

Healthcare Science Postgraduate Scientist Trainees  
and Supervisors Annual Conference 2018

# RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT STORIES

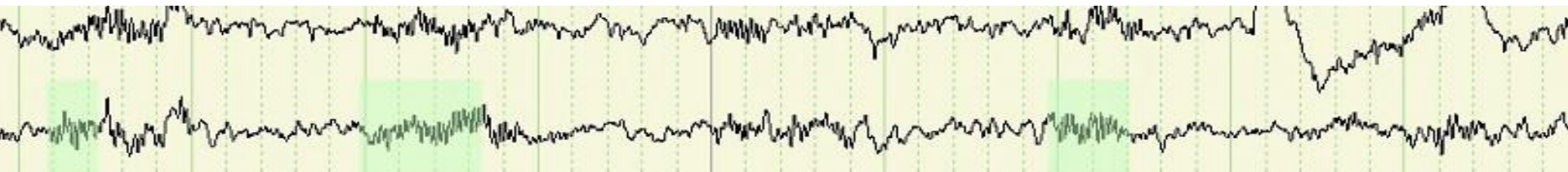
**Dr Lizzie Hill**

**PhD RPSGT EST**

Sleep Research Fellow, The University of Edinburgh

Specialist Clinical Physiologist (Sleep), Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Edinburgh

NRS Career Research Fellow, Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Edinburgh



- **How did I get here?**
- **What have I learned?**
- **Questions**

# EARLY DAYS

- **Generally curious**
  - How? Why?
- **Interest in science**
  - Dinosaurs
  - Volcanoes
  - Human body
- **Career plan**
  - Palaeontologist
  - Scientist
  - Fashion designer
  - Medical researcher



- **BSc (Hons) Human Life Sciences**

- Anatomy
- Physiology
- Biochemistry
- Psychology
- Neuroscience

- **Graduated with 2:2**

- Not “high achiever”

- **Career plan**

- Biomedical Scientist
- “We’re breeding research scientists, not lab technicians...”



# EARLY CAREER

- **Various lab-based jobs**
  - Summer student, NoSWA (temporary position)
  - QC Technician, Rosgen (made redundant)
  - QC Technician, Serologicals
- **Realised lab work was not for me**
  - Variety
  - “People person”



- **Sleep Technician post, RIE (30hr/wk)**

- Science degree
- Physiology-based
- Patient contact
- Day shifts / split shifts

- **Diagnosis and treatment of sleep disorders**

- Obstructive sleep apnoea
- Narcolepsy
- Parasomnias
  - Sleepwalking, night terrors, REM behaviour disorder



- **On-the-job training**
  - No formal training pathway
  - No professional qualifications / registration in UK
  - “Not respiratory enough” for RCCP registration
- **Strong research tradition**
  - Clinical research / RCTs
  - Pioneers in field, e.g. Prof Sir Neil Douglas
  - PhDs / MDs
  - Publications in high-quality international journals
  - But research and clinical staff very much divided
    - “them and us”



- **Keen to be involved in research**
  - But “not part of the job for NHS staff”
  - Clinical workload comes first
- **Research Assistant post (7.5hr/wk)**
  - Assisting with technical and admin aspects of studies in department
  - Learning basic research techniques
  - Fostering research interest
- **Attended conferences**
  - British Sleep Society
  - European Respiratory Society, Glasgow



# CAREER FOUNDATIONS

- **Joined British Sleep Society**

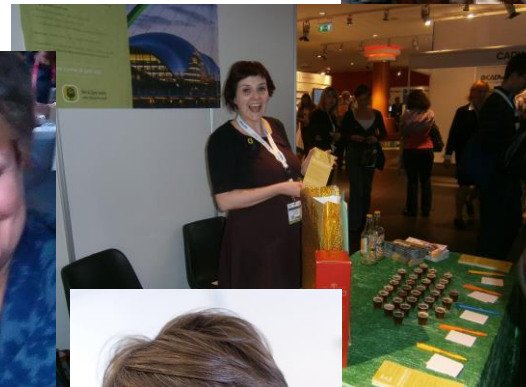
- Attended conferences
- Find own funding

- **Invited to teach**

- Lectures
- Workshops

- **Networking**

- Conference dinners / drinks
- Informal mentoring
- Encouraged to get more involved in Society / stand for election
- Chance meeting led to next job...



leep Society Newsletter

## Editors's Message



Firstly, huge thanks to Ro time as editor. I hope to co entertaining periodical, refle  
To this end, please get in better, write an article! This  
opinions, enquiries and feedback; longer a

# MOVING ON

- **Technical Manager, The Edinburgh Sleep Centre**
  - Private sleep clinic
  - Commercial research
  - Mentoring
  - Gaining research skills
- **Unexpected career change...**



# MOVING ON

- **Time out for maternity leave**
  - Returned to work part-time
  - But covering full-time post in less hours!
- **No sleep jobs advertised anywhere!**
  - Contacted colleague at RIE
- **Research Assistant, University of Edinburgh (21hr/wk)**
  - Technical / admin support for study of OSA in adults with Down syndrome
  - CSO funded
  - Diagnostics / treatment



