

UNIVERSITY LAUNCHES BRAIN TUMOUR RESEARCH CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE CAMPAIGN

It is a condition that kills more children and adults under the age of 40 than any other cancer; its mortality rate within a year of diagnosis is an appalling 55% – and the number of cases has risen by 25% over the past 30 years – with the South West topping the list in cases per million. And yet it receives just 1% of national spending on cancer research.

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Director of Dartmoor Zoological Park, and an Honorary Doctor of Science at Plymouth University

It is against this sobering backdrop that Plymouth University has taken a stand, partnering with a leading national charity to establish a Centre of Excellence in its medical school, underpinned by fundraising and awareness-raising to support ongoing research.

“Brain tumour research is woefully underfunded,” said Professor Oliver Hanemann, who is the Associate Dean for Research in the Plymouth University Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry (PUPSMD), and lead for the centre. “This means a critical lack of researchers to investigate the condition and more effective treatments – at this rate it could take another 100 years to find a cure.”

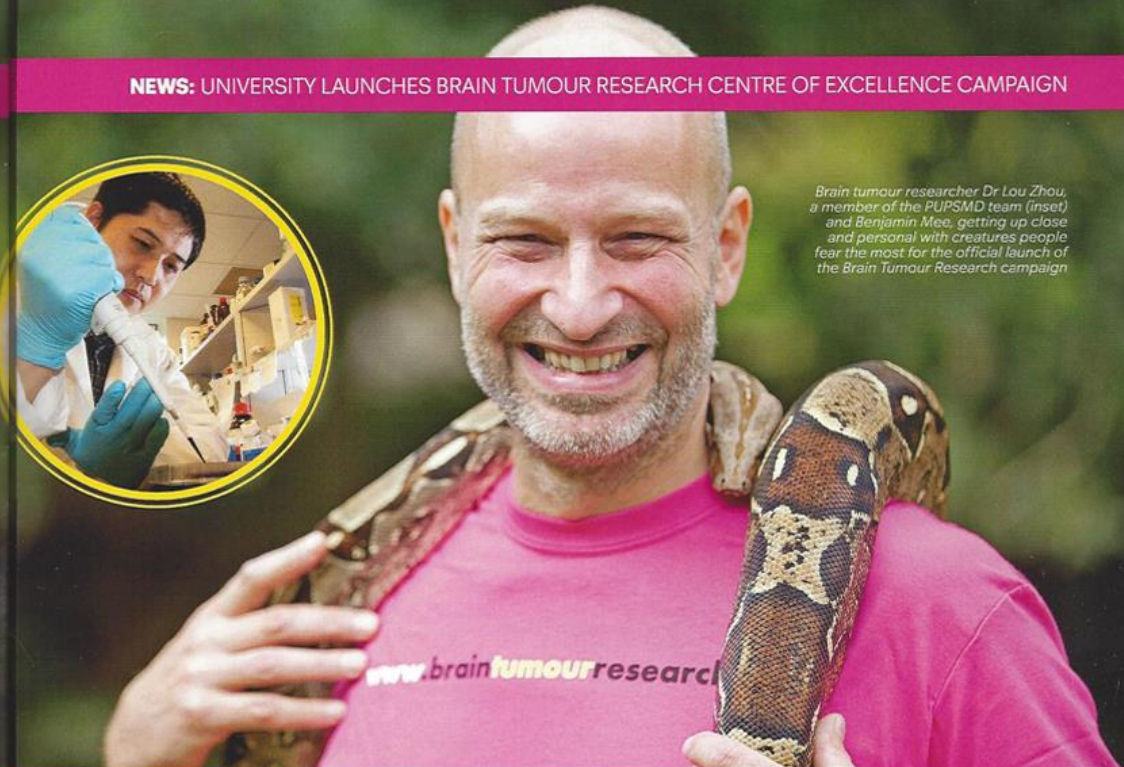
“Plymouth’s Centre of Excellence specialises in low-grade brain tumours, which are slow-growing but ultimately can become malignant. Our focus is to identify and understand the mechanism underlying their development and explore ways to halt or reverse it.”

The University was chosen as one of Brain Tumour Research’s official Centres of Excellence last year, in recognition of the expertise embodied by Professor Hanemann and his team in researching these tumours. Plymouth was the fourth national centre to be chosen, and each has pledged to provide support with up to £1 million per year in funding.

“The Brain Tumour Research campaign is our first major project in terms of strategic fundraising and will be one of a number that we will support from across the University under the umbrella of ‘Campaign,’” said Christian Burden, Director of the Development Office. “The Campaign will showcase our strengths and aspirations as a university, and will be very much driven by the faculties with our support. In the case of Brain Tumour Research, this is all about Oliver and his team; they are the reason why we got behind the application to become a partner to Brain Tumour Research, and they are the reason why we now have a global reputation for research in this field.”



Brain tumour researcher Dr Lou Zhou, a member of the PUPSMD team (inset) and Benjamin Mee, getting up close and personal with creatures people fear the most for the official launch of the Brain Tumour Research campaign



The Development Office, which brings together Alumni Engagement, Campaign, Fundraising, Events, Partnerships, and Community Engagement, is now looking at ways to engage with stakeholders, including alumni, in support of the projects – whether ‘in kind’ or financial. One of those, in the case of Brain Tumour Research, is Benjamin Mee, Director of Dartmoor Zoological Park, and an Honorary Doctor of Science at Plymouth University. Benjamin lost his wife to a brain tumour in 2007 and has backed the project with awareness-raising events at the zoo.

He said: “At the time when we were exposed to the relentlessness of Katherine’s brain tumour, I was more than frustrated. And I remain frustrated that a diagnosis of cancer is something of a lottery depending on where it is situated in your body. We know from the success stories of other cancers that improvements in timely diagnosis and effective treatment are possible, due to investment in research.”

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One of the elements of the project is the Wall of Hope (pictured below with Professor Hanemann) at the Derriford HQ of PUPSMD, where for every £2,740 donated – the cost of one day of research – a tile will be placed with a personal message.

Future campaigns will showcase and support a number of the University’s major life-changing projects, with others set to include a new medical research facility, a new scholarship programme for engineering students, a major marine and technology research initiative, and exciting projects in art and culture.

“This is a national, even global, issue,” adds Christian.

“This project gives us a shared vision, a focus and a structure around which we can engage with our students, our staff, our alumni, and our community partners, to make a real difference in the world. Pride is a key word for us. We want our alumni and supporters to sit up and take notice, and say ‘Wow! That is my university!’ And we want them to get involved and help in whatever way they feel able to.”

www.plymouth.ac.uk/campaign

