SPCR internship projects 2026

Name & email supervisor(s):
Rob Goodwin
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Name & email of reviewer(s) for applicants applying to undertake this internship project:

Length and dates of internship:
4-6 weeks. Approximately, in the period June-August 2026

Host department:
Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences, University of Nottingham

How will the internship be conducted:

☐ In person at the university
☐ Virtual/ from home
☒ Both are possible, depending on preference of student

Title internship project:
Understanding the diagnostic referral activity and consequences in advanced practice physiotherapists working in community interface clinics

Summary of the internship project: *(max 250 words, can include hyperlinks to further information)*

This internship is embedded within a mixed-methods research project entitled "*Understanding the diagnostic referral activity and consequences in advanced practice physiotherapists working in community interface clinics*." The project seeks to examine how physiotherapists working in advanced practice roles use diagnostic investigations—particularly MRI imaging—and to explore the clinical, professional, and patient-level consequences of these referral decisions.

Physiotherapists working in community interface and primary care settings increasingly have access to advanced diagnostic privileges. While these extended roles may improve access to care, they may also introduce additional professional pressures and uncertainty, with potential implications for referral behaviour, shared decision-making, and patient experience. The project aims to understand whether diagnostic referrals made by advanced practice physiotherapists working in community interface clinics are appropriate and clinically meaningful. The project will also explore how decisions are made and experienced by patients, and whether there are unintended consequences for both patients and clinicians, including potential iatrogenic harm.

The study uses a mixed-methods design. Quantitative components include analysis of routinely collected data on shared decision-making (using the CollaboRATE

questionnaire), diagnostic referral rates, referral appropriateness, and therapeutic yield. Qualitative components involve in-depth interviews with patients and physiotherapists to explore beliefs, experiences, motivations, and perceptions related to diagnostic referral and imaging decisions.

The intern will support data analysis and synthesis across both quantitative and qualitative work packages. Activities will include data cleaning and descriptive analysis, contributing to the assessment of referral appropriateness and outcomes, assisting with qualitative analysis of interview data, and supporting the integration and write-up of findings. The project and any work will be under-pinned by realist methodology (For details see; https://www.ramesesproject.org/). The intern will receive regular supervision and mentorship from the project lead, providing a supportive environment to develop skills in mixed-methods research, applied health services research, and academic writing.

Learning objectives:
By the end of the internship, the student will be able to:

- Develop an understanding of advanced practice physiotherapy roles in primary care and an understanding of the scope, responsibilities, and challenges of physiotherapists working in advanced practice and community interface clinic settings, particularly in relation to diagnostic decision-making.
- Develop an understanding of shared decision-making and the CollaboRATE tool within the context of diagnostic referral and imaging decisions.
- Develop an understanding of realist research methodology as it is applied to this project and the various analytical stages of this project.
- Develop skills in quantitative health data analysis and conduct qualitative analysis of interview data. Assist with coding and thematic analysis of qualitative interview data from patients and physiotherapists, developing skills in qualitative methods and reflexive analysis.
- Contribute to the preparation, management, and descriptive analysis of routinely collected clinical data, including referral rates, imaging outcomes, and therapeutic yield.
- Integrate mixed-methods findings and contribute to the triangulation and synthesis of quantitative and qualitative findings to develop a coherent understanding of diagnostic referral behaviours and their consequences.
- Develop academic writing and dissemination skills
- Contribute to drafting sections of research outputs (e.g. results, discussion, or reports), developing clear and concise academic writing skills.

- Build confidence in professional research practice

- Work effectively within a research team, engage in regular supervision, respond to feedback, and demonstrate ethical awareness and good research governance.

Any further information: