Haleon/Oral & Dental Research Trust (ODRT) Grants Programme

ORAL AND DENTAL RESEARCH TRUST

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Letter on behalf of Chairman and Director of the Oral and Dental Research Trust (ODRT)

For the past 20 years the ODRT has proudly partnered with Haleon, formerly GSK Consumer Healthcare ("Haleon") in the Haleon/ODRT Grants Programme. This programme is designed to assist with career development for UK & Ireland based early career research workers. These grants support research programmes into fundamental mechanisms, prevention and management of plaque-related oral diseases or tooth wear.

Since 2006, Haleon have contributed over £560,000 to the ODRT to fund recipients of the Haleon/ODRT Research Grant Programme.

The prestige of the Haleon/ODRT Grants Programme was established early in its history and continues to grow. Such success could not have arisen without the rigorous peer review process administered by the ODRT.

The Chairman and Trustees of the ODRT wish to sincerely thank Haleon for 20th year of generous support for these important awards, and all of the applicants who have submitted such high-quality applications, making the selection of "winners" increasingly difficult each year.

Our partnership with Haleon has been and continues to be invaluable in attracting a richness and diversity of research applications, and we hope this partnership will continue for many years to come, with the ultimate goal of being a springboard to assist the career development of UK and Ireland early career researchers.

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Introduction from

Adam Sisson

Vice-President & Head of Oral Health Research and Development, Haleon

This year marks the 20th year of Haleon supporting the Haleon/ODRT Grants Programme. This booklet is designed to share the stories behind a selection of past award winners. Through the pages of this booklet they have shared their stories to inspire future award applicants and those considering a career in scientific research.

Haleon is a world-leading consumer healthcare company with a clear purpose to deliver better everyday health with humanity. Haleon's competitive advantage is derived from combining deep human understanding with trusted science.

Our leading brands are built on science, innovation and human understanding and are trusted by millions of consumers globally. As one of the world's largest providers of oral health products, our science-based products are designed to fight against everyday oral health problems.

I would like to thank all of the applicants for their submissions and congratulate this year's winner on their award and I look forward to seeing the development of their research projects.

Adam Sisson

Vice-President & Head
of Oral Health Research
and Development, Haleon

Dr Praveen Sharma

Associate Professor & Honorary Consultant in Restorative Dentistry, University of Birmingham

Dr Praveen Sharma is a Associate Professor at the University of Birmingham and has recently completed his PhD with full funding from a successful NIHR grant application. In this interview he shares his career journey as well as tips for budding researchers.

> **"It's a huge boost to a junior researcher to get one of these grants, a boost in terms of both personally winning the grant, but also professionally."**

Can you tell us about your career to date?

I graduated from Birmingham in 2007 as a dental undergraduate and completed my vocational training in Kent. After working in a few house officer jobs, I returned to Birmingham in 2009. I started off in a new post as the first academic clinical fellow (ACF) in Restorative Dentistry. The post sounded like a no-brainer because it had research time built into it with the clinical responsibilities of a traditional specialist registrar in Restorative Dentistry. The idea of these posts is to do a pilot project during that ACF year to build up a grant application for funding from somewhere like the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR), which I was fortunate enough to do.

This meant that I was able to do my PhD, fully funded by the NIHR for three years, a first for Birmingham Dental School. It was a fantastic opportunity to knuckle down, with some of the teaching and clinical responsibilities taken off your plate. I officially graduated from my PhD in 2019 and now I've got around a year of clinical training to do in Restorative Dentistry, before I sit my consultant exams.

What did it mean to you to win the Haleon ODRT grant award?

The thing about the Haleon ODRT grant is that they are such a unique thing in dentistry. This is because if you are researching in cancer or cardiac or renal disease, diabetes, or most major diseases, there are a few charities you can approach to get funding to do research. That sort of thing just doesn't exist within dentistry apart from a few, and the Haleon ODRT grant is one of them.

Which is why even though it's not at the same scale as the NIHR grant, it is very valuable because it provides support to a lot more budding researchers. It means a great deal because that was one of the first ones that I was the main applicant on.

It's a huge boost to a junior researcher to get one of these grants, a boost in terms of both personally winning the grant, but also professionally because these smaller grants then build up to bigger projects, and ultimately lead you from being a dependent researcher, (dependent on your mentors) to becoming more of an independent research leader.

Winner of the 2014 Haleon/ODRT Grants Programme

Effect of intensive periodontal therapy on systemic inflammatory markers in patients with chronic kidney disease: a randomised controlled trial.

Looking back, what would you say are some of the key moments that have defined your success to date in your career?

Well, I think it all started off with Mr Bateman, who was one of the restorative consultants, coming over and bringing a print-out of an A4 sheet, saying this has come from Professor Chapple, and he's looking for future high-flying NHS researchers.

And that was the introduction to the ACF programme. As I said, it was the first in Birmingham Dental School, so it wasn't on my radar or anyone else's radar. That then got me a taste of research. I fell completely in love with research during the ACF years.

I was then fortunate enough to win the NIHR fellowship, which took me out of programme. Then came the ODRT grant hot off the heels of the NIHR grant, one of my first ones as Principal Investigator. And then building onto that, the courses and the training and the networking opportunities that these grants have brought me to really drive the success.

You couldn't do this sort of work alone, and I'm really fortunate in Birmingham to have a great team. Not only the team of mentors and people who can guide you in research, but also people on clinic, people on the ground who are really helpful. It's just an umbrella of fantastic support and without this none of the accolades would have been achieved.

What advice would you give to other dental professionals or scientists if they were considering entering dental research?

One thing that I would caution budding researchers is that you need to make friends with failure. It sounds like a really harsh thing to say but before they start off as a researcher, before they start applying for grants, before they start writing papers, most of the current undergraduates would have never failed, both in their GSCEs, A levels, and within dentistry itself. So, when you step out of that environment and you're suddenly writing papers and they're getting rejected, or they're asking for major revisions to papers, or when you're applying for grants, or when you're applying for prizes, and you're not winning, it's quite demoralising. Especially because you have no official "training" in this sort of thing.

So, and it's no put down to anyone who can't handle that sort of failure, because for the five grants that you write you may get one or two. Same with papers, the multiple revisions that you go through. And you just need to be a little bit resilient to that. So that's the other piece of advice that I give potential applicants. It's part of academia. It's just a part of it where some efforts will bear fruit and some won't.

"One thing that I would caution budding researchers is that you need to make friends with failure."

What advice would you give to someone who was thinking of applying for an award like this?

The first thing is always read the remit of the grant or award you're applying to. There are some funding opportunities available out there, and you just need to make sure you find the one where your project aims, and the grant funders remit align well. So, say for example, if you want to do more basic science research, then NIHR is probably not the place to apply. Similarly, if you want to do more clinical research, then the Wellcome Trust is probably not the place to apply.

Make sure that you study the remit of the funder and that what you're proposing to them, the grant that you're proposing, fits the remit. And then the next thing is just to apply. You need to be in it to win it, as they say. But you equally need to make friends with failure, as I said earlier.

And what does the future hold for you?

I have finished my PhD officially now but the research doesn't stop because the PhD is finished. I'm exploring one of my own ideas a little bit further, to do with the oral microbiome. And that's from an ongoing research point of view. From a clinical point of view, I've got a year more of my clinical training to do, and then I'm finished with my clinical training. And then the plan long term or medium term is to progress from being a clinical lecturer to a senior clinical lecturer, and then eventually to a professor based on my research portfolio.

Could you share something with us that we wouldn't find on your CV?

Oh yes. So again, in the same way that the support that I mentioned earlier from the people on clinic, and my mentors, isn't officially documented anywhere, the same goes for the family support that I have. I'm really lucky to have a hugely understanding wife, Ajit, and a beautiful three-year-old daughter, Lara. And they completely put things into perspective for me. If I'm feeling down about a grant not coming through or something, then all I need to do is be home in the loving and supportive environment that I have and it just all gets into perspective.

So yes, there's a lot actually, that's probably for most researchers, that's left off the professional resume, and that's really what I think we're saying - the support structure that I have from friends and family.

What's your favourite piece of music or song?

Oh, do you know what? I probably don't have a favourite favourite. Really, I'm so easily influenced by what's happening around me, and I'm so easily 'brain wormed' it's unbelievable. But my uni days are my go-to, so if I'm on clinic I'm listening to songs from the early 2000s or the noughties.

So that's my sort of playlist at work, during clinic. And it's things like Queens of the Stone Age or White Stripes. Oh, Seven Nation Army, by White Stripes. A classic that I can just go into and work to that song.

"I have finished my PhD officially now but the research doesn't stop because the PhD is finished. I'm exploring one of my own ideas a little bit further, to do with the oral microbiomes."

Dr Robert Reilly

Clinical Lecturer and Honorary StR in Oral Medicine, University of Glasgow

Dr Robert Reilly has been a Clinical Research Fellow at the Institute of Infection, Immunity and Inflammation since September 2017. He was awarded the Oral and Dental Research Trust Haleon Research Award to investigate Leukocyte Address Codes. In this interview he shares what winning the award meant to him and highlights his interests for future work.

> **"I think the most pertinent piece of advice I can give would be follow your curiosity."**

Can you tell us about your career to date?

I grew up in Perthshire in central Scotland and moved to Glasgow for my undergraduate dentistry degree, wahere I've stayed ever since. I'm now a clinical research fellow and honorary clinical fellow in oral medicine at the University of Glasgow. I am based between the main university campus and Glasgow Dental Hospital.

During my undergraduate dental degree that time I developed an interest in immunology and research. These interests stem from my undergraduate elective project investigating Sjögren's syndrome at the Forsyth Institute in Boston. It was exciting being at the forefront of innovation and learning how that can impact clinical care.

That was what spurred me on to pursue a career in clinical academia. Following graduation I completed my vocational training in Aberdeenshire and Dental Core Training in the West of Scotland in oral medicine, oral surgery and oral and maxillofacial surgery. During Core Training I successfully applied for, the Haleon ODRT award.

