M E E T T H E P R O F E S S O R S captures a moment in time. It marks our progress towards a better gender balance at King’s College London. We acknowledge that there is more work to be done, since, although women comprise some 50 per cent of our academic workforce, only 24 per cent of our professors are female. Nevertheless, we are grateful to our female colleagues who have stepped forward to provide us with insightful commentary on the challenges and achievements they have faced in their careers and personal lives.
I've always been interested in bridging the link between genetics and psychology and have been developing a new field that we have named therapygenetics, which is already attracting interest and awards. It’s an exciting area, because it has the potential to be of real benefit in the future. I have three children and have recently returned to full-time work. I work from home two days a week so I can collect them from school. That flexibility is invaluable to me.
Barbara Prainsack  
*Professor of Sociology*  
*Department of*  
*Social Science, Health & Medicine*

My work takes place where biomedicine, genetics and society meet. This is an area where new dilemmas in ethics and policy making constantly emerge. It’s very rewarding to do research that throws new light on such problems, or to suggest new solutions. At such moments I feel a sense of achievement. I find working with students on these challenging issues enormously stimulating as well.
Teaching is, in itself, one of the most rewarding things that I’ve done, irrespective of nominations for teaching excellence and an award for supervisory excellence. I’ve enjoyed the administrative roles that I have taken on at department and faculty level: running the department during a period of strategic expansion was exhilarating, and serving the faculty at a senior level was also a privilege. Finally, completing each of my books in turn has felt very rewarding.
Academically, my achievements include pioneering the development of laser technology, leading the largest educational software project in Europe, developing the use of haptics in dental education, which won four awards for innovation in health care and education, and being awarded an OBE, FKC and FInstP and fellowship of three other associations. My most rewarding life achievements have been to balance my career with raising three children and having a full social life, and laterly continuing my work while regularly looking after grandchildren.
My research is on gender, Roma and Jewish ethnicity and media memory; the memory practices associated with mobile and social technologies, and the environmental impact of digital media. I’ve also had seven plays performed in the UK, Poland, the USA and Ireland. Both my partner and I worked part-time until our children were school age. Now, as Head of the Department of CMCI at King’s, it’s a privilege to lead and contribute positively to the development of a culture, as well as policies and practices in which equality is the norm.
As a junior doctor, I wrote the first cognitive-behavioural self-care book for people with bulimia. We then carried out trials which showed that with minimal guidance this works as well as specialist treatment. At the time, this approach was seen as an oddity, whereas now this evidence-based self-help approach is very widely used. Recently, I’ve led to completion a large programme of NIHR-funded research into better treatments for people with anorexia nervosa, which has been very rewarding.
My research interests include constructions of gender and other aspects of social identity in the classroom, and the role of education in the reproduction of inequality. I’m an Advisor to the Commons Select Committee inquiry on Academies and free schools, and was a director of the recent independent Academies Commission, which was satisfyingly influential. I’ve been lucky to have very good friends and collaborators throughout my academic career, and I also have a very supportive partner who has shared fully in child-care.
Since joining King’s in 1996, I’ve built up the Statistical Genetics Unit, developing and applying complex statistical tools in genetic research, and identifying and characterising the genes that contribute to human diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, stroke, depression and schizophrenia. On a more personal note, I feel privileged to work and live in a time where being ‘productive’ and ‘re-productive’ are not incompatible.
When I was a teenager I wanted to be a pianist. My sister persuaded me to study biochemistry instead, but I’m convinced the concentration and dedication needed to play a musical instrument prepared me for the hard work and focus required in science. As a PhD student I first saw movies of living cells and became hooked on cell biology, and I really enjoy passing on this enthusiasm to students and also to my daughters, who both studied science A-levels.
My research interests are the Greek, Roman and post-Roman worlds, especially history and language. I’ve created the first full corpora of Greek and Latin texts on stone to be published online, and what I like about this is reaching new audiences and scholars in countries where scholarly books are unaffordable. I thought balancing an academic career with life outside work might get easier – but grandchildren are also demanding. Grumbling is an academic convention, but we’re very lucky if we can earn our money doing work we enjoy.
I was a commissioner on the Human Genetics Commission for seven years and I'm medical adviser to Alport UK, a patient support group set up by some of my patients. Meeting patients and their families outside the hospital has been a pleasure, and has helped to identify possible new areas of research. My advice is, don’t be afraid to take risks – if they work, the sense of achievement is wonderful, and if they fail you always learn something.
Debra Bick

