

# Connective Issues:

## BSMB Newsletter



### Committee:

Prof John Couchman (Chair), Prof Kim Midwood (Secretary),  
Dr Tom van Agtmael (Treasurer), Ms. Laura Collins (Student rep),  
Dr Michal Dudek (Post doc rep), Dr Giovanna Nalesso,  
Dr Stephen Robinson, Prof Steph Dakin, Prof Jerry Turnbull,  
Dr Kasia Pirog, Dr Blandine Poulet and Dr Maria Fragiadaki

Registered Charity no. 281399

No. 97, July 2020

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## Editorial

Welcome to the 97<sup>th</sup> Connective Issues. I'm not sure how to comment on events since our last BSMB newsletter, other than to hope that all of you have been keeping safe and well, and adjusting to new challenges of life at home, in the clinic or in Covid-19 research labs. Sadly as a result of the pandemic many international matrix meetings planned for Summer and Autumn 2020 have been postponed. However, there is still plenty going on! As we dust off our pipettes and try to remember where we left everything in the lab, why not consider:

- Registering for the completely **FREE BSMB Autumn meeting**. With a programme packed full of first class speakers from all over the world, you can sign up from July 13<sup>th</sup> at <https://bsmb.ac.uk>. Abstract submission will also open on this date - there will be more talks than ever allocated to selected abstracts at this online meeting.
- Applying for the **John Scott Young Investigators Award**. This prestigious event will also be held at the Autumn 2020 meeting. You can find out more below and apply now by visiting the website.
- Joining the **BSMB committee**. We are seeking to elect one new member this year so if you have a passion for Matrix Biology and want to get more involved in the Society, do consider a nomination.
- Taking part in the **BSMB survey**. We are asking for your opinions on our Spring and Autumn meetings. Details are below – now is your chance to have your say...

We look forward to seeing you online in September!

*Kim Midwood, Honorary Secretary*

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## Chair's Letter

First, I hope that all our members have kept well and managed to make the most of a uniquely difficult period. For sure, normal research activity came to an abrupt halt, and still has a long way to go before normality returns. There are some challenges ahead for the university sector, and perhaps also for research funding in our area. The BSMB has been affiliated with the Royal Society of Biology for many years, and it is encouraging to see that they are very actively engaged in supporting the biology community, not least as a key advocate to government. For now, we hope that covid-19 incidence keeps declining, allowing all those things we used to take for granted to slowly return.

This is not how an anniversary should be celebrated! The BSMB reached a milestone this year, and we had planned to celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. However, the coronavirus has changed everything for everyone and as you will be aware, our April meeting in Guildford was a casualty. We are very grateful to Giovanna Nalesso for all her work in the preparations for the meeting, but also in the aftermath of its cancellation. In the first week of June, the BSMB Committee met by Zoom to discuss the next meetings. Given the uncertainties of the next few months, it was clear that the best option for our autumn meeting was to move to a virtual format. We thank Tom van Agtmael, Rachel Lennon and Fabio Quondamatteo for responding to the current situation and preparing for this meeting. Please support the meeting (which will be free to registrants) and enjoy some excellent science. Details can be found on the pages below of the newsletter.

Our constitution demands that the Society holds an AGM once per year. We shall, therefore, make time on the autumn meeting schedule for this event. We again ask our members to participate in this important and necessary meeting. We remain hopeful that as we move into 2021, normal BSMB meetings can be held once more. Our plan, therefore, is to hold our spring meeting at St. Catherine's College in Oxford, a venue that we have used previously and is ideal for our requirements. Steph Dakin will organise this meeting (April 12/13) and an excellent programme is taking shape. Please make a note of the dates and make a plan to come to Oxford next spring. If all goes well it will be a really enjoyable chance to catch up, in person, with colleagues and friends, and at the same time, enjoy the science and celebrate 40 years of the BSMB (or British Connective Tissue Society as it was). On that note, we are very pleased to include a short piece in the newsletter from Doreen Ashhurst, one of the founders of our Society.

Very best wishes to all members.

*John Couchman, Chair*

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## **Mark your diary**

**BSMB Autumn 2020 Meeting**  
"University of Glasgow"  
Online meeting  
September 1-3 2020

**BSMB Spring 2021 Meeting**  
University of Oxford  
April 12-13 2021

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## **BSMB News**

### **BSMB Autumn 2020 meeting:**

#### **Basement Membranes in Health & Disease**

**Tue 1st -Thurs 3rd September 2020**

It is our great pleasure to invite you to attend this online meeting. The conference will be held over three afternoons from 2pm -5.30pm each day, and will include sessions covering diverse topics such as matrix organogenesis and development, matrix secretion, assembly and turnover, and basement membranes in health and disease, together with the John Scott Young Investigators Award and lecture.