This was important as I was moving into my next role as a clinical research fellow at the University of Glasgow, which I started in September 2017.

Initially, this was a 2 year pump prime fellowship which gave me two years to develop a proposal for a full PhD funding. However, prior to the Haleon ODRT award, I had no funding for lab consumables and as such the experiments I would have been able to conduct were limited. During this fellowship I generated data and develop my research acumen in support of a full Clinical Research Fellowship application. I was successful in applying for a clinical research fellowship from the MRC in November 2018. I am now in the midst of my PhD.

What does winning the Haleon ODRT award mean to you?

Professionally the award was important for my career progression. I secured a salary to conduct research within the university; however, I didn't have any funding for lab consumables or other experimental costs. The Oral & Dental Research Trust Haleon award provided essential funding which allowed me to conduct a small study; investigating the chemokine landscape in human gingival tissue.

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Winner of the 2017 Haleon/ODRT Grants Programme

Mucosal Postcodes: understanding T Cell trafficking in the oral mucosa.

This was a key stepping-stone in developing a full PhD fellowship application. Personally, this was a significant accomplishment, and this was the first grant I'd applied for successfully. It's was encouraging to get recognition for the hard work that I put into the applcaion, especially when I was relatively new to applying for research funding.

What are the key moments that have driven your career success to date?

During my elective project it was immensely satisfying to conduct my research overseas, present this to my peers and seeing how it can impact clinical care. In addition, I was awarded a presentation prize for my work. It was the enjoyment of engaging in science, which has meaningful clinical applications, at multiple levels that can have meaningful application during this project that encouraged my to pursue a clinical academic career.

More recently, I presented at IADR last year, this was my first experience of presenting at an international scientific meeting. Again, it was initially a daunting prospect presenting at dental academia's biggest event, but also invigorating to and rewarding to discuss your work with others in your field and an experience I enjoyed.

Being awarded an MRC Clinical Research Training Fellowship is probably my biggest achievement to date. Despite this being a significant challenge the process of writing a fellowship proposal and being interviewed by leading clinical academics truly improved my understanding of my project and what funding bodies look for in a research proposal. Importantly it has given me the means to develop my research career and complete my PhD.

What's your advice to researchers who are looking to apply for awards such as the Haleon ODRT award?

The most pertinent piece of advice I can give would be follow your curiosity. If you're interested in something and feel you have an important question to ask and subsequently answer, then follow that curiosity. And by applying for something like this award, that's a really good way of doing that.

Try to find supervisors who have similar aligned scientific interests, and potentially clinical interests. They will then also help refine that question which will be beneficial in your application. Further to this will help identify the best ways of answering the scientific question with the resources available. Also have an idea also of where you would like your research career to take you that way you can

> **"It was really rewarding being at the forefront of innovation, I suppose, and seeing how that can impact clinical care."**

incorporate the work proposed for the Haleon ODRT as either pilot data for a fellowship application or as part of a larger project such as a PhD. For an award such as this, you don't have a lot of space to write your application, so have a well refined question to ask and subsequently answer, would be my advice.

What does the future hold for you?

I'm in the midst of my PhD, and I'm due to submit in early 2022. Following my PhD, I would like to continue my clinical training in oral medicine. But alongside that, I would love to remain in research for. Ultimately, my long-term goal is to become a clinician scientist, focusing on the immunology of the oral cavity and how it influences oral mucosal disease.

Tell us something about yourself that isn't in your professional resume?

When I do get a spare moment, I am an avid cyclist. I like throwing myself up as steep a hill as I can find on my bike. But perhaps more interesting then that, back in the heyday of my youth I represented Scottish schools in 100m sprinting.

What is your favourite piece of music and why?

Oh, this changes on a regular basis; however, a song which I've regarded as one of my favourites for a long time would be Graceland, by Paul Simon. For me, I think it's just such an uplifting and inspirational song, everyone should hear it at least once, in my opinion.

> **"Try to find supervisors who have similar aligned scientific interests, and potentially clinical interests."**

Dr Nadia Rostami

Research Associate, Newcastle University

Dr Nadia Rostami was born in Iran before moving to the UK. Currently working at Newcastle University as a Research Associate she shares her experience of receiving the Haleon ORDT award and reflects on her future career journey.

> **"My advice would be to choose your topic wisely and think about what motivates you, what you care about."**

Can you tell me about your career to date?

I am originally from Iran and came to the UK at the age of 19. I undertook my undergraduate and postgraduate studies at Newcastle University. I currently work as a Research Associate at the dental school in Dr Nick Jakubovics' lab.

What did it mean to you professionally and personally to be awarded the Haleon ORDT grants programme?

This was one of the best things that could happen to my career actually, because as a young scientist, you need to show that you are capable of bringing funding to a university to fund your research and also to fund students. The fact that this was in partnership with Haleon was great because it's always a challenge to get industry involved in research.

Winning the award boosted my CV a lot. Not just in terms of getting the grant but also being able to use this grant, because it didn't have a lot of the restrictions that other funds sometimes do. It allows you to use this money for your personal growth and your career development. It meant I had a bit of freedom to look at the field and see what I would need to advance in my career.