Professor of
Evidence Based Midwifery Practice
Department of Midwifery

I’ve represented midwifery on several major policy groups working to re-frame maternity care in the UK, and contributed to online learning resources for midwives and obstetricians worldwide. A post-natal project I led won an All Party Parliamentary Group on Maternity award in 2009. I’ve benefited from working with senior women academics who were encouraging and supportive of my career development. I hope I’m a role model for my own daughters: to show them that women can achieve senior positions in academia.
I’m Director of the Social Care Workforce Research Unit: a great privilege as I work on areas of topical interest and intellectual challenge with knowledgeable, skilled and good-humoured colleagues. My current research includes the first study of homeless people with dementia, and the first study of mental capacity and safeguarding systems, and I’ve written books about dementia, depression, community care and older workers. I play an active role in voluntary sector bodies to support their research and user engagement.
I’ve developed cognitive, behaviourally-based, brief interventions that can reduce the impact of premenstrual and menopausal symptoms, without the need for medication. These are now being made more widely available to women going through the menopause and women who have had breast cancer, as well as to men who experience hot flushes following endocrine treatment for prostate cancer. I doubted whether combining children and a clinical academic career would be manageable, but having some flexibility and maintaining academic continuity have been helpful.
I’m interested in social policy with regard to children and older people, and hope I’ve helped put the importance of housing for older people ‘on the map’. I’m proud never to have had a day out of the workforce (even when I had three small children and four part-time jobs), and also that I chaired the King’s Research Ethics Committee for nearly 10 years and built it up into a nationally recognised body with international links. I put family first, and I’m also an active member of my local church.
Laura Goldstein

Professor of Clinical Neuropsychology
Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience

At school I met an inspiring female member of the Samaritans and that led me to explore studying for a psychology degree. My role model Dr Maria Wyke inspired a passion for understanding individual patients’ presentations, while Professor Barbara Wilson showed me how to be both authoritative and innovative in the field. I’ve found it particularly rewarding that my evidence of the existence of cognitive and behavioural change in patients with motor neurone disease has gained broad acceptance as a potential characteristic of this disorder.
I’m passionate about my subject, which is using statistics to inform and change clinical practice, especially for babies and children with cancer. One of my three statistics books for non-specialists, *The Oxford Handbook of Medical Statistics*, has sold over 5,000 copies since 2011. I like the buzz of being in a university where new things are possible and encouraged; being in London where a lot is happening, and being surrounded by very good and friendly people. Work-life balance is important and academics should be able to enjoy life outside work.
I was President of the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry in 2012 and hosted a joint conference with our European Association. It was fantastic to see colleagues across Europe actively sharing with one another. I really enjoy teaching students and training specialists in dental public health. Life is busy and I continually have to juggle and prioritise, but I can’t believe the wonderful opportunities that professional life has offered. I’m truly delighted to have been awarded a personal chair at King’s.
Two achievements I am proud of include the Presidency of both the American and International Associations for Dental Research. As the first female in most of the positions I’ve held, there have been many challenges. One of my operating principles has been that it was not necessary to choose between a career, being a woman, and being a wife and mother. Easy? Of course not. But, through determination, taking challenges in my stride, finding creative solutions, and a sense of humour, I have been able to create a rewarding career.
As a chemistry undergraduate in Italy, I enjoyed interacting equally with male and female students and professors. After moving as a PhD student to ETH Zurich, I noticed there were fewer female students and even fewer full professors. The lack of female role models was challenging at times, but has reinforced my determination to create my own research profile. I’ve always strived to enjoy my work, without letting ambition take over my genuine passion for science.
Throughout my career I’ve explored the implications of the literary culture of Britain and Ireland from the seventh to the twelfth centuries for the study of women, gender and sexuality. I’m particularly proud of my collaborative research, the ways in which I foster collaboration among my students, and of my engagement of the medieval with the modern and contemporary. I’ve been fortunate in developing networks outside of work to help support me during periods of family responsibility and care.
My interest in the military was sparked as an epidemiologist with the UK Ministry of Defence. The impact of military life on the wellbeing of an individual and their family is an area that fascinates me. Defining moments include giving evidence to the House of Commons Defence Committee (terrifying but exciting); becoming Co-Director of KCMHR, and sitting next to Bill Turnbull on the BBC Breakfast red sofa. I do lots of evening working but keep my weekends free for my family.
I was a maxillofacial surgeon and moved to academia in 1994. Technology Enhanced Learning is my main research interest: the opportunity to bring in a creative element to an essentially apprentice-like course is stimulating for both staff and students, and led to teaching awards on topics ranging from serious games to social media. One role model, Dame Margaret Seward, succeeded against all odds in the then male-dominated world of dentistry, and encouraged and inspired students, especially women, to triumph in challenging circumstances.
My main interests are in the evaluation of mental health and social care services for children and adolescents: to try and make a meaningful difference to populations who are struggling. My work with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and the Social Care Institute for Excellence has given me the clearest sense of making a real difference to research and public policy. Since having children I have more defined work hours and home time, but it’s a constant battle to get that balance right.
I’m President of the European Society of Oncologic Imaging and an active contributor to national and international practice guidelines and policy in this area. My research focuses on multimodality functional imaging and biomarker development in cancer, with a special interest in gastrointestinal, lung and renal cancers. As a clinical academic, wife, and mother of young children, I strongly believe that it’s important to be happy and maintain a healthy balance in work and life in order to achieve the most of one’s potential.
When I realised that the way we perceive everything, including the universe, originates from our brain, I became interested in researching the source of ‘our’ reality, the brain. I’m proud that my research has helped to change the public image of ADHD from ‘naughty children’ to a brain developmental disorder. It’s a humbling experience if your favourite hypothesis turns out to be wrong and you have to rethink. It opens your mind and makes you aware of the relativity of human beliefs.
My main research areas are programming languages, models of computation and security. I find it fascinating that there are so many different ways of understanding computation. In addition to the classical models, there are new models inspired by biochemical processes, by agent interactions, by quantum mechanics. Writing textbooks to introduce my research area to students was challenging but rewarding. I am fortunate to have a very supportive family.
I’m a leading clinical researcher in maternal medicine in the UK and internationally, focusing on diseases of the liver and endocrine glands in pregnant women. I’ve authored reports on maternal deaths for the UK Confidential Enquiry into Maternal Deaths, and I regularly speak about medical disorders of pregnancy at international conferences and courses. I have two children, and in my spare time enjoy cycling, theatre and days out with my family.
Karen O’Brien

