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Making a Fellowship application

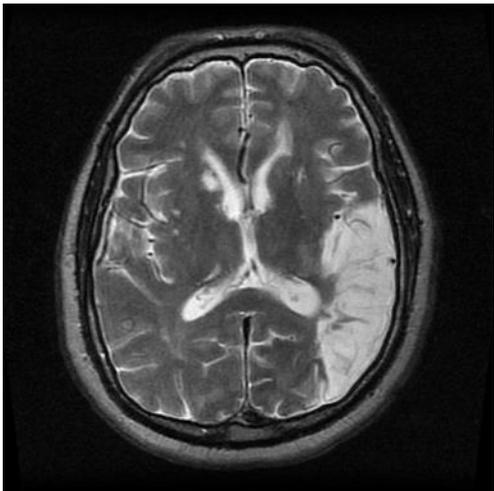
Dr Gemma Learmonth
Sir Henry Wellcome Research Fellow

Institute of Neuroscience & Psychology
University of Glasgow

Disclaimer: these opinions are my own, and do not represent official guidance of the Wellcome Trust or other funding bodies.

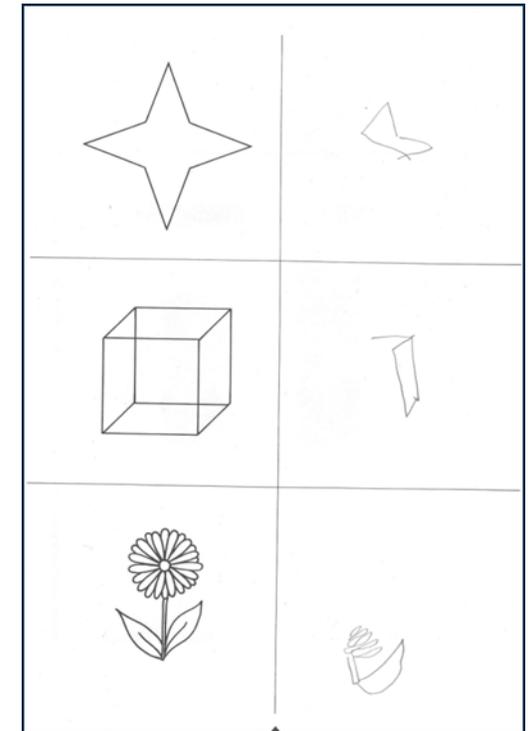
Brain Rhythms in Altered Vision After Stroke (BRAVAS)

- Sir Henry Wellcome Postdoctoral Fellowship
 - Awarded Nov 2017
 - £250k over 4 years



Hemianopia

Hemispatial neglect



My career so far

2001-3. BSc (Hons) Psychology, Glasgow University

2005-7. NHS medical secretary (Greater Glasgow & Clyde stroke services)

2007-10. NHS clinical auditor (Greater Glasgow & Clyde stroke services)

2009-10. Volunteer, Pollok stroke club

2007-10. BSc (Hons) Psychology, Open University

2010-11. MSc Human Cognitive Neuropsychology, Edinburgh University

2011-16. PhD Psychology, Glasgow University

2016-7. Research Assistant. University of Glasgow

2017. Research Associate. University of Glasgow

2018-22. Sir Henry Wellcome Fellowship, University of Glasgow



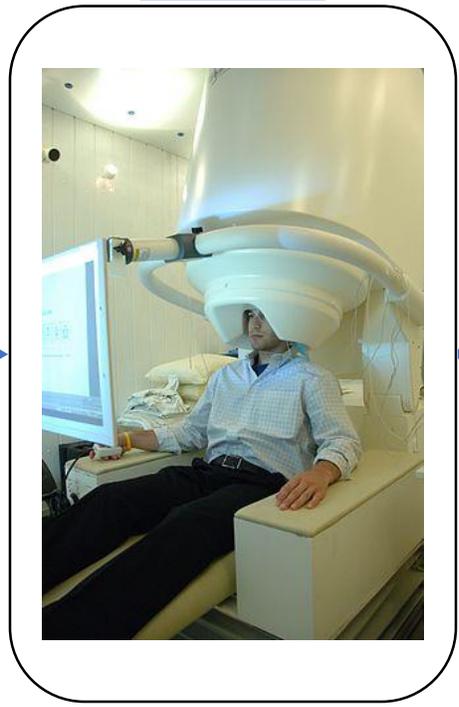
- ✓ Novel idea
- ✓ Gap in the market
- ✓ Clear progression
- ✓ Clear outcomes
- ✓ Feasibility
- ✓ New skills

Study 1



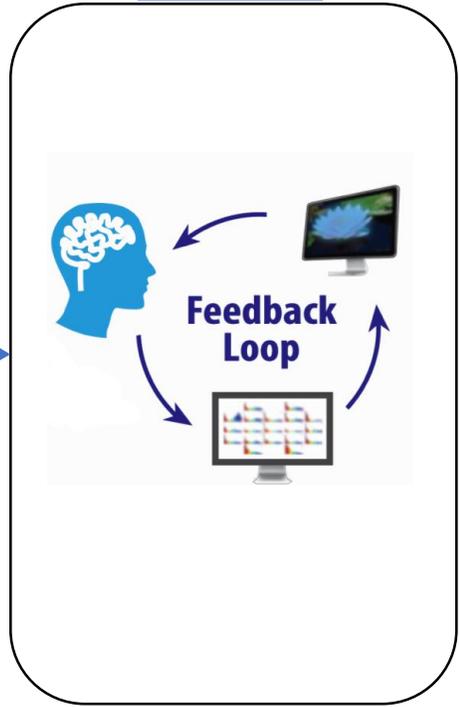
Single-session EEG
 Q: It is feasible to record good quality EEG in patients after stroke?
 Q: Are there any indicators of visual impairment in the EEG?