Selected abstracts will also be awarded presentation slots in each session to encourage younger investigators to participate. There will be up to 23 talks awarded to submitted abstracts. Please see details below for confirmed speakers and the programme.

**Chairs:** Tom Van Agtmael, Rachel Lennon,  
Fabio Quondamatteo

#### **Key dates:**

- Registration opens July 13<sup>th</sup> 2020
- Registration closes September 1<sup>st</sup> 2020
- Abstract submission opens July 13<sup>th</sup> and will close 14<sup>th</sup> August 2020
- Oral presentation notification: 18<sup>th</sup> August 2020

For further information and to register, please visit: <https://bsmb.ac.uk>.

You can also follow us on...

**Instagram:** [@matrixbiologyuk](#)

**Twitter:** [@BSMB1](#)

**Facebook:** [@BritishSocietyForMatrixBiology](#)

## The origins of the BSMB

The development of techniques which enabled the characterization of collagens and matrix glycoproteins (mucopolysaccharides) led to the formation of the Collagen and Mucopolysaccharide Clubs in the late 1960s. Many researchers belonged to both Clubs as the interdependence of these molecules was quickly appreciated. In the 1970s after much deliberation it was agreed that the clubs should combine to found a connective tissue society. Thus, on 19 September 1980 the British Connective Tissue Society held its inaugural meeting at University College, London.

The Society started with a ready-made membership which rose to 500 in 5 years. Its funds were meagre at first, but subscriptions were kept low at £5, £2 for students. Attendance at meetings was free to members. Two meetings of 1½ days were held each year, a format that continues to be followed. The meetings were organized by members and usually held at their place of work as frequently the facilities were then “free of charge”. The organizers raised external funds to support special speakers, including some from abroad. In 1986 the Society hosted the FECTS meeting in Manchester and this proved great boost for the Society. From this time onwards the Society continued to hold successful meetings which became more ambitious in scope. Joint meetings were held with Societies, such, as the British Society for Cell Biology and the Biochemical Society, to name but two!

To celebrate the first 25 years a short history of the Society, “The First 25 Years”, was written by Allen Bailey and myself. A glance at the topics covered in these years illustrates the broad interests of the members and also how the Society aimed to cover the latest

developments in all the relevant aspects of matrix research. For example, in 1982 a meeting entitled “Collagen research and recombinant DNA/RNA technology” was held at York. At this time DNA/RNA technology was a mystery to most members! Over the years new molecules were characterized and their prominence at meetings came and went! Looking over the lists of committee members and meetings in “The First 25 Years”, I am reminded of many people who appear as organizers of these meetings or committee members and wonder what has happened to them. The majority will have retired, and many will have died, but without their willing commitment the Society could not have become the successful Society that it is today!

Doreen E. Ashhurst

## BSMB Spring Meeting 2021



We are very excited to announce our BSMB Spring 2021 meeting will take place at St Catherine's College, University of Oxford on 12-13<sup>th</sup> April 2021. The meeting, organised by Prof Stephanie Dakin will focus on disease mechanisms and translational solutions for the theme 'Inflammation, Fibrosis, Resolution and the Matrix'. The meeting also features the Fell-Muir Lecture awarded to Prof Andrew Pitsillides. This meeting will celebrate 40 years of BSMB, what better way to celebrate by joining us!

Steph Dakin

## WELCOME TO NEW BSMB MEMBERS!

### Student members

Majid Almansouri (Sheffield)  
Rebecca Horne (Liverpool)  
Oliver McClurg (Liverpool)  
Matthew Markham (UEA)  
Krittee Dejong (Manchester)  
Qiao Tong (Bristol)  
Yuan Yan Sin (Glasgow)  
Matteo Calligaris (Pisa)

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### In print!

**In Prep:** Abstracts from the Norwich BSMB Autumn meeting 2019 will be in print soon in the International Journal of Experimental Pathology.

**In Print:** “ADAMTS-5: A difficult teenager turning 20” by Salvatore Santamaria, winner of the 2019 John Scott Young Investigators award, is now in print in the International Journal of Experimental Pathology.

