What’s going on at the MRC

The MRC elevator pitch
This was our focus for the 2015 Spending Review: “The MRC prioritises, discovers and transforms.”

The MRC Prioritises
- Infections
- Lifelong Mental Health and Dementia
- Prevention
- Regenerative medicine

The MRC discovers
- MRC institutes
- Experimental medicine (discovery in humans)
- Target discovery and validation
- Interdisciplinary discovery science

The MRC transforms
- Medical bioinformatics and computation
- Stratified medicine
- Academic/industry relationships
- Stratified/Global public health

Major projects

Dementia Research Institute (DRI)
- The DRI came from a political imperative.
- Dementia is a major concern for the population and it presents new scientific opportunities.
- The Spending Review gave the MRC around £20m per year specifically for an institute.
- ARUK and Alzheimer’s Society have also invested £50m each.
- The DRI will spend around £30m a year on research.
Distributed institute
Successful in convincing government that a distributed institute was the best way forward.

Why?
- The Dementias Platform UK and NIHR’s Dementia Translational Research Collaboration were already established.
- Must bring scientists from a range of fields to this cause.
- A single institute would disrupt science and deny experts the connections they need.
- The interesting patients are all over the UK.

Director and set up
- Director-elect identified. Hope to make public announcement soon.
- Director will work with the MRC and with five universities.
- The five universities will form a hub where 50 per cent of the funded science will take place.
- There will also be a cluster of centres – very similar to MRC centres.
- 450 scientists working on dementia in this institute within 3–4 years.

UK Institute for Health and Biomedical Informatics Research (UK IHBIR!)
The power of data
Graham Spittle, Chief Information Officer of IBM: “electronic records and data linkage are going to be as important to 21st century medicine as the microscope was to 19th century medicine.”

UK potential for data sharing
- UK has world-leading capacity to link medical data.
- Must win public support for the concept that sharing data save lives.

Funding
- The MRC has so far invested over £100m into health informatics – mostly into kit and buildings.
- Want to establish a single, multi-funder, UK institute for health and biomedical informatics research.
- Various funding partners are signed up and we are talking to many others.
- The Farr Institute has three research councils, four major charities and three departments of health. We hope that at least that many funders will come into this new institute. The MRC has committed a budget of £37.5m over the next five years.
- We hope the budget will be at least £10m a year.

Search for a director
- Today we are launching the international search for the first director.
One Director, one employer

- Plan to establish a bespoke funder and delivery mechanism through a company limited by guarantee.
- A single director would control all the resources wherever they are used in the UK.
- Scientists would work for one employer.
- Need to retain expertise and develop a career programme in this area.
- Currently failing to produce a career pathway that keeps people in this area.

UK Prevention Research Partnership (UK PRP)
Prevention is always better than cure.

National Prevention Research Initiative

- National Prevention Research Initiative was a result of a major push several years ago with 16 funders involved.
- We learnt a great deal from that.

UK PRP independent steering committee established.

- Now informing the assembly of another large pot of funding.
- The MRC has committed £12m.

Opportunities for prevention research are colossal

- These are underlined by the report: “Improving the Health of the public in 2040” which will inform how we put together this partnership with other funders.

UKRI
Not yet been debated in Parliament

- I have no doubt that it will come into being on the 1 April 2018.

The MRC will continue

- Importantly, there will be an MRC, AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC, NERC and STFC.
- Research Councils will continue to have large, long-horizon, devolved research budgets.

Make it a success

- It is important that everyone here does our best to ensure that UKRI is a success.
- If it is a success then the MRC will continue to be a success, as will all the other research councils.
- UKRI should be welcomed and supported now.