I didn't have any background programming or coding and this grant meant I was able to enrol in a course to learn how to do so. Acquiring new skills is essential to adapting to the way in which science is evolving.

What would you say have been the key moments in your career to date that have helped to drive your success?

I think one of the key moments was choosing the right career, the fact that I chose a path that excites me. When I finished my PhD, I tried to take the time to look where I would like to go next and what fields excited me. It's sometimes hard to keep your motivation up in science, especially academia, where you're measured by the publications you produce or the grants you bring in. So, that was one of the key moments, to basically get the career I want to go into. The small awards and grants and also the publications that came after that were really good for me.

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Winner of the 2017 Haleon/ODRT Grants Programme

Developing stable and accurate models for periodontal biofilm research.

What advice would you give to other scientists or dental professionals considering a career in research?

My advice would be to choose your topic wisely and think about what motivates you, what you care about. I think in the dental field we are quite lucky that there are a lot of things we can do and it's a huge issue. Dental caries and periodontitis affect most people in the world so we can do a lot with fairly simple interventions to improve the lives of both children and adults.

I think it's vital to make sure that you have your eye out for new advances and what's going on in industry. It is really good to find an industrial partner that is interested in what you do and then you can have a mutually beneficial relationship with them. One of the most rewarding moments is when you see the result of your research translate and gets to people. If you do other parts of basic science, like I did before during my PhD, that might take years and years and you might not even see the results. So, we are quite lucky in the dental and oral health research that the transfer time can be short, relative to other areas.

What advice would you give to people considering applying for grants such as the Haleon ORDT award?

To be honest, my advice is to not just apply for these grants to bring in additional money to your lab. Look at these small grants as opportunities to come up with a new project that can be run parallel to what you're doing already. Something you can get excited about and something you can see getting somewhere, but that you haven't had a chance to explore yet.

These grants give you a very rare opportunity that you don't have in academia. In a lot of our jobs, we are expected to know things and learn things by ourselves and master them. But sometimes you can't do that without professional help; these awards and small grants can be an opportunity to get that training and fix what is missing in your career and in your skill set.

What does the future hold for you now, Nadia?

This award has really boosted my CV. As early career scientists, we can't go for huge awards, but these small awards can show your capability. The other thing it does for you, it allows you to develop yourself as a scientist, go for what you didn't have, learn the techniques that you don't have in your toolbox.

Now, with publications and a track record of bringing in funding to university, I feel more confident applying for fellowships, which is something I wanted to do. I wanted to apply for fellowships, become an independent scientist and have my own small group. I think the next step is for me to apply for fellowships and try to go for a bigger grant and try to have my independent career.

Could you tell us something about yourself that we wouldn't find on your professional resume?

Something that is not on my resume is that I am freakishly strong. I can dead lift more than my body weight, so I think it should be on my resume! I do jiu-jitsu as a hobby. I'm a very small person and I have to be able to lift people off my chest, and it's a male dominated sport, so that requires a lot of strength. It takes a lot of being squashed by bigger people!

What is your favourite song or piece of music?

That's a really difficult question, because I have a whole bunch of them that are my favourite songs. But I think one of them that's very special to me is 'Is This Love?' by Bob Marley. It's because years ago, when I moved in together with my at-the-time boyfriend, he made me a mix tape and it had 'Is This Love?' as the first track. I remember we just moved into the house, there is a mess everywhere, and he puts the CD on and we started dancing. Bear in mind, my husband as he is now, cannot dance. He has two left feet. We did this really silly dance and it just remained in my memory and it was really nice, and I had a good time. So, we picked that for our first dance song at our wedding, and we danced to it, again terribly. But that song has a special place in my heart.

> **"Look into these small grants as opportunities to come up with a new project that can be parallel to what you're doing already."**

Dr Irundika Dias

Senior Lecturer, Aston Medical School

Dr. Irundika Dias is a Senior Lecturer in Aston Medical School, Birmingham. She is actively involved in research into pathobiology of periodontal disease: lipid oxidation, protein oxidation and analysis of oxidative stress markers. In this interview she shares her thoughts on the need for more scientists to be involved in oral health research.

> **"I was in the early stages of my career, so I was seriously excited, and really it was a really fantastic award to be won."**

Can you tell us about your career to date?

I'm a biochemist by training. I did my first biochemistry bachelor's degree at the University of Colombo, in Sri Lanka. Then I came to the UK to do a master's degree in immunology and medical genetics. My biochemistry research career started after university, whilst doing my PhD. After my PhD I stayed in Aston University as a post-doctoral researcher, and also as a research fellow, before becoming a lecturer.

What did it mean to you to win the Haleon ODRT award?

At that time, I was in the early stages of my career, so I was seriously excited, and it was a really fantastic award to win. And professionally it helped me a lot in my career to have this recognition. Getting this award, at that early career stage as a post doc, kind of stacked the stepping stone for me to get my next big grant from Kidney Research UK as an independent fellowship.

