

An Interview with Peter Fischer Conducted by Anja Wiechmann



Introduction:

Peter Fischer is the Director of the CBS. He holds a Professorship in Medicinal Chemistry and is working in the School of Pharmacy which belongs to the Faculty of Science.

1. Hello Peter, we just created a website for the CBS Researchers Forum and are interviewing people in CBS, to allow others from the building to see who is working here and what subjects the researchers are focussing on.

As the Director of CBS we thought you would be ideal to be one of our first targets to be interviewed.

Could you please give us a short summary about the places you have been working and tell us how you came to CBS?

Peter: Of course. In my early twenties, I moved to Australia where I studied chemistry and biochemistry at the Macquarie University Sydney and the Deakin University near Melbourne. I did my PhD in organic and medical chemistry at the Deakin University, where I also got an initial position as lecturer afterwards.

After that I moved back to Europe and worked at Nycomed, a pharmaceutical company located in Norway, which is specialises in medical contrast agents. In the meantime Nycomed merged with GE Healthcare.

From Norway I moved to Dundee in Scotland, where I worked at a pharmaceutical biotech spin-out company of the University of Dundee and conducted research on oncology drug discovery.

Since I worked in smaller companies that had collaborations with academia, I always knew that there is an option to move back to academia. While being in Dundee, I collaborated with Weng Chang who already worked in CBS at that time. Our joined research concentrated on peptide based therapeutic projects. In that time the University of Nottingham advertised a position as Chair of Medicinal Chemistry with focus on drug discovery and I successfully applied for that position. That was 10 years ago.

2. How did you become Director of CBS?

Peter: The University was looking for a senior person in CBS who could take over the leadership role and I got asked. I am now in the position for 6 years.

3. What are your main duties as CBS Director?

Peter: Normally the University is divided into faculties and schools. CBS is a quite unique facility because it is a collaborative research centre, accommodating research groups out of four different schools who are conducting their work on interfaces in 'biomolecular' research.

My main duties are:

- To encourage collaborations and interactions between the research groups.
- To make sure that facility runs smoothly.
- To review the performance of the centre.

There was major review 2-3 years ago. The purpose of the reviews is it to establish CBS as a leading centre of the University. To achieve this, readjustments of which working groups are leaving, which working groups are staying and which groups are joining the centre need to be undertaken. For example, there will be a third part of the CBS building coming within the next 3 years, which will accommodate new working groups. CBS will expand in particular in those areas of expertise: microbiology/ synthetic biology, stem cell research, tissue engineering and pharmaceutical and chemical drug discovery. However, the exact location has not been made public, yet but it will be attached to the building.

4. Do you see a lot of collaboration in CBS?

Peter: Yes, in general the groups are very collaborative and collaborations are increasing, but of course there is also room for improvement.

5. When did you get the idea to set up the Researchers Forum?

Peter: It wasn't really my idea. The researcher community came up with the idea by themselves. It was initiated for researchers with different expertises to exchange ideas.

The first chair of the forum was David Foley who is now in Dundee.

I usually give a short introduction at the CBS Research Symposium, which will take place on September 17th this year.

6. Is the CBS Researchers Forum improving the CBS community?

Peter: Yes, definitely. Since we all work in many different areas, knowledge of what others are doing and which technologies and techniques they are using generates ideas and improves the way we think about our own research.

7. Do you have some ideas how we could improve CBS?

Peter: Yes. It would be important to make our research more accessible to public, such as carrying out more outreach and public engagement in schools or organising science events for non-researchers.

8. Is there anything you do not like in CBS?

Peter: No I don't think so; CBS an excellent place and one of the best facilities at the University.

9. What is your favourite equipment?

Peter: Speaking as a chemist, the equipment which revolutionised our work most is the LC-MS (liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry).

If you would like to know more about Peter's research, you can find an overview of his research interest and a publications list here:

[Peter Fischer- UoN website](#)