



## Launch of new Centre for Health Communication Research

Bucks New University is to establish a research centre that focuses on the communication challenges and issues within the health sector.

The Centre for Health Communication Research and Excellence (CHCRE) will operate within the newly established Institute of Applied Leadership and will aim to establish strong relationships with both public and private sector health organisations.

The director of the new centre will be John Underwood who was appointed an Honorary Professor at Glasgow University in 2006 and who is a director of Freshwater, one of the UK's largest regionally-based communications consultancies. Freshwater has a specialist health communication division and offices throughout Britain. Over the past 15 years Underwood has advised a wide range of NHS organisations

on complex communication and reputation management issues.

He said: "Much of the new centre's work will involve NHS organisations and the tremendous communication challenges they face. Effective communication is never more important than in times of great change and, of course, the NHS is currently facing greater change than at any time since its creation over 60 years ago. We are looking forward to helping the NHS address the communication challenges of the immediate future."

The deputy director of CHCRE will be Dr Bill Nichols, a marketing and public relations specialist who worked in France, India and the US as well as the UK before joining Bucks New University as a senior lecturer in marketing in 2009. He ran his own international communications consultancy before completing a DBA at Henley Business School where he is also now a visiting lecturer.



*Dr Bill Nichols (left) and John Underwood*

Dr Nichols said: "The new health communication research centre will focus upon a range of issues including engagement and consultation, media coverage of the health service, the challenges surrounding lifestyle health campaigns such as smoking cessation and obesity, and the relationship between the pharmaceutical industry and public health systems. I cannot imagine a more challenging time for the healthcare sector than that which lies ahead."

CHCRE will undertake academic research, postgraduate level teaching, short courses for health practitioners, practical/commercial research and communications consultancy. The centre will be located at Bucks New University's High Wycombe Campus.

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