Research collaboration continues across key primary care priorities

The School is delighted to announce that £2.5 million has been awarded to seven new collaborative studies in the key areas of infection, anti-microbial resistance, hypertension, polypharmacy, chronic disease and multimorbidity. The large cross-department projects join the 85 studies currently funded to date since the School’s renewal in October 2015.

Developing and evaluating a measure of inappropriate polypharmacy in primary care. Rupert Payne (Bristol) with co-applicants Alastair Hay, Richard Morris and John MacLeod (Bristol), Tony Avery and Sarah Rodgers (Nottingham), Jenni Burt (Cambridge) and Stephen Campbell (Manchester).

Quantifying severity of chronic conditions in English primary care using the clinical practice research datalink. Evan Kontopantelis (Manchester) with co-applicants Chris Salisbury (Bristol), Christian Mallen and Carolyn Chew-Graham (Keele), David Reeves, Harm van Marwijk and Darren Ashcroft (Manchester), Nadeem Qureshi and Stephen Weng (Nottingham), Tim Holt and Rafael Perera (Oxford).

Improving identification of familial hypercholesterolaemia in primary care using a new case ascertainment tool (FAMCAT). Nadeem Qureshi (Nottingham) with co-applicants Kate Walters (UCL), Barbara Hanratty (Newcastle), Katherine Payne (Manchester), Stephen Weng, Joe Kai, Carol Coupland, Matthew Jones and Paul Leighton (Nottingham).

Developing clinically useful subgroups from urine samples reported as ‘mixed growth’ to guide primary care clinicians. Gail Hayward (Oxford) with co-applicants Chris Butler and Tom Fanshawe (Oxford), Michael Moore (Southampton), Alastair Hay (Bristol).


Feasibility study of Pelargonium Sidiodes root extract EPS®7630 (Kaloba®) for lower respiratory tract infection in adults. Michael Moore (Southampton) with co-applicants George Lewith and Paul Little (Southampton), Alastair Hay (Bristol), Merlin Willcox and Chris Butler (Oxford), Andrew Flower, Caroline Eyles, Lily Yao and Gareth Griffiths (Southampton).

A randomised controlled trial on the effectiveness of GP promotion of e-cigarettes in supporting reduced smoking and abstinence in hardcore smokers with smoking-related chronic disease. Rachna Begh (Oxford) with co-applicants Paul Aveyard (Oxford), Tim Coleman (Nottingham), Felix Naughton (Cambridge), Hazel Gilbert (UCL) and Rebecca Barnes (Bristol).
Genetics of type 2 diabetes revealed

The School for Primary Care Research co-funded a study into type 2 diabetes which has produced the most detailed picture to date of the genetics underlying the condition.

More than 300 scientists from 22 countries collaborated on the study, which analysed the genomes of more than 120,000 people with ancestral origins in Europe, South and East Asia, the Americas and Africa.

Andrew Farmer, Professor of General Practice in the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford, working with colleagues from the Oxford Centre for Diabetes, Endocrinology and Metabolism, contributed data from a group of 200 patients who were recruited from 12 local practices in a study looking at the prevalence of monogenic diabetes. The findings of this community-based study in Oxfordshire were published in 2011 in Diabetologia.

Type 2 diabetes is a growing threat to global health, with one in 10 people either having the disease or predicted to develop it during their lifetime. The risk of developing this form of diabetes is influenced by the pattern of genetic changes inherited from their parents, and environmental factors such as levels of exercise and choice of diet.

A better understanding of precisely how these factors contribute to type 2 diabetes will enable researchers to develop new ways of treating and preventing this condition. The findings of the broader study, published in Nature, identify several potential targets for new diabetes treatments, but also reveal the complexity of the disease that needs to be addressed by efforts to develop more personalised strategies for treatment and prevention.

Read the full story here.

Developing a support needs tool for patients with advanced COPD

The support needs tool is a component of a complex intervention to enable identification, communication and discussion of support needs for patients with advanced Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) in primary care: the Support Needs Approach for Patients (SNAP). Dr Morag Farquhar and researchers at the University of Cambridge have developed the draft tool, grounded in the evidence-base of a rapid review of the literature, qualitative analysis of purposively sampled mixed method interviews with patients with advanced COPD, and focus groups with patients and carers living with COPD. The draft tool has been reviewed in workshops with patients, carers and healthcare professionals who have reviewed the tool’s content and language, and endorsed both the tool and the proposed approach.

Priority setting for the Cochrane Tobacco Addiction Group (TAG)

As part of the Cochrane Tobacco Addiction Group’s 20th anniversary, researchers at the University of Oxford held a stakeholder workshop to inform future research priorities of the group. The stakeholder engagement forms part of a wider School funded study to gather evidence to inform smokers and healthcare providers of ways to prevent or stop smoking. Read more.
Dr Matthew Ridd, a practising GP and Consultant Senior Lecturer at the University of Bristol has been awarded the 2017 RCGP John Fry Award.