And that then lead to my current lectureship position, an academic position. So, it's been really great to win this award.

Reflecting on your career, what were some of the key moments that have helped drive your success?

I think being quite determined on what I want to achieve has helped. I did a master's project in the National Blood Service, so that also was a really key moment in getting into the PhD. And then during my PhD I got a few other grants, very small grants. This set my CV in a strong place to be able to apply for the Haleon ODRT award. The Haleon ODRT award, I think was the key moment in my career, because that gave me a really high value to my CV. And it's been catalytic, I think, to get into the next grant, and so on.

When it comes to research you do need to have support from your family, as well as support from your work colleagues. It's an area which, again, is another part that made me really successful to have the correct collaborators.

Professor Iain Chapple has been really amazing on the oral care side, and at Aston University, Professor Helen Griffiths was my mentor, and she's still my mentor. They have both been really important in guiding me.

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Winner of the 2013 Haleon/ODRT Grants Programme

Does the inflammatory lipid and proteome provide a unifying mechanism for increased co-morbitity between periodontal and chronic kidney diseases?

What advice would you give to other scientists or dental healthcare professionals that were considering entering into oral health research?

I would really encourage scientists to get involved in this field. When I first started in my early career in research there were not enough researchers going into oral health research in terms of basic scientist terms. We do really need to investigate why - it's not just the oral environment, but also the impact of what happens in the body and the systemic state that is really, really important.

So, I would encourage anybody to come into the field, and also to be determined about what they want to do, and not get discouraged by the things that are not working, or not being successful. Keep applying and then be focused on what you want to do and where you want to be.

What is your advice to scientists looking to apply for awards such as this?

Applying and winning a grant, big or small, is very difficult and very competitive. So, if you're the sole applicant I think you need to have strong evidence for the funder to show that you're the best for delivering that project. I would advise getting some preliminary data to support your application, and get a strong CV.

Additionally, it helps a lot if you're in a strong team with the correct collaborators, and with the right people to support your research idea, which gives a boost, or evidence to show that you're being supported by these other people, and you have their support to make the project a success.

Getting a team and the data in a good state is really important for anybody to apply.

"Getting a team and the data in a good state is really important for anybody to apply."

What does the future hold for you?

I joined Aston Medical School last year as a lecturer, so this is my first year being an academic. My ambition is to become an independent PR principle investigator with my own group. I'm now applying for PhD students and other post docs to be in the lab and get the project into another level.

Can you tell us some information about yourself that we wouldn't find on your CV?

I am a mother of two children. I had my first child when I was into my second year of my PhD. I am really proud that I managed to complete my PhD on time!

I would like to encourage women in science, and also women with families, and who'd like to have children, that they can still do both sides of life without a problem.

Is there a song or piece of music that is special to you?

I like the kind of songs that make me feel happy. This is really important when developing grants or applications as a sense of needing to be prepared can leave you feeling down. So I try to always listen to songs, anything that makes your spirits lift up.

Dr Svetislav Zaric

Lecturer/Honorary Consultant in Periodontology, Kings College London

Dr Svetislav Zaric moved to the UK from Serbia to complete his PhD in Periodontology. He has since worked in Aberdeen and Plymouth and is now Lecturer/ Honorary Consultant in Periodontology at King's College London.
In this interview he shares his experience of winning the Haleon ODRT award and provides advice for future applicants.

> So, my advice for the researchers, and obviously clinicians, is to try to make their research clinical development.

Can you tell us about your career to date?

I'm originally from Serbia, and I moved to the UK in 2007 to pursue my PhD in periodontology in Belfast and spent the following five years in Belfast. Then I moved to Aberdeen where I spent two years, and then from Aberdeen I got my current position in Plymouth in 2013. I'm currently a clinical senior lecturer in biomedical sciences at Peninsula Dental School in Plymouth University. And actually, from 31st August I will be moving to join King's College London where I have NIHR funding to undertake a role with 50% research and 50% speciality training in periodontology. It's really a unique opportunity for me to be able to do specialty training and to concentrate more on research.

Thinking back to the Haleon ODRT grants programme, what did it mean to you professionally and personally to win this award?

That was my first research grant as a principal investigator, and I think for most people that is a first grant, and you always keep that first grant close to your heart.
It was a very important milestone in my professional life. It gives you more self-esteem and it gives you more enjoyment in what you do because, as you probably know, research money is very tight nowadays. And especially for dental research. There is only a small pool of funding bodies that are willing to fund dental research. And as already mentioned, this was my first research grant as a principal investigator.

Also, I think the award gave me a jumpstart to my position here in Plymouth because I just got it when I moved from Aberdeen to Plymouth. And it gave me motivation to continue with research because my primary role in Plymouth was teaching. But I was really trying to protect my research time and the grant also gave my employers some perspective to protect some research time for me.

What would you say are the key moments that have driven your career success to date?

The first key moment was when I got my PhD scholarship from Belfast as that drove my move from Serbia to Belfast. And with all the family, that was a big step. And the next step for me was to get my clinical degree recognised

Winner of the 2013 Haleon/ODRT Grants Programme

Subgingival plaque lipid - a profile as a bacterially derived biomarker for chronic periodontitis.

in this country as Serbia is not a member of the EU. I had to go through many hoops to get my diploma recognised. This meant the next step was the ORE exam because before that I was only able to do non-clinical research.