Study 2



Multi-session MEG
 Q: Do brain rhythms change during rehabilitation from stroke?
 Q: Are these changes related to improvements in behaviour?

Study 3



Neurofeedback
 Q: Can we change brain rhythms to bring about improvements in behaviour?

Why a Fellowship rather than postdoc?

- Independence
- Control own direction
- Control own budget
- Travel / lab visits
- Prestigious
- Use it to develop yourself as a researcher
- Can make own decisions re teaching, supervision
- “Semi-PI”



**UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE**

Why a Fellowship rather than lecturer?

- No teaching (*if you don't want to*)
- No admin
- Time to learn new skills
- More time to explore wild ideas / form collaborations
- Less pressure to publish
- Less pressure to bring in grant money



Writing the application



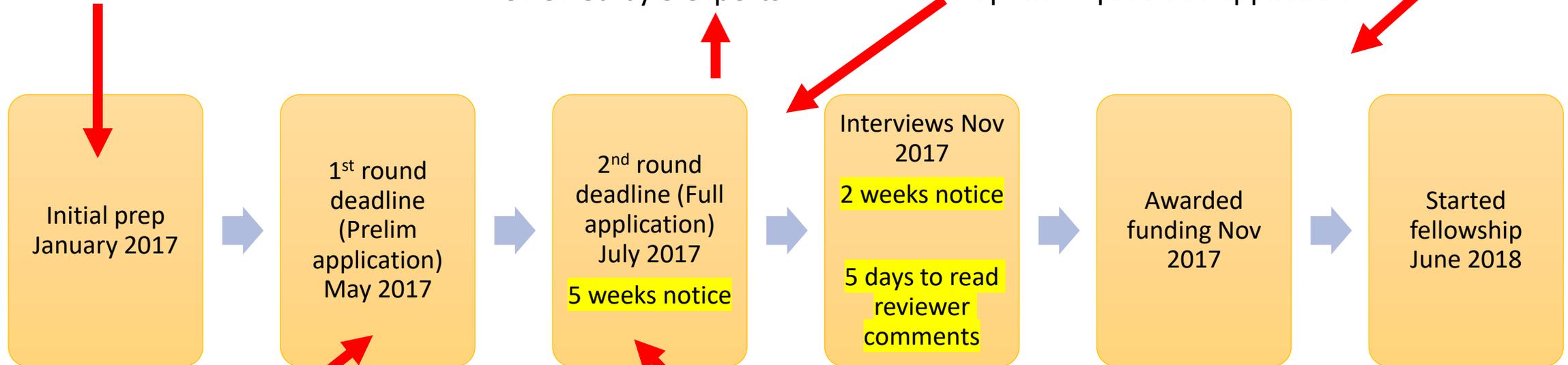
Start early!

It is a huge amount of work.
It is worth doing it *well*.

Writing the application

- Brainstorming
- Tons of emails!
- Advice/feedback

6 month funding (£25k)



- Reviewed by 3 experts

- 2x mock interviews
- Spoke to previous applicants

- Research sponsor statement
- HoD statement
- Mentor named
- 700wd outline

- Needs to be submitted by grant admin team
- Current supervisor statement
- Collaborator statement(s)
- Mentor statement
- Name key collaborators
- NHS sponsor agreement
- 1400wds

Where people go wrong



- Emphasis on cool equipment, or department, or superstar collaborator.
- It's as much about YOU as your science.
- Disjointed projects with unclear rationale/aims.
- Not aligned with key aims of funder.
- Too much jargon - assume your audience is intelligent but knows nothing about your field.
- Too similar to what you did during your PhD / what your collaborator is working on. Why not just work for them as a postdoc?
- Occupying the same niche as someone else. Inter-disciplinarity really helps here. Forge a new path.
- Poor feasibility. It helps to run pilot, collect data, and prove rather than guess.
- Staying in the same place for too long (weave in some lab visits).

The Interview

Be prepared for what this will look like



The Interview

- You will know in advance who is going to be on your panel. Maybe 1-2 from your general area, but likely *nobody* who know your exact niche.
- Lots of faces but not everyone will speak.
- Talk to people who were successful, and also people who were not.
- Some funders release videos about their interview process:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bp6G2Md96IM>



The Interview

- Do you have to give a presentation? Practice practice practice!
- It helps to know the flaws in your application - you *will* be asked about them!
- Get experienced people to ask you tough questions beforehand. This may be *deeply unpleasant* but it will show you the holes so you can fill in the gaps.
- The interview is about *you* as well as the science. Be able to convey your career plans.
- Have an answer to everything that the reviewers have pointed out.
- Why the location? Why the people? Why why why.....

My actual interview questions!

- The reviewer suggested adding a control condition to Study 3. What do you think?
- The reviewer also suggested using a smaller, homogeneous sample. What do you think?
- The reviewer thinks that you will struggle to recruit 100+ patients. What do you think?
- Why did you choose to use those particular time frames for testing?
- Who else is working in this field?
- Why did you choose MEG and not fMRI?
- Can you explain the situation with the pilot grant?
- How will your training progress during this Fellowship period?
- How will this project leave you as an independent researcher at the end of the 4 years?
- I put it to you that you should really be leaving Glasgow at this stage. Can you convince me otherwise?

Key points to remember

- Preparation is everything
- Develop a dream team around you
- Carve your own niche
- Know your strengths and weaknesses
- Communicate simply and clearly
- Learn from the wisdom of other people



I'm happy to help!

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Any questions?