patients in their health and wellbeing. We expect our key domains of research strength to be recognised on the international stage and these are represented by the new departments of Global Health and Infection (including HIV and sexual health) and Neuroscience (including mental health and neurology). We have made significant investments in research infrastructure, including a world-class Clinical Imaging Sciences Centre (CISC) housing a 3T and 1.5T MRI and a PET-CT scanner and a Clinical Investigation & Research Unit (CIRU) dedicated to patient-orientated research and early clinical trials.

Following the appointment of Professor Malcolm Reed as Dean in December 2014, the Medical School has undergone a strategic review and is currently undergoing reorganisation into the following Departments which will be fully established for the academic year 2016/17:

- **Clinical and Experimental Medicine**
- **Global Health and Infection**
- **Neuroscience**
Primary Care and Public Health

Medical Education

**Administration.** The Medical School's Administration is led by the Medical School Secretary. The School's 60+ support staff offer support to a range of functions including curriculum development and delivery, admissions, library and IT, communications, student welfare, human resources, research and finance.

**The Universities**

The Universities of Brighton and Sussex have formed a highly effective and successful partnership that has resulted in the creation of this first new medical school in the South East region outside of London. Each institution has its own distinct culture and each is proud of its history and achievements but they have a long and successful history of collaboration.

**Research and teaching**

Both universities are committed to excellence in teaching and research.

Sussex is a progressive university delivering innovative thought and action, with a worldwide reputation for excellence in research and discovery. Its distinctive approach leads to the development of high quality new research which crosses traditional boundaries, benefits and enriches society, and influences policy at international, regional and national levels. Sussex research has a positive impact on people’s lives. In the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2016, Sussex was ranked 23rd in the UK and 140th in the world for research influence.

The results of the government-commissioned Research Excellence Framework (REF) in 2014 show that over 75% of research activity at Sussex is categorised as 'world leading' (4*, 28%) or 'internationally excellent' (3*, 48%) in terms of originality, significance and rigour, whilst 98% of research activity at Sussex is categorised as either 'world-leading', 'internationally excellent' or 'internationally recognised'.

The University of Brighton has a long and distinguished history of applied research. This serves to sustain and nourish its mission to help form professional and vocational careers. Ultimately, the university aims to transform the lives and experiences of people and their environments with research that matters. In the REF2014, 92% of its research was judged to be world-leading or internationally excellent in terms of the impact it makes, putting it in the top 25% for the sector. 38% of the university’s work in the Health Sciences was rated as world-leading.

BSMS made a major contribution to its host universities’ submissions in the most recent Research Excellence Framework (REF2014). The majority of BSMS staff submitted contributed to Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience, and Biological Sciences at the University of Sussex, both ranked 10th, or the joint submission with the University of Brighton (Allied Health Professionals, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy – ranked 27th). A smaller number of academics were submitted with Sociology and English at Sussex.

**Brighton & Sussex University Hospitals NHS**

Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals (BSUH) is the regional teaching hospital working across two sites: the Royal Sussex County Hospital in Brighton and the Princess Royal Hospital in Haywards Heath. The Brighton campus includes the Royal Alexandra Children’s Hospital and the Sussex Eye Hospital,
and the Haywards Heath campus includes the Hurstwood Park Regional Centre for Neurosciences.

In May 2014 the UK Government agreed the release of £420m to redevelop the Royal Sussex County Hospital site. The plans will see the site’s 19th century buildings replaced with new, modern facilities for the delivery of healthcare, for teaching and for research.

Revised August 2016 (PP-D)