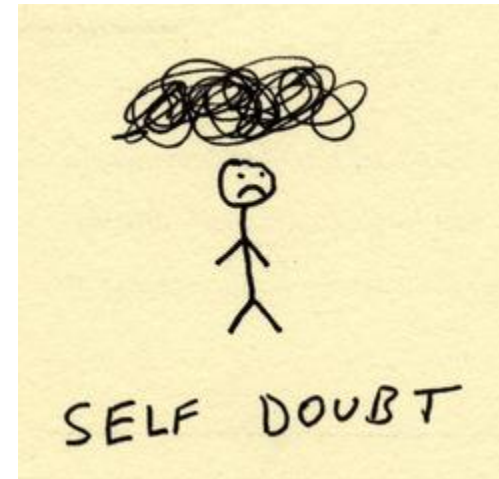
# MOVING ON

- **Disaster! Study lead pulls out...**
  - Funding in place but no one to lead
  - Redundancy?
- **Invited to lead study**
  - Skills, experience
- **Grant states researcher will undertake higher degree**
  - Problem for funding?
- **“It’s ok, you can just do a PhD...”**



# THE NEXT STEP

- **PhD by Research, University of Edinburgh**
  - Fully funded
  - Salary
  - Entirely research based
- **But...**
  - I'm not a "high achiever"
  - I'm not "academic enough"
  - Mid-30s
  - 1 year old child
  - Not PhD material .....



# THE NEXT STEP

- **Encouraged by senior researchers in department**
  - Experienced in sleep
  - Practical / technical
  - Organisational skills
  - Driven, focussed...
- **Commenced PhD...!**

"The worst enemy to creativity  
is self-doubt."

-Sylvia Plath

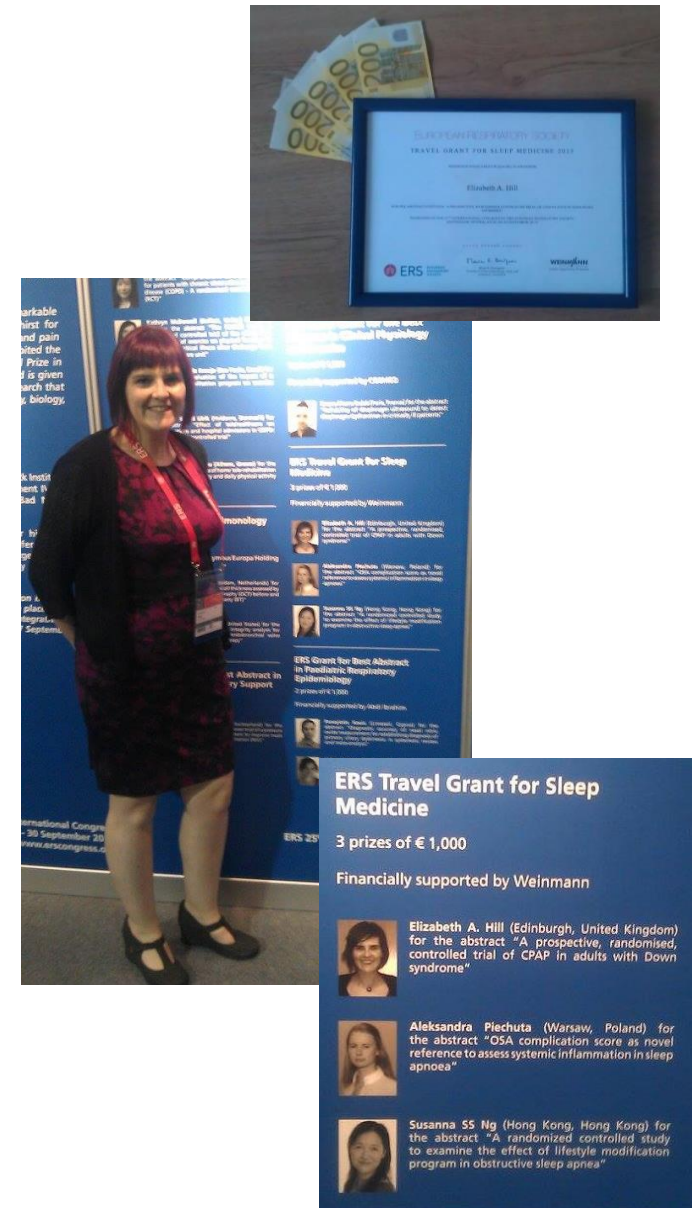


- **Skills gained through PhD**
  - Patients with intellectual disability
  - Research skills
  - Independent working
  - People management / teamworking
  - Time management
    - Job, study, travel, family...
  - Data management
  - Statistics
  - Lecturing / presentation skills
  - Confidence in myself and my skills / experience ...