After passing the ORE and getting the full GDC registration I embarked onto more translational and clinical research. And the third step is my first research grant - the Haleon ODRT award. It really gave me reassurance that what I was doing at that time was important to someone else, apart from me obviously. And that ideas are clinically important, and can give some clinically relevant results in order to improve patient care.

What advice would you give to other dental professionals, and scientists, that are considering entering oral health research?

My first piece of advice is to make sure you enjoy what you're doing. There is no real point doing something that you cannot actually put all of yourself into. And more importantly is to enjoy what you're doing. Even the most challenging tasks seem more achievable as long as you enjoy what you're doing.

Oral research is quite a niche and dental research is a small world - almost everybody knows everybody. It is a nice group of people that usually work together in a nice way.

And because dental diseases are very wide spread diseases, there is a genuine opportunity to improve people's life with your research. And I urge all of the scientists and clinicians in the dental and oral research field to make their research translational. Because if the research is not really aiming to improve people's lives and patient care I don't see the point of that research. We are here to improve the patient journey, and to improve their oral health. So, my advice for the researchers, and obviously clinicians, is to try to make their research clinical development.

What advice would you give to researchers that are looking to apply for grants or awards such as the Haleon ODRT programme?

So, first thing is always to try to find time for research, because research cannot really be done ad hoc. And that is what I realised at a very early stage of my career. Research takes time, and nothing happens overnight in research so be patient and always look for more research grants and more calls. And don't be shy or worried to apply. I don't know the exact statistics, but probably you have to apply maybe for ten calls or grants in order to get one.

Sometimes it can be very demoralising because you spend a lot of your time and effort preparing your grant applications, and sometimes the feedback is going to be one line. Thank you very much for your application but we have received many more applications than we are able to fund. And that is usually their feedback.

Protect your research time, always try to find maybe smaller funding bodies which are not widely known to start with, to get some good publications, preliminary results. You can then apply for larger grants later on.

Always try to surround yourself with people who motivate you, and people who you can always ask for feedback about your application process. Because every grant is not usually done by an individual, that is usually a group grant. And having those people who are supportive around you, and who value what you're doing is very important.

What does the future hold for you?

Well I was in Aberdeen after my PhD, and Plymouth now and both of these positions were predominately teaching based. Most of my time used to be spent in teaching and organising teaching and quality assurance. And now I want to focus on my clinical development, and spend more time trying to develop my research portfolio. And that is why I decided to pursue this, and to take the opportunity at Kings.

What I would like to do is finish my specialty training and become a consultant. Then I would still like to stay in academia, because of my research background, teaching background, and hopefully my clinical experience that will come with my specialist training. I think these three are perfect combination for an academic career.

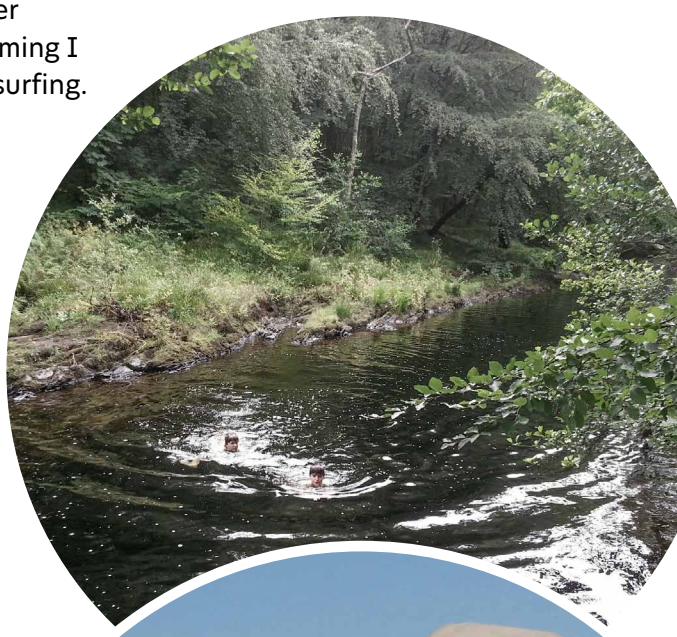
But I would also like to spend more time treating patients because in academia you usually spend most of your time teaching students how to treat patients. But my ideal career in the future would be mainly one or two days in a private practice, and three or four days in academia. I hope that I'll be able to make it in three or four years, after I finish my specialist training.

Would you be able to share something about yourself that we wouldn't find on your CV?

I'm a keen wild swimmer and I try to swim in every water that I'm passing by or that I see. Having lived in the South West for the last six years, has probably improved my wild swimming skills. I belong to the Devon Wild Swimming Society, and we swim throughout the year every Thursday evening and Saturday morning no matter the weather. And so that is something I like doing. I usually enjoy water sports so apart from swimming I also do a little bit of windsurfing.