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### BSMB Committee news

#### Welcome to our new committee member



### Dr Maria Fragiadaki

I trained as a molecular biologist and was originally interested in understanding the causes of kidney scarring. During my PhD (2005-2009), at Imperial College London, I discovered a protein, known as CUX1, which binds the collagen promoter (COL1A2) and causes suppression of type I collagen production in renal epithelial cells. As a young post-doctoral scientist, I was involved in researching a number of extracellular matrix components including Transforming Growth Factor  $\beta$  and Connective Tissue Growth Factor. During this time, I presented my work widely, published in high-ranking journals and received numerous awards, including Best Renal Young Scientist (2008), the Renal Association's Lockwood Award (2009) and the Centenary Poster Prize from the Biochemical Society (2010).

In 2013 I joined the MRC Centre for Developmental and Biomedical Genetics, based at the University of Sheffield, to discover new regulators of the immune-regulatory JAK/STAT signalling pathway by functionally scanning the genome using siRNA libraries in *Drosophila*. My work was recognised by the award of the Thomas-Berry and Simpson University of Sheffield Fellowship in 2013. I was then awarded an Intermediate Fellowship from Kidney Research UK in 2015. These academic positions were built upon recognition of my research achievements at the interface of cell and molecular pathobiology enabling me to build a strong international reputation in fields spanning from kidney fibrosis to vascular pathology. This is epitomised by several key discoveries on proliferative signalling mediators of renal cancer, polycystic kidney disease and renal fibrosis<sup>1-5</sup>. The international standing of my research is also emphasised by a *Nature Review Cardiology* article depicting some of our findings in a model<sup>6</sup>.

This research background was recognised by the award of a Springboard Fellowship from the Academy of Medical Sciences in 2018, which enabled me to establish my research group. I was promoted to group leader of Cardio-Renal Science in 2020.

I am looking forward to meeting everyone during the next three years serving as a committee member of the British Society for Matrix Biology.

### Key references

- 1 Fisher, K. H. Fragiadaki, M. *et al.* A genome-wide RNAi screen identifies MASK as a positive regulator of cytokine receptor stability. *J Cell Sci* **131**, doi:10.1242/jcs.209551 (2018).
- 2 Fragiadaki, M. *et al.* STAT5 drives abnormal proliferation in autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease. *Kidney Int* **91**, 575-586, doi:10.1016/j.kint.2016.10.039 (2017).
- 3 Fragiadaki, M. & Zeidler, M. P. Ankyrin repeat and single KH domain 1 (ANKHD1) drives renal cancer cell proliferation via binding to and altering a subset of miRNAs. *J Biol Chem* **293**, 9570-9579, doi:10.1074/jbc.RA117.000975 (2018).
- 4 Fragiadaki, M. *et al.* High doses of TGF-beta potently suppress type I collagen via the transcription factor CUX1. *Mol Biol Cell* **22**, 1836-1844, doi:10.1091/mbc.E10-08-0669 (2011).
- 5 Fragiadaki, M. *et al.* Interstitial fibrosis is associated with increased COL1A2 transcription in AA-injured renal tubular epithelial cells in vivo. *Matrix Biol* **30**, 396-403, doi:10.1016/j.matbio.2011.07.004 (2011).
- 6 Souilhol, C. *et al.* Endothelial responses to shear stress in atherosclerosis: a novel role for developmental genes. *Nat Rev Cardiol*, doi:10.1038/s41569-019-0239-5 (2019).

### Contact Details:

Dr Maria Fragiadaki, The University of Sheffield  
[m.fragiadaki@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:m.fragiadaki@sheffield.ac.uk)

### Join the committee!

We are seeking a new member for the BSMB committee.

Any current member in good standing is eligible. Committee members formulate policy and have a major responsibility for organising BSMB meetings. It is expected that each Committee

member will take a major part in planning and organising one BSMB meeting during their tenure, be available to attend most Committee meetings, but also to attend occasional further meetings. Should more nominations than vacancies be received, an election may be held. Nominees should send a CV to the BSMB Secretary, Kim Midwood. Appointees become BSMB Trustees. It is recommended that those interested read BSMB Constitution and trustee status ([www.bsmb.ac.uk](http://www.bsmb.ac.uk)).

Closing date: August 14<sup>th</sup> 2019. Enquiries to Kim Midwood or John Couchman.

### One BSMB meeting, or two?

As you all know we have always run two BSMB meetings per year, one in Spring and one in Autumn. We are seeking your opinion now on the frequency of these meetings. We welcome all feedback, and would particularly like to hear from student and post doc members too. The survey will take only 2 minutes to complete. Please follow the link below and respond:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/RLGSQ7J>

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### News from the International Society for Matrix Biology

All of the major international conferences supported by ISMB in 2020 have been affected by the covid-19 pandemic.



MBE2020, initially due to take place in May 2020 and then postponed to October 2020, will now be moved to 2022. Precise dates will be released in the near future.

The ASMB Biannual conference of Nov. 2020 has been postponed to September 12-15, 2021, at the Hyatt Regency at the Arch, St. Louis, MO.

The 12th Pan-Pacific Connective Tissue Societies Symposium will take place on the scheduled dates, Nov 22-26, 2020, but will now be a virtual meeting. See <https://ppctss2020.smalltalkevents.com.au/> for information.

ISMB will be in contact with anyone who has been awarded a 2020 ISMB international travel award for any of these conferences or other 2020 matrix biology conferences that have been cancelled or delayed.

Our international travel award scheme is open for applications for conference travel due to take place in 2021. The next deadlines are Oct. 1, 2020 and Jan. 1, 2021.

Jo Adams

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## **BSMB AUTUMN 2020 MEETING**

### **Basement Membranes in Health & Disease**

**Tue 1st -Thurs 3rd September 2020  
ONLINE MEETING**

**Chairs:** Tom Van Agtmael, Rachel Lennon,  
Fabio Quondamatteo

This conference will be held online and is free of charge. It will take place over three afternoons from 2pm -5.30pm each day, and will include sessions covering diverse topics such as matrix organogenesis and development, matrix secretion, assembly and turnover, and basement membranes in health and disease, together with the John Scott Lecture and Young Investigators Award.

Selected abstracts will also be awarded presentation slots in each session to encourage younger investigators to participate. There will be up to 23 talks awarded to submitted abstracts. Abstracts can be on any topic of basement membrane and matrix biology to be selected for an oral presentation. The selection panel will make decisions based on the quality of the science.

Our host of internationally renowned speakers are already confirmed and ready to go. This will be a great opportunity to catch up with colleagues in the field and find out what is new in Basement Membrane research and beyond.

- Registration opens July 13<sup>th</sup> 2020
- Registration closes September 1<sup>st</sup> 2020
- Abstract submission opens July 13<sup>th</sup> and will close 14<sup>th</sup> August 2020
- Oral presentation notification: 18<sup>th</sup> August 2020

For further information and to register, please visit: <https://bsmb.ac.uk>.

## Programme

### Day 1: Tuesday September 1

|                  |  |                    |
|------------------|--|--------------------|
| <b>2.00-3.30</b> | <b>SESSION 1 Matrix, Organogenesis and Development</b>   |                    |
| <b>Chair</b>     | <b>Tom Van Agtmael</b>                                   |                    |
| 2.00-2.30        | Florence Ruggiero (University of Lyon)                   |                    |
| 2.30 -3.00       | Short presentation from abstracts                        | TBC 5x flash talks |
| 3.00-3.30        | Sally Horne-Badovinac (University of Chicago)            |                    |
| <b>3.30-4.00</b> | <b>BREAK</b>   |                    |
| <b>4.00-5.30</b> | <b>SESSION 2 Matrix secretion, assembly and turnover</b> |                    |
| <b>Chair</b>     | <b>Rachel Lennon</b>                                     |                    |
| 4.00-4.30        | David Stephens (University of Bristol)                   |                    |
| 4.30-5.00        | Short Presentation from abstracts                        | TBC 5x flash talks |
| 5.00-5.30        | David Sherwood (Duke University, North Carolina)         |                    |

### Day 2 Wednesday September 2

|                  |   |                    |
|------------------|---|--------------------|
| <b>1.00-1.45</b> | <b>BSMB AGM</b>   |                    |
| <b>2.00-3.30</b> | <b>SESSION 3 ECM and Basement membranes in health and disease</b> |                    |
| <b>Chair</b>     | <b>Fabio Quondamatteo</b>   |                    |
| 2.00-2.30        | Kevin Hamill (University of Liverpool)                            |                    |
| 2.30-3.00        | Short Presentation from abstracts                                 | TBC 5x flash talks |
| 3.00-3.30        | Lydia Sorokin (Munster)   |                    |
| <b>3.30-4.00</b> | <b>Break</b>  |                    |
| <b>4.00-5.30</b> | <b>Session 4 Matrix secretion, assembly and turnover</b>          |                    |



|              |  |                    |
|--------------|--|--------------------|
| <b>Chair</b> | <b>Tom Van Agtmael</b>                             |                    |
| 4.00-4.30    | Ambra Pozzi (Vanderbilt Medical Center, Nashville) |                    |
| 4.30-5.00    | Short Presentation from abstracts                  | TBC 5x flash talks |
| 5.00-5.30    | Karl Kadler (University of Manchester)             |                    |