Professor of
English Literature
Department of English

As Vice-Principal (Education) I have broad responsibility for all aspects of student education in the university. My research is concerned with the history, culture and impact of the eighteenth century European Enlightenment and its legacy for political thinking, civil society, feminism and religious tolerance. I believe universities are the embodiments of the best Enlightenment values. It’s a privilege to work with colleagues who teach and generate new knowledge, and I love to teach students from all over the world on that journey of discovery.
Scientific curiosity has accompanied me from childhood, thanks to the inspiring questions posed by my father, a scientist himself, who taught me the beauty of science. The fascination of a starry sky at night, the challenge of understanding the far history of the universe and the intellectual thrill of research drove me into theoretical cosmology. Our aim is to construct a theory of quantum gravity, unifying Einstein’s general relativity with quantum mechanics, unweaving the fabric of the universe and revealing the secrets of its infancy.
From the moment I did my BA dissertation my life has been about academic research, which I still enjoy tremendously. My interests are the European political economy, especially economic and monetary integration, and the political economy of the Middle East and Northern Africa, especially Egypt. My best advice to young women is to find something you are passionate about and never give up. Women can have it all: family and work (just like men)... only it takes much more effort, patience and organisation.
In the 1960s I was a rare working-class girl at Oxford, studying history, and I then studied social sciences at LSE. I’ve promoted interaction between history and the social sciences and the contribution of history to social policy formation, especially in areas including ageing, gender (in)equality and voluntary action. When I became a professor at Sussex in 1994 there were just eight female professors of history in Britain. Things have improved, but massive inequalities remain. The battle continues!
King’s has one of the largest research clusters of competition lawyers in the world, and we educate students from across the globe. One of the most rewarding aspects of my job is seeing students develop and grow – as practising lawyers, academics or in other careers. Academic commitments are infinite, so drawing a line and clearing precious family time (children are only children for such a short time), is challenging. Because some aspects of the job can be solitary, you need to work hard to find good mentors and colleagues to discuss all aspects of your work.
I contributed to the discovery of human regulatory T cells and have built a research programme to understand more about these cells. I have now initiated two clinical trials using them to prevent kidney and liver transplant rejections. The biggest challenge in my life has been to combine my scientific career with my personal life – especially care for my two children and my mother – and consequently my promotion to professor came rather later than for many of my male colleagues.
As a registered nurse with a PhD in immunology and biomolecular science and an interest in psychology, my career has an eclectic mix of science and social science. This gives me the interdisciplinary background needed for my research exploring the impact on individuals’ and families’ lives of personalised risk information generated by new genetic technologies. To relax I spend time walking my dogs and I keep one day in the weekend when I don’t look at work or emails.
Watching fertilised sea urchin eggs divide and develop into a swimming embryo in a few hours got me hooked on developmental biology. My current work focuses on how cells differentiate to form the eye, ear or olfactory organs: helping to understand hearing and visual impairment. My role models challenge existing concepts, remain curious to discover new principles and ask biological questions rather than ‘collecting data’. Science is not a nine-to-five job, and it’s often over a glass of wine or during a country walk that you have the best ideas.
In the final year of my BSc I found something that really excited me: the joys of generating biological research data and trying to interpret it. My research concerns how immune mechanisms change in asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and the role of vitamin D in this. It’s very rewarding to get new ideas and perspectives: whether from a scientific conference, from students or from the general public. Having a family is enormously important to me, and the joys and concerns that come with this always put life into perspective.
I’ve provided the evidence base for some key tobacco control policies introduced in England. Among my current interests are how to reduce smoking across all social groups as quickly as possible and how smoking influences mental, as well as physical, health. I’m physically small, from ‘up north’ and the first member of my family to go to university. On occasion I feel I’ve had to make my actions speak louder than my words. A positive supportive network, in or outside work, and a good sense of humour, help.
Born in Argentina, I was predestined to stay at home to raise a family. Looking back, I am surprised to see how I got here: so far from being a stay-at-home mother. It wasn’t easy to raise a family while doing my PhD and post doc training, but the challenge made it more rewarding. Thinking of the translational studies we are doing that might find new treatments to save pregnancies, it would have been a pity if I’d stayed at home.
I’ve had two academic careers: first a lectureship in social sciences which ended with serious mental health problems and medical retirement. I spent several years without work but became involved in the service user movement. I never expected to have a second academic career, but I was fortunate to be around just when research funders were becoming interested in patient involvement in research. So I brought my two identities together as a service user researcher, and I’m now co-director of the Service User Research Enterprise (SURE) at King’s.
I’m interested in the processes that regulate ‘hardening of the arteries’ and in a very rare genetic disorder of premature ageing which gives us lots of clues as to how blood vessels age in the general population. I find you need to be relatively satisfied with both your career and your life outside to feel balanced and happy. My advice would be: ‘Don’t listen to other people about how things should be done – just go for what you think will make you feel most satisfied. There is no plan or pattern but your own!’
I don’t know when I began to see English as an ‘academic discipline’ but I never wavered in knowing I would read English at university, and later it seemed obvious that I would work on the nineteenth century. I think we’re still living there in some ways, with its institutions and assumptions. If you love your subject, and you love sharing it, it really can help you live your best possible life, even when the future is terrifyingly uncertain, as it was for me when I was undergoing treatment for breast cancer with two children of six and three.
I lectured in social science before training in medicine and neurology in Canada. Having worked both as a GP and a neurologist, my aim is to develop more integrated services for people with neurological conditions. I set up a new MSc for GPs and became leader of neurology teaching for medical students. My research involves testing self-management courses for patients with problems such as migraine and epilepsy. I enjoy tennis, and I have adopted children from abroad.

