



Newsletter

Spring 2019, Issue 4

Welcome to the ORCADES Newsletter!

Thanks for taking part in the Orkney Complex Disease Study - ORCADES

It's been a while since we were last in touch and we've got some updates for you. This newsletter provides details on new funding, an award for our Principal Investigator Jim Wilson, the recent Orkney Science Festival, and some research we have conducted thanks to your involvement!

You may have also noticed a **small form inside this letter**. We would greatly appreciate your completion and return of the form, giving your **email address** and **name**, in the prepaid envelope provided. We would like to keep in touch from time to time, with updates on project findings and invitations to contribute to new research, and email will be a more efficient way for us to contact you in future.

For more information about how we use your data and keep it safe, please see our **Privacy Policy** at www.ed.ac.uk/viking/privacy-notice, or let us know if you'd like to have a copy posted to you.

£53m funding for MRC Human Genetics Unit

The MRC Human Genetics Unit recently received a £53 million funding boost from the Medical Research Council (MRC), supporting research at the Unit for the next five years, from April 2018.

We're pleased to say that part of this funding has been given to ORCADES, which will enable us to further develop our research into genes and variants which influence the risk of complex disease.

The ORCADES research team is situated in the University of Edinburgh at the Usher Institute and the MRC Human Genetics Unit (pictured below). You can write to us at:

VIKING Genes
MRC Human Genetics Unit
Institute of Genetics and Molecular Medicine
The University of Edinburgh
Western General Hospital, Crewe Road South
Edinburgh, EH4 2XU



MRC funding opens door to new recruitment

Thanks to MRC funding, we're pleased to announce that we are planning further recruitment!



We'll merge ideas from the ORCADES study with our

sister project, the VIKING Health Study - Shetland, and aim to recruit a further 4,000 participants with ancestry (two or more grandparents) from Orkney or Shetland.

This new "VIKING II" recruitment aims to take the total number of participants to 8,000, which will allow us to strengthen our research into common, complex diseases. You can find out more about some of the ways you are helping research at www.ed.ac.uk/viking and in future newsletters.

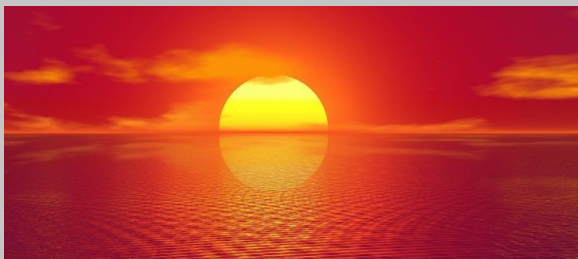
We'd like to thank you again for taking part in ORCADES and hope you will soon be able to help us by getting your friends, neighbours and family involved too! Details of how to do this will be shared with you soon.



Founder Jim Wilson awarded Personal Chair of Human Genetics

Congratulations to Professor Jim Wilson, who's been awarded the Personal Chair of Human Genetics at the University of Edinburgh. Of Fair Isle heritage, he grew up in Orkney where he attended the Kirkwall Grammar School, before reading genetics at the University of Edinburgh. After a year working in Bavaria, Jim completed a DPhil in human population genetics at New College in Oxford. Jim moved back to Edinburgh in 2003 after a stint at University College London, to take up a Royal Society University Research Fellowship.

He's authored over 230 peer-reviewed articles, of which 58 have been published in top journals *Nature*, *Nature Genetics* and *Science*. He is the founder of ORCADES and VIKING Health Study - Shetland and is leading the next stages of recruitment in VIKING II.



ORCADES Study finds holidays in the sun hold key to boosting vitamin D

Good news if you're planning a holiday! Research conducted using the ORCADES study found that holidays abroad may be the key to tackling Scotland's vitamin D deficiency. It found that people who take foreign breaks have higher levels of vitamin D in their blood.

Farmers also have higher levels of the vitamin according to the findings. The highest levels were seen in farmers and people over 60 who take regular foreign holidays.

Emily Weiss, a PhD student involved, said: "It was interesting to find that the traditional occupation of farming was associated with higher levels of blood vitamin D in Orkney. This may be because farmers are outside and utilising even the smallest window of vitamin-D strength sunshine."

The team were interested to see whether widespread vitamin D deficiency in Orkney might explain why rates of multiple sclerosis are higher here than anywhere in the world. They were surprised to find that average vitamin D levels are higher in Orkney than mainland Scotland.

Prof Jim Wilson, who led the study, said "It was surprising to see that levels of vitamin D were not worse in Orkney, and if anything they were better than in Mainland Scotland. It would appear that poor vitamin D status, while common enough, cannot explain the excess of Multiple Sclerosis we see in Orkney."

ORKNEY International SCIENCE FESTIVAL

On 10th September 2018 researchers from the University of Edinburgh took part in the Orkney International Science Festival. A number of talks were given, including four involving ORCADES:

- Dr Lucija Klaric - *What is a Whole Genome Sequence?*
- Dr Andy Bretherick - *From Genomics to Proteomics*
- Prof Jim Wilson - *We're all Jock Tamson's Bairns*
- Ed Gilbert - *Scottish Genetic Structure*

All talks took place at the Baptist Church, Victoria Street, Kirkwall and were well received by the audience!

For further details on the festival, visit www.oisf.org.

We hope to return this year!

New Website and Social Media Launch

We're proud to announce that we've created a brand new website which contains information on both ORCADES and the VIKING Health Study - Shetland.

Please come and visit us at www.ed.ac.uk/viking to see our fresh look and design, and to keep up to date with our latest news and events! You can also find us on Twitter:

@vikinggenes,
Facebook: Viking Genes or
Instagram:
viking_genes

