

**Wednesday 16 April 2008**

### **UK Biobank reaches landmark figure in Wales**

A retired fire service employee has become the 100,000<sup>th</sup> person to join UK Biobank – the pioneering medical project to improve the health of future generations.

The landmark moment fell to Mrs Pam Jones of Llys Illtyd, Creigiau, Cardiff, who received a commemorative plaque from the Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan, First Minister of the National Assembly for Wales and Assembly member for Cardiff West, today, to mark the achievement.

More than 13,000 people have joined the ambitious health initiative from the Cardiff area so far, where the response to the letters of invitation to take part in the project has been consistently high. The project, also recruiting in six other towns and cities in the UK, is now well on the way to its target of 500,000 participants by the end of 2010.

In congratulating Mrs Jones, Mr Morgan, who is one of the 100,000 who have joined UK Biobank, said: "Biobank is a great opportunity for volunteers to do something positive for the health of future generations. To reach 100,000 participants in just a year is a fantastic example of partnership between citizens and researchers. Although there is no major personal gain for participants, the results of this study will have benefits for the health of future generations. Technology doesn't stand still. Health scientists need to continue to build a broader, richer range of data in order to understand more about how we treat life-threatening conditions such as cancer or heart disease."

Mrs Jones and her husband Aelfryn were motivated to join UK Biobank because the project will help to improve the health of future generations. "Both my husband and I have lost our parents to heart disease or cancer. It seemed to us that if we could play our part in helping to prevent these diseases in the future then we should do it."

Through the Wales Office of Research and Development (WORD), the Assembly Government has also funded a mobile UK Biobank laboratory that will enable people in rural and hard to reach areas to participate in the project.

Cardiff University Vice-Chancellor, Dr David Grant, said: "As an international centre of medical research and education, Cardiff University is proud to be part of the success of this visionary medical project to improve the health of future generations."

UK Biobank began recruiting participants in Manchester in April 2007, and opened its assessment centre in Cardiff last October. The most detailed study of its kind, the ambitious project is building a major health resource to help scientists and doctors find out why some people get particular diseases such as cancer, heart and lung disease and dementia, and others do not. The work will pave the way for better prevention and treatment of disease and improved public health for many years to come.

The project collects detailed health and lifestyle information from participants, and asks for a donation of blood and urine and for permission to follow their health over the next 30 years and more.

Over the past year the project has stored more than 1.5 million samples of blood in sub-zero temperatures and written to more than 1 million people in England, Scotland and Wales to ask them to participate.

The project's Participant Resource Centre, a free phone information line (8am-7pm, six days a week), based at Cardiff University, has taken more than 177,000 telephone calls and received double that number of postal replies over the past year.

Along with follow up health information, the resource will help scientists untangle the complex interaction between nature and nurture in disease development and treatment.

Mrs Jones was presented with a commemorative cartoon drawn by Robert Duncan, who specialises in cartoons for advertising. He has produced over 3,000 greeting card designs, including the famous Not Particularly Orange range.