**Day 3 Thursday September 3**

|                  |  |                    |
|------------------|--|--------------------|
| <b>2.00-3.00</b> | <b>BSMB Young Investigator Award: Chair: John Couchman</b>             |                    |
| 2.00-2.45        | Award presentation TBC   |                    |
| 2.45-3.00        | <b>BREAK</b>   |                    |
| <b>3.00-5.00</b> | <b>SESSION 4 ECM and Basement membranes in health and disease</b>      |                    |
| <b>Chair</b>     | <b>Rachel Lennon</b>   |                    |
| 3:00-3.30        | Alex Nystrom (University of Freiburg)                                  |                    |
| 3:30-3.45        | Short Presentation from abstracts                                      | TBC 3x flash talks |
| 3.45-4.15        | Taina Pihlajaniemi (University of Oulu)                                |                    |
| 4.15-4.45        | Jeffery Miner (Washington University, St Louis)                        |                    |
| 4.45-5.00        | <b>Presentation of Prizes and close of Meeting: Tom, Rachel, Fabio</b> |                    |

## **BSMB Meetings in 2021**

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### **Spring 2021 Meeting**

University of Oxford

April 12-13<sup>th</sup> 2021

**Inflammation, fibrosis, resolution  
and the matrix**

*Organised by Steph Dakin*

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### **Autumn 2021 Meeting**

The joint BSMB - Harden Conference meeting on Proteoglycans planned for 2021, organized by Jerry Turnbull, and supported by the Biochemical Society, has been postponed until Autumn 2023. Watch this space for news of new plans for Autumn 2021.

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### **The John Scott Lecture and Young Investigator Award**

The “Young Investigator Award” is a prestigious award presented annually to an early career researcher who has made a significant contribution to matrix biology and has excelled in the early stages of their research career. Following the generous bequest from the estate of Professor John Scott (1931-2012), the winner of the Young Investigator Award will be presented with a

cheque for £1000, and will deliver the ‘John Scott Lecture’ at this year’s Autumn meeting.

Early career researchers up to the age of 36 are encouraged to apply.

NB: The application deadline for the 2020 award is the 14<sup>th</sup> August 2020

For application rules and how to enter visit <https://bsmb.ac.uk/media/uploads/2018/09/26/young-investigator-award.pdf>

For Further information contact [j.whiteford@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:j.whiteford@qmul.ac.uk).

## **BSMB Bursaries**

### **Bursaries for the BSMB meeting in Oxford**

Applications are invited for a bursary to attend the BSMB Spring meeting to be held in Oxford, 2021. Up to £250 can be claimed.

For more details, please follow the link below:

<https://bsmb.ac.uk/page/reporter-bursaries/>

Qing-Jun Meng

Chair of the BSMB Bursary Committee.

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## Current BSMB Committee

Chairman, Prof. John Couchman  
University of Copenhagen;  
[john.couchman@bric.ku.dk](mailto:john.couchman@bric.ku.dk)

Honorary Secretary, Prof. Kim Midwood  
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Honorary Treasurer, Dr. Tom Van Agtmael  
University of Glasgow;  
[tom.vanagtmael@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:tom.vanagtmael@glasgow.ac.uk)

### Elected Members:

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**SEE YOU ONLINE IN SEPTEMBER!**



 **MANCHESTER**  
1824  
The University of Manchester

**Virtual Meeting**  
**BASEMENT MEMBRANES IN  
HEALTH AND DISEASE**  
1st - 3rd Sep 2020 Glasgow, UK

**Chairs**  
Tom Van Agtmael  
Rachel Lennon  
Fabio Quondamatteo

**Speakers**  
Kevin Hamill (ULIV), Sally Horne-Badovinac (UofC), David Stephens (UOB),  
David Sherwood (DU), Taina Pihlajaniemi (OU),  
Lydia Sorokin (WWU), Florence Ruggiero (UDL),  
Karl Kadler (UOM), Alex Nystrom (UCF),  
Ambra Pozzi (VUMC), Jeffery Miner (WUSTL).

**REGISTRATION and ABSTRACT SUBMISSION  
OPENS ON JULY 13<sup>th</sup> 2020**