# THE NEXT STEP

- Presented work at international conference
  - Posters
  - Oral presentations
- European Respiratory Society Travel Grant
  - Top 3 abstracts in sleep
- World Sleep Federation Travel Grant
  - Top abstracts submitted





# MOVING ON – AGAIN...!

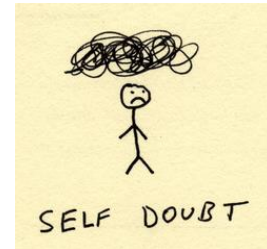
- **Disaster!**
  - Funding runs out...
  - Still mid-data collection
  - Made redundant
- **Contact network**
  - “You’ve probably heard...”
  - Post created at RHSC
  - 3-month stipend from University

# MOVING ON – AGAIN...!

- **Specialist Clinical Physiologist (Sleep)**
  - Part-time whilst finishing PhD
  - Kept on full-time after completion of PhD
- **Full-time clinical post**
  - Research interest within wider team
  - But “not part of the job for NHS staff”
  - Some funding to assist with ongoing research project
- **Approached manager re. seeking my own research funding**
  - Surprisingly supportive!

# MOVING ON – AGAIN...!

- **Applied for NRS Career Research Fellowship**
  - Funding for up to 0.4WTE research time within existing clinical post
  - 3 years
  - Application form
  - Research portfolio proposal
  - Mentor
  - Interview with panel of 8 clinicians, researchers from NHS and CSO
- **Awarded funding April 2017**
  - First physiologist to be awarded funding
  - Ring-fenced time to undertake research



# MOVING ON – AGAIN...!

- **Feel constrained by clinical post**
- **Research Assistant in Neurodegeneration and Sleep Disorders, University of Edinburgh**
  - Full-time post
  - No longer entitled to NRS funding
  - Encouraged to speak to CSO by new line manager
- **CSO agreed to continue funding provided 2 clinical sessions per week retained**
  - “you don’t ask, you don’t get...”

- **3 days/wk Sleep Research Fellow, University of Edinburgh**
  - Centre for Clinical Brain Sciences
  - Small vessel disease in adults with OSA (international collaboration)
- **1 day/wk Specialist Clinical Physiologist, NHS Lothian**
  - RHSC
  - Clinical sleep diagnostics
- **1 day/wk NRS Career Research Fellow, NHS Lothian**
  - Parental group sleep education for pre-school children with Down syndrome
  - Various other sleep-related projects

# WHY DO RESEARCH?

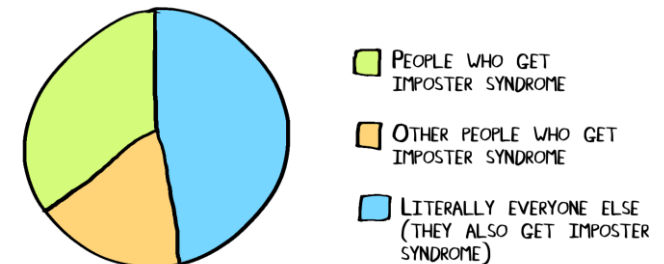
- **Part of our job as Healthcare Scientists!**
- **Patient benefit**
- **Personal / professional curiosity**
- **Pursuit of knowledge / contribution to field**
- **Professional development / career progression**
- **Personal development / confidence in self**

# WHAT HAVE I LEARNED?

- **Have a plan**
  - But be prepared to deviate
  - Not everyone's path is the same
  - Flexibility is key
- **Don't wait to be asked – make your own opportunities**
  - But do grab opportunities when they arise
- **Stay informed**
  - CPD: professional bodies, conferences, publications

# WHAT HAVE I LEARNED?

- **Network, network, network**
  - “It’s not what you know, but who you know”
- **Find a mentor**
  - Formal, informal
- **Have confidence in yourself**
  - Avoid impostor syndrome
  - Big yourself up!
  - Social media, blogging
- **Just do it!**
  - You won’t know if you don’t try...
  - Don’t be put off by negativity of others



EVERYONE FEELS LIKE AN IMPOSTER  
SOMETIMES, AND THAT'S OKAY

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# CONCLUSIONS

- **Be prepared to work hard**
  - but grab opportunities when they present themselves
- **Use the resources at your disposal**
  - Training
  - Networking
  - Mentorship
- **If there isn't a research culture in your department / hospital / field – cultivate one**
- **Stay curious!**
  - Keep questioning

- **NHS Research Scotland (NRS)**
  - [www.cso.scot.nhs.uk/nrs/](http://www.cso.scot.nhs.uk/nrs/)
- **CHAIN**
  - [www.chain-network.org.uk](http://www.chain-network.org.uk)
- **Vitae**
  - [www.vitae.ac.uk](http://www.vitae.ac.uk)
- **Wellcome Trust Clinical Research Facility, Edinburgh**
  - [www.wtcrf.ed.ac.uk/Courses](http://www.wtcrf.ed.ac.uk/Courses)

# Any questions?

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