Leone Ridsdale
Professor of Neurology & General Practice
Department of Basic & Clinical Neurosciences
My research is on molecular pathogenesis of cancer, the machineries regulating cell cycle checkpoints and cell death. I want to improve the detection and treatment of head and neck cancers and I’m involved in several studies on ways of predicting patient response to radio-chemotherapy. I’m particularly proud to have been the first recipient (in 1984) of the Biochemical Society’s Krebs’ Memorial Scholarship for supporting my postgraduate studies.
I did my higher degree on ovarian failure and osteoporosis. My other main areas of interest are minimally invasive surgery and female genital mutilation. I’ve always been an enthusiastic teacher and had a major role in medical education, and I feel very privileged that I can combine clinical medicine with research and teaching. My support group has been four female obstetricians and gynaecologists who have met every two months for 20 years: discussing all our problems freely and giving each other good advice.
Palaeography – the study of handwritten materials – is a discipline fundamental to the history, literature and language of pre-modern cultures. Only a few elite universities in the world support research in this area, and it’s a great privilege to train a new generation in this subject. My husband is a professor at a university outside London and we have three children of secondary-school age, so we all have to make compromises. We always make some family time at weekends and have a summer holiday entirely free of email and work-related reading.
My laboratory has developed models of the devastating inherited neurodegenerative Huntington’s disease and used them to study its molecular basis and to identify targets for drug development. In 2007 I was elected to the Royal Society: partly in recognition of the model of Huntington’s that we developed which is used by both the academic community and industry worldwide. It’s a privilege to work in an area that is so interesting and has the potential to help others. We can always achieve more together than when working in isolation.
Janet Walsh

Professor of Human Resource Management & Employment Relations

Department of Management

My research examines the changing character of labour markets and employment and the consequences for employees and organisations. I have researched part-time and flexible work, the careers and work-life balance of female lawyers and employee stress and well-being in customer service work. At King’s I particularly enjoy teaching postgraduate students in my specialist field of human resource management and have supervised a succession of extremely able doctoral students who have become accomplished academics in their own right.
Lucy Di Silvio

Professor of
Tissue Engineering & Biophotonics
Department of
Biomaterials, Biomimetics & Biophotonics