What is your favourite song or piece of music?

I started playing the harp about two years ago so I'm still a beginner. I used to take lessons, now I'm trying to teach myself. I like classical music and my favourite piece is Carmina Burana from Carl Orff. It is very energetic and uplifting so whenever I'm a little bit down I like to listen to that piece of music. And it always puts me back to the right mood.



"Protect your research time, always try to find maybe smaller funding bodies which are not widely known to start with."

Haleon - ODRT Grants Programme
Past Winners

2025 Winners

Samaneh Keshavarz
UoB

"to develop an antimicrobial peptide (AMP)-containing mouthrinse for post-operative use for periodontitis patients" £ 7,500

Guiseppe Mainas
KCL

"to test if a fasting-mimicking diet can influence the systemic and periodontal response following nonsurgical periodontal therapy" £ 7,500

Haiyang Xu
KCL

"to investigate whether vitamin D signalling is downregulated in patients with inflammatory bowel disease and periodontitis compared with systemically healthy patients" £ 7,500

Jiangyue Lu
KCL

"to explore how IL10 host genetic variants influence the composition and function of the oral-gut microbiota axis in periodontitis" £ 7,200

Alexander Creswell-Boyles
UPlymouth

"to develop a reproducible, biomimetic artificial dentine model to ethically and effectively replace extracted human teeth in dental materials testing" £ 3,500

2024 Winners

Dr Annika Kroeger
University of Birmingham

"Overcoming the major challenges of current gold-standards in multi-omic sequencing"

Dr Dean Wash
Warwick University

"Validating in-vitro endotracheal tube (IVETT) biofilm model by demonstrating that intact human saliva microbiomes can be cultivated"

Dr Emily Lu
Kings College London

"To investigate whether the biological effects of platelet-rich fibrin (PRF) could be further enhanced by extracorporeal treatment of whole blood"

Dr Dario Balacco
University of Birmingham

"Characterising the oral microbiome associated with chronic wounds and scarring in Dystrophic Epidermolysis Bullosa: a pilot study".

Ms Malee Nagi
University of Birmingham

"Identifying mechanisms of F. nucleatum biofilm inhibition by interruption of quorum sensing (QS), and associated subspecies differences in membrane protein expression.

Dr Joanna Monteiro
Sheffield University

"Development and evaluation of a child oral health-related quality of life (OHRQoL) measure of dentine hypersensitivity (DH) specific to children with molar incisor hypomineralisation (MIH)".

2023 Winners

Ms Antonia Cutts
University of Sheffield

Miss Hessah Alotaibi
University College London

Dr Nicole Thomas
University of Plymouth

Dr Noha Zoheir
Guy's Hospital

Mr Richard Boyle
University of Dundee

2022 Winners

Waraf Al-yasneen
University of Cardiff

Alice Hamilton
Dundee Dental Hospital & School

Lauren Matthews
University of Birmingham

Maria Muchova
University of Birmingham

Zhain Mustufvi
Leeds Dental Institute

Klaudia Slowik
University of Sheffield

Satnam Virdee
University of Birmingham

2021 Winners

Diana Abduallah
University of Birmingham

Nathanael Leung
University of Surrey

Jennifer Malcolm
University of Glasgow

Bryan Murchie
University of Newcastle

Pasquale Santamaria
KCL

2020 Winners

Dr A Kroeger
University of Birmingham

Dr R Bolt
Sheffield University

Dr V C N Neves
KCL

Dr D S Raindi
University of Birmingham

Ms V Wilson
Dental Hygienist/Therapist Practice-Based

2019 Winners

Ryan Kean
Glasgow Caledonian University

Christopher Dowson
Newcastle University

Alexandra Perks
Birmingham Dental Hospital

Haleon - ODRT Grants Programme
Past Winners

Eric Thorand
Edinburgh

2018 Winners

Priya Bahal
KCL

Craig Cutler
Plymouth University

Xutao Deng
UCLAN

Isuru Muthukidaarachi
Sheffield

Ajit Tanday
Birmingham

2017 Winners

Dr Martha Paisi
Postdoctoral Research Fellow, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Plymouth University

Ms. Ana Poveda
Lecturer in Oral Medicine, University of Birmingham

Ms. Cher Farrugia
PhD student, University of Sheffield

Mr. Joshua Twigg
PhD Student/Honorary Senior House Officer, Cardiff University

Ms Nadia Rostami
School of Dental Sciences, University of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne

Mr Robert Reilly
Clinical Research Fellow (Immunology), Glasgow Dental School

2015 Winners

M Blagojevic
Kings College London

Characterisation of candidalysin as a novel antimicrobial peptide (£5,750)

Simona Iancu
Kings College London

Role of Fusobacterium nucleatum FadA and FAD-I in activating epithelium cells (£4,030)

Gerry McKenna
Queens University Belfast

Manufacture and testing of an oral biosensor capable of diagnosing and monitoring peri-implantitis in the oral environment (£4,030)

Jamie Toole
Queens University Belfast

Silver nanoparticle treatment Fusobacterium nucleatum in an in-vitro model of peri-implantitis (£6,300)

