



# Heart Support Group Lab Visit

## Morris Baker – Brighton and Sussex Take Heart Group

I feel very fortunate in being enabled to attend a Heart Support Group Lab visit at the Institute of Child Health at UCL on the 20<sup>th</sup> April 2017. It really was the most fascinating and well organised visit.

I met several people from similar groups around London. This was great in itself to discover there were other groups just like ours doing the same thing, all with similar experiences and so diverse. We were then introduced to three scientists who were researching congenital heart disease, especially among children. The lead scientist was Professor Peter Scambler, who was to show us around. He introduced us to two of his team, Sarah Ivens and Liam Ridge. They explained and described their part into the research of DiGeorge syndrome, which, though complicated, was totally fascinating. They explained with diagrams and slides the process of the heart and how it works and what could go wrong. So it was fascinating to us heart patients.

We were then taken round the laboratories to see all the latest (and very expensive) equipment for studying the heart, including some amazing state of the art microscopes. Nothing like the ones we used in our biology labs at school, these were the latest digital microscopes. We saw mice embryos and mice hearts, but probably the most moving and troubling was the heart of a child that had died from congenital heart disease. Professor Scambler showed us how the heart worked and what went wrong with the ventricles when they didn't open.

It was fascinating to see the essential work that is being funded by The British Heart Foundation, and that these busy scientists were prepared to take the time to show us some part of their essential work.

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## Ted Lock - Active Hearts Support Group

On 16th October a number of representatives from heart support groups in the North West visited Professor David Eisner at the Division of Cardiovascular Sciences, Core Technology Facility, at Manchester University. We started with a healthy lunch and an opportunity to meet the attendees, Professor Eisner and some of his staff. We then gathered in a lecture theatre, were given a warm welcome by our host, and listened to three presentations on current research.

First was Dr Gwilym Morris, consultant cardiologist and electrophysiologist at Manchester Royal Infirmary. Dr Morris deals with the electrical conductivity of the heart in patients with atrial fibrillation, implanting electronic pacemakers and performing cardiac ablation.

Professor David Eisner, head of the Unit of Cardiac Physiology then presented his work on the role of calcium in the heart. Dr Cathy Holt a senior lecturer in the department, presented the work she and co-workers have done to try and reduce the extent of heart damage following myocardial infarction, a heart attack.

The excellent series of talks was followed by a tour of the well-equipped laboratories and the opportunity to meet BHF-funded PhD students who presented their work as posters. The students gave an excellent account of their studies and were very highly motivated, which bodes well for the future. Overall, the BHF-funded research at Manchester was of a very high standard and in my opinion fully justifies the support given.

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