As a woman from a foreign country pursuing an academic career in the UK, I’m proud to be head of a multidisciplinary and multicultural group in the Dental Institute, where I feel that my own experiences have significantly helped me to understand the needs of the staff. In 2003 when I first started to set up a tissue engineering group I had no staff, and only a small section of a bench in the laboratory. Now we have an entire lab, with state-of-the-art equipment, flourishing in both teaching and research.
I study the nursing workforce and am passionate about creating positive practice environments for NHS staff and supporting them in caring for patients. My research highlights the links between staff experiences of work and patient experiences of care, and has been important in arguing for better support for NHS staff in the very challenging and demanding work they do. My son George (now 22) has learning disabilities and autism. He and his sister Lola help me prioritise a good work life balance so that I can support my family as well as be a King’s Professor.
I was part of the small team that found the association between infection of the stomach with the bacterium helicobacter pylori and the development of gastric lymphoma. By eradicating the infection, patients could be cured of their tumours: real translational research. I was told by one of the first female professors in the UK to ‘keep going and try to publish the best papers you can. If you do this, in the end, you can’t be ignored.’ It’s not as tough for us as it was for her, but her advice probably remains sound.
Before I was an academic I worked for the Ministry of Health in Zimbabwe on a programme delivering clean water and sanitation services to rural areas, which got me interested in how planned interventions to tackle poverty and inequality actually work out at local level. I train African school leavers as research assistants for my fieldwork, encouraging them to re-think certainties about their environment and society, and to develop critical skills of interviewing and observation. Sometimes they apply these skills to encourage me to confront my own preconceptions.
I wrote my PhD on women in early modern courtrooms, focusing on sexual insult and marital conflict. I use legal records to recover the lost worlds of ordinary women from a time when most of them couldn’t write, and I’m interested in what gender meant before the modern era, and in the body and its experiences. I’ve been at King’s for 11 years and was promoted to professor in 2013. I’ve appreciated the advantages of temporary part-time working and unpaid leave to have, and care for, a child.
Most of my work focuses on educational identities and inequalities, particularly in relation to gender, ethnicity and social class. I guess this reflects my political and personal ideals and commitments, such as to feminism. I want to do work that can contribute to social justice and help make people’s lives better and more equitable. I was a co-founder of the Athena SWAN Charter for Women in STEM, so it’s amazing to see how it’s now a nationwide scheme that lots of universities (including King’s) are signed up to.
I had two inspiring clinical trainers early on in my career who focused my interest in oral surgery. As combining career options and family became clear, I opted for an academic pathway and now find my combined activity as a surgeon, researcher and trainer incredibly rewarding. The most rewarding aspects of my work are providing patients with optimum care, which is often predicated on our own clinical research, and also our research work being shortlisted in the top ten King’s Health Partners impact cases for the 2014 REF.
I’m very proud to be the world’s first female professor of econophysics: applying methods from statistical physics, the physics of complex systems and the science of networks to macro- and micro-economic modelling, financial market analysis and social problems. It’s a great advantage to work in one of the world’s leading universities, close to the City of London. My keys to balancing my career and personal life have been passion about my work, support from my family – and my motto: ‘never give up!’
I worked as a midwife in a government hospital in Malawi, and also had my first two children there. Then I studied a social sciences degree and became hooked, and went on to take a PhD in sociology. Childbirth and reproduction makes a fascinating lens through which to look at different societies and cultures, and sociology provides a way to study the link between personal troubles and public issues. My advice is to follow your heart and intellectual passion. Academic work takes up so much time, it’s really important to enjoy it.
I was drawn to obstetrics because it’s a field which has often been neglected but which is critically important, for the health of women and also that of the next generation. Leading an internationally respected team researching diseases of pregnancy including pre-eclampsia, premature birth and gestational diabetes has been constantly rewarding. I was fortunate to come from an academic family where science was always discussed, and to have had excellent teachers who supported my career interests in science.
At school, I was good at maths but had a practical streak that made me realise that I didn’t want to be a mathematician. Economics covered interesting real life issues and its analytical focus meant I continued to use my maths skills. My research area is measuring and explaining international comparisons of growth and productivity. I’m part of a large network of researchers in Europe, the US and in emerging economies who generate internationally comparable data. I paint as a hobby, and when I paint I switch off from work completely.
I specialised in marine biology in my first degree, but when, in 1961, it came to getting a job, all the exciting ones went to men, and I was offered the prospect of counting plankton at Lowestoft. So I took a job at Guy’s, in what is now the Division of Medical and Molecular Genetics, and was able to study for a PhD. My interest is in how congenital malformations occur during embryological development, and finding ways of preventing them. I’m also an Anglican priest and serve in the parish in Surrey where I live.
Being the first person in my family to go to university, and the professional career that has followed, is constantly rewarding, and constantly grounding. My research interests are in Latin American cultural studies, largely in theatre and theatre translation, and in feminist and gender studies. The most enjoyable and rewarding aspect of my job is sharing my research with others, especially through teaching. Becoming a Fellow of King’s in 2014 was a special moment of recognition, shared with my colleagues and students.
Kate Crosby

