

Scientists to explore how bioscience could support Britain's elite athletes

Bioscientists and sports scientists are meeting this week to discuss the application of bioscience research to help investigate challenges presented by the UK high performance sport community.

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and UK Sport are bringing together scientists in the fields of neuroscience and musculoskeletal research with sports scientists with a view to establishing collaborative projects that will boost the chances of our top athletes in future competitions. A workshop is taking place today (28 September) and tomorrow at the Babraham Institute, an Institute of BBSRC, near Cambridge.

Professor Janet Allen, Director of Research, BBSRC said: "The bioscience community in the UK has knowledge and skills that could address many major challenges facing high performance athletes. The translation of fundamental bioscience, including the physiology of the nerve to muscle to tendon system, into strategies to fulfil physical potential could help give British athletes an edge as they prepare for a home Olympic and Paralympic Games in three years time."

Dr Scott Drawer, Head of Research and Innovation, UK Sport said: "Elite athletes train incredibly hard and maintain a very high level of fitness over a long time. While this makes them healthier than average, it can also expose them to more physical stresses and they can be prone to certain injuries and conditions. In some cases it almost seems like while they are operating at an incredibly high level they can easily topple and fall from that height.

"At UK Sport we have a well established Innovation Partnership Network from the best of British industry and academia, but we are constantly looking for new ways in which our athletes can improve the way they train, recover and perform, so we are delighted to be exploring this possibility with the BBSRC and their research community."

The workshop is designed to introduce bioscientists to the practical challenges faced by leading athletes and their coaches and trainers, so as to encourage application of knowledge in relevant fields. BBSRC and UK Sport will then collaborate to fund research projects in this area.

Professor Allen added: "High performance sport provides a unique model for investigating factors related to healthy physiology and so the projects that are taken on following this workshop are also likely to tell us something about increasing healthy lifespan for everyone."

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About BBSRC

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) is the UK funding agency for research in the life sciences. Sponsored by Government, BBSRC annually invests around £450 million in a wide range of research that makes a significant contribution to the quality of life for UK citizens and supports a number of important industrial stakeholders including the agriculture, food, chemical, healthcare and pharmaceutical sectors. BBSRC carries out its mission by funding internationally competitive research, providing training in the biosciences, fostering opportunities for knowledge transfer and innovation and promoting interaction with the public and other stakeholders on issues of scientific interest in universities, centres and institutes.

The Babraham Institute, Institute for Animal Health, Institute of Food Research, John Innes Centre and Rothamsted Research are Institutes of BBSRC. The Institutes conduct long-term, mission-oriented research using specialist facilities. They have strong interactions with industry, Government departments and other end-users of their research.

For more information see: <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk>

About UK Sport

UK Sport is the strategic lead body for high performance sport in the UK. It invests Exchequer and National Lottery funds in Britain's best Olympic and Paralympic sports and athletes to maximise their chances of success on the world stage. UK Sport also leads the campaign to bring strategically important sporting events to our shores; works with National Governing Bodies and other partner organisations to help them build positive working relationships with International Federations and other international bodies; and currently acts as National Anti-Doping Organisation (NADO) for the UK.

For more information see: <http://www.uk sport.gov.uk>

About the Babraham Institute

The Babraham Institute is a world-leading centre of excellence in biomedical research and underpins government's national responsibilities for healthcare research and training. With a strategic focus on 'healthy ageing', scientists are studying diverse processes, from developmental regulation in the womb, to diseases at the molecular and cellular levels, aiming to develop novel approaches for tackling chronic diseases and public health concerns like obesity. Exploring how defects in cell signalling and gene regulation trigger disease has provided insight into conditions like hypertension, cardiac arrhythmia and heart failure, autoimmunity, birth defects, bipolar disorders, cancer and neurodegenerative diseases. Babraham is an international leader in epigenetics, now known to underlie several human diseases, using state-of-the-art equipment to unravel the complexity of our genomes and understand how gene–environment interactions may have consequences later in life or on future generations. The Institute's innovative research portfolio is commercialised through Babraham Bioscience Technologies Ltd, which also manages the vibrant Babraham Bioincubator at the Babraham Research Campus in Cambridge.