Sian Walley
University of Liverpool

To determine the extent to which sugar consumption behaviour in preschool children is affected by ego-depletion in the caregiver and / or the child (£4,290)

2014 Winners

Louise Belfield
Plymouth University

Modulation of ostreoclast differentiation and activity by induction of endotoxin intolerance (£5,900)

Margaret Mullin
University of Liverpool

Developing an intervention using automated cognitive processes activates by cues (situational features) or rewards to reduce inequalities in dental preventive visiting (£6,203)

Mark Payne
Barts and the London

Transmissibility of a dysbiotic oral commensal microbiome and associated alveolar bone loss (£6,322)

Praveen Sharma
University of Birmingham

Effect of intensive periodontal therapy on systemic inflammatory markers in patients with chronic kidney disease: A randomised controlled trial (£5,000)

Philippa White
University of Birmingham

Neurophil Extracellular Traps in Periodontitis (£4,170)

2013 Winners

Dr Irundika Dias
Aston University

Does the inflammatory lipid and proteome provide a unifying mechanism for increased co-morbitity between periodontal and chronic kidney diseases? (£6,315)

Kirsty Sands
Cardiff University

Proteomics of endotracheal tubes and saliva from mechanically ventilated patients: association with ventilator associated pneumonia (£6,500)

Mr Svetislav Zaric
Peninsula Dental School, Plymouth University

Subgingival plaque lipid - A profile as a bacterially derived biomarker for chronic periodontitis (£5,952)

Lindsay O'Donnell
University of Glasgow Dental School

Development of a novel antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory oral healthcare product to prevent or treat periodontal disease (£6,450)

Leighann Sherry
University of Glasgow

Evaluating outcomes of denture stomatitis patients: impact of denture cleaners and biological properties of Candida spp (£3,283

2012 Winners

Joanna Batt
University of Birmingham

The influence of implant-derived Ti ions and particles on peri-implant epithelial cell responses (£6300)

Kathryn Naylor
University of Sheffield

Investigation of the molecular mechanisms of human cell interactions of the keystone periodontal pathogen P.gingivalis (£6,150)

Paola J Marino
Cardiff University

The role of dental plaque in development of endo-trachial tube biofilms and ventilator-associated pneumonia. (£6,300)

Rachel Williams
Newcastle University

Identification of global gene expression changes in response to novel pro-inflammatory signals in gingival fibroblasts (£6,458)

Peter Day
Leeds University

Life course determinants of dental caries in 3 year old children: a pilot study (£3,176)

2011 Winners

John Butcher
University of Glasgow

Characterisation of T cell differentiation in response to the periodontal pathogen Porthyromonas gingivalis (£6,425)

Michael Spencer
University of Sheffield

Viral bio-prospecting in the oral cavity: the search for bacteriophage specific for periodontal pathogens (£3,609)

Dr K Askimakopoulou
Kings College London

The effects of individualised risk communication on adherence with periodontal treatment (£6,500)

Dr Prachi Stafford
University of Sheffield

Phosphorproteomics of the oral epithelial cells following infection with the oral pathogens Porphyromonas gingivalis and Tannerella forsythia (£6,431)

Raja Azman Raja Awang
University of Glasgow

What is the role of IL-33 in periodontal disease? (£6,500)

2010 Winners

Simon Stone
University of Newcastle

Investigating the cost effectiveness of providing hygiene phase therapy to patients with desquamative gingivitis (£2,373)

Rupert Austin
Kings College London

An investigation into the potential for fluoride varnishes and a dental bonding agent to provide protection to enamel from multi-factorial tooth wear in vitro (£1,350)

Dr KM Jaedicke
University of Newcastle

Adipokins as novel salivary biomarkers in periodontal disease and diabetes (£6,498)

The Haleon/ODRT Grants Programme – how to apply

The Haleon/ODRT Grants Programme provides small grants to support research programmes into the fundamental mechanisms, prevention and management of plaque-related oral disease or tooth wear.

A limited number of grants are available up to a maximum of £7,500 per award.

Applications should comprise:

- No more than two sides of A4 giving the background to and detail of the proposed research programme,
- 1 side of A4 detailing and justifying the financial expenditure, and
- Full details of the applicant.

Applications should be submitted electronically to **Ms. Marie Jones** at **m.e.jones@bham.ac.uk** who will acknowledge receipt of your application. If no acknowledgement is received please contact Ms Jones. Safe receipt of applications is the responsibility of the applicant. If you are unable to provide evidence of receipt ODRT will not accept that a submission has been made.

This programme is designed to assist with career development for early career research workers, applicants should therefore be pre-doctoral or within five years of receiving their Doctorate. A statement to that effect should be incorporated in the application.

The Oral and Dental Research Trust is now an NIHR non-commercial Partner and as such studies funded by this scheme are eligible for consideration for inclusion onto the NIHR portfolio.

HALEON

A world-leading consumer health company with a clear purpose to deliver **better everyday health with humanity.**

Haleon is a health company that brings together deep human understanding and trusted science.

For Health **with Humanity**