Professor of Buddhist Studies
Department of Theology & Religious Studies

When I was three I was transfixed by a nine-foot-high Buddha in the Victoria & Albert Museum. Now I work on Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. Buddhism teaches that change is inevitable and that you can direct change positively. I’m interested by the technologies of positive change and the traditional meditation of Theravāda Buddhism. This oldest surviving branch of Buddhism provides insights into obstetrics, intranasal delivery of pharmaceuticals, generative grammar, group theory mathematics and traditional chemistry.
I first became interested in law because my grandfather graduated with a law degree but never had the opportunity to apply this learning. I may also have watched too many episodes of LA Law as a teenager. I enjoy logical and analytical reasoning and was curious to know the ways in which society was regulated through legal rules. It’s extremely rewarding to be able to teach and supervise bright, able and engaged students and to be in an environment that enables me to pursue my research interests in the field of intellectual property law.
I’m passionate about my research and clinical work, both of which focus on improving the quality of life for children with neuro-developmental disorders such as autism, learning disability and ADHD. As Head of Department, I get the most fulfillment from supporting the career development of others, especially the younger researchers. I’ve realised there isn’t a single style of effective leadership, but identifying colleagues’ strengths and working collaboratively works best for me.
I’m interested in the family lives of older people: particularly how changes in family structure, such as divorce and smaller family sizes, affect intergenerational support. One of the things I’m most proud of is leading a team of outstanding researchers at the Institute of Gerontology: one of the world’s leading gerontological research and teaching centres. It’s important to find a group of people that you enjoy working with, as a lot of academic work (at least in my field) tends to be collaborative.
I’ve enjoyed a fascinating and challenging career pursuing fundamental questions in epigenetics and developing my academic experience in research, outreach and higher education. Epigenetic mechanisms are crucial factors in fertilisation, growth and development but are not directly encoded by the DNA sequence. An academic career provides the freedom to explore questions in depth and to continue learning and personal development. I’ve always worked full time and found my career very flexible and conducive to family life.
Choosing statistics for my undergraduate degree opened doors for me in many varied areas. I have worked in national government and social research, and held senior positions in professional statistics bodies, the National Data Archive, UNESCO, and the NHS. My career has witnessed the growing perception of the importance of statistics in almost every walk of life. This diversity has been of immense value in my King’s role as Dean of a large faculty spanning an extensive range of subjects within our very multi-disciplinary University.
Being appointed to the only chair of nuclear medicine therapy in the UK opened unrivalled opportunities to explore new types of cancer treatment and to work with an outstanding multidisciplinary clinical and scientific team. Teaching both at King’s and as Chair of the European School of Nuclear Medicine enables me to share my enthusiasm for the subject and pass on knowledge and skills. It’s tremendously rewarding to see students translate their learning into practice and rise to the challenge of developing their own research programmes.
Working with people who experience mental health problems stimulated my curiosity (and my admiration) about how they cope with odd and frightening experiences. They shape my research by asking important questions. I’m proud to have led the NIHR Mental Health Research Network which recruits more than 30,000 people a year into mental health studies, making a huge difference to our understanding and treatment. In my spare time I contribute to the family food blog: sampling gourmet and not-so-gourmet offerings in our local restaurants.
I came to university to study biology and chemistry, but soon realised that I had a real expertise in pharmacology, studying the effects of drugs. It was a key point in my career when I discovered the ability of a new substance, a peptide produced by the body, to influence cardiovascular regulation. From then on I wanted to learn as much about it as I could. I’m particularly proud to be listed on the Thomson Reuters Highly Cited List for Pharmacology, and to have supervised 25 PhD students, some of whom now have senior research roles.
I love the opportunity to think about the big questions philosophy asks, and the rigorous way in which it trains the mind to answer them. At the heart of my research is the relationship between reason and religion. Flexible working patterns have been essential to my career progression. As the mother of three wonderful children, one with Down’s syndrome, combining a demanding family life with headship of a large department has not always been easy. But it worked thanks to family-friendly policies and mutually supportive colleagues.
I’m very proud to be a Vice-Principal at King’s. Almost everything I know about management and leadership comes from my children who’ve taught me how to listen, plan and organise. In 2005 I was elected a National Teaching Fellow and won the Wolfson Prize for History for my book, *Shopping in the Renaissance*. This was particularly gratifying as it was a clear demonstration that you could be both an innovative and devoted teacher and a committed researcher.
I’ve always been fascinated by the atomic details of biological processes and I came to the UK to pursue my interests in structural biology after completing my PhD in Naples. It’s extremely rewarding to be the first person to ‘see’ what a particular protein looks like and how exactly it interacts with other molecules to accomplish its function. To be able to visualise a chemical process that supports life or contributes to disease is a quest that’s shaped my life. It’s even more gratifying to be able to transfer this knowledge to my students and postdocs.
I was always interested in the experiences we call psychosis. As a trainee on the ward, someone approached me and said ‘You put my mother in the washing machine’. I was intrigued as to what might lead someone to think in this way. Exploring reasoning and emotions in delusions is at the heart of my research. I later helped challenge the prevailing view that psychological therapy was unhelpful for people with psychosis by contributing to the development of a new approach, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, a treatment now widely recommended.
My major research interests are looking at how the differentiated state of adult tissues is maintained and how this information can be harnessed for regenerative medicine. Collaborations with scientists from other disciplines have been critical to my research. In 2008 I received the Women in Cell Biology Senior Leadership Award for outstanding scientific achievement, leadership and mentoring. I’m married and have three children.
I’ve worked in psychosis for many years. Early on there were few therapies available and lots of pessimism about outcomes and I felt I might make a difference. With colleagues, I developed and evaluated work with patients’ families and individual cognitive behavioural therapy: both now NICE recommended interventions. In 2013 I received lifetime achievement awards from Women in Science and Engineering and the British Psychological Society. I’ve learnt that persistence is key, and that the purpose of research is to find out you are wrong.
The focus of my research has been the study of aberrant glycosylation that occurs in essentially all types of human cancer and appears to be an early event playing a key role in the induction of invasion and metastases. I never thought I’d have a career in academia and eventually become a professor. Organising a series of international meetings bringing together enthusiastic collaborators is very satisfying. I took eight months’ maternity leave, and have a very supportive husband who took an equal share of the childcare.
My main achievements have been contributing to the development of discrimination law as a distinct field and strengthening equality policy in the UK, Europe, the USA, Canada and ASEAN countries. This research allows me to think about how law relates to rapid social change, and I play an active role in disseminating my findings to the voluntary sector and in public engagement. I enjoy teaching and PhD supervision: it’s a privilege to contribute towards younger law scholars developing their full potential.
I’m a pharmacologist devoted to discovering new targets and treatments for chronic pain, with a long-standing interest in the biology of spinal cord mechanisms that underlie such pain. My lab is exploring several approaches to targeting neuropathic pain; in particular the involvement of microglia: a type of cell that acts as the first and main form of active immune defense in the central nervous system. I have a family and two boys in their teenage years who keep me busy. I have learnt to be persistent, and to find good mentors and role models.
I work at the interface of physics with chemistry, materials science and biology. I design computer experiments to understand how nano-materials and biomolecules behave at the atomic level in response to external stimuli, such as light, pressure or the binding of ligands. I teach and use quantum mechanics, one of the most useful, bizarre and beautiful topics in Physics. Within the complexity of the academic profession it is essential to find time for creative thinking, which is the base for innovative research.