Matthew’s research explores dermatology in primary care, continuity of care and person-centred care, with a foundation in dermatological issues in general practice and wider primary care.

New Regius Professorship

World leading research on ageing at Newcastle University’s Institute for Ageing was recognised by the Queen during her 90th birthday celebrations in June. A new Regius Professorship was created, one of twelve in the country, which recognises exceptionally high quality research.

SAPC - best educational research prize

Congratulations to Dr Sophie Park, GP and Senior Lecturer in Primary Care and Population Health at UCL, who was awarded the prize for best educational research presentation at SAPC in Dublin (6-8 July 2016).

Sophie presented work, supported by the RCGP scientific fund, which aimed to determine what information patients would like about participation in general practice-based undergraduate teaching, and how they would like this to be made available. Prior to this Sophie was PI on two significant studies funded by the SPCR: A Best Evidence Medical Education (BEME) systematic review of general practice undergraduate medical education; and, PatMed which used PPI to interpret and develop models about patient and student participation in general practice-based teaching.

Congratulations also go to the recipient of this year’s Yvonne Carter Award for Outstanding Young Researcher 2016, Dr Kamal Mahtani. Kamal is a GP and NIHR Academic Clinical Lecturer in General Practice, Deputy Director Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine in the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford.

In addition, PPI collaborator from the University of Nottingham, Antony Chuter, won the Dangerous Ideas prize for his lay patient poster entitled ‘Considering who is a ‘Lay Patient’.’

Other research presented at SAPC this year included results from over thirty SPCR research projects.

OBE awarded to Professor Debbie Sharp

Professor Debbie Sharp, a member of the School since its inception ten years ago, has been awarded an OBE for services to primary care in the Queen’s Birthday Honours list.

Professor Debbie Sharp is Professor of Primary Health Care in the Centre for Academic Primary Care at the University of Bristol. The School would like to congratulate Debbie on this magnificent achievement.

President’s Doctoral Scholar award

SPCR trainee Yumna Masood has been selected as the Faculty of Medicine’s 2016 President’s Doctoral Scholar at the University of Manchester.

Contributing to college and university life

Ben Fletcher, SPCR trainee at the University of Oxford, was presented with a Nautilus Award by Green Templeton College on 25 June. The award recognises his outstanding contributions to college and university life, in particular his publication record, conference presentations, and competitive selection for the TUTOR-PHC (Transdisciplinary Understandings and Training on Research Primary Health Care) programme.

John Fry award

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National Institute for Health Research School for Primary Care Research  
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Addressing health inequalities in hard to reach ethnic minority groups

The Centre for Primary Care at the University of Manchester is engaged in a wide range of multidisciplinary research to improve the delivery of care for people living with long-term conditions and to improve health inequalities. Researchers Waquas Waheed, Maria Panagioti and Gavin Daker-White recently completed a meta analysis of barriers and facilitators in accessing care for dementia in British ethnic minorities, linking it to the School’s disease prevention and diagnosis theme and adding evidence to the non-communicable disease, multimorbidity and ageing working groups. Waquas writes about the study here.

“The ethnic minority population in developed countries is increasing over time. These groups are at a higher risk of mental illness and demonstrate lower participation in research. Published evidence suggests that multiple factors like stigma, lack of trust, differences in explanatory models, logistical issues and a lack of culturally aware researchers all act as barriers to ethnic minority recruitment into mental health research.

To reduce inequalities in participation there is a need to devise innovative and culturally sensitive recruitment strategies. It is also important that researchers share their experience of employing these strategies so that ethnic minority participation can be facilitated.

Based on findings from our published systematic review of barriers to recruitment of ethnic minorities to mental health research, an initial framework of potential barriers was formulated1. Following this, another systematic review was published proposing solutions to these barriers2. In a further mixed method paper, all solutions relevant to British South Asians, based on our research team’s experience of conducting five trials for depression, were documented3. Guided by these reviews we have developed a unique training programme - SHAMIL, which means to “include” in South Asian languages. The half day training equips researchers to devise and employ culturally sensitive recruitment strategies. We have already delivered this training to 23 researchers and all have reported significant improvement in their knowledge, confidence, skills and attitudes. Participants also found the training to be very acceptable and recommendable for other researchers.

Yumna Masood has been awarded a NIHR SPCR PhD studentship to take this work further. The project will involve Yumna working collaboratively with the research team on three randomised controlled trials evaluating psychosocial interventions for depression. She will train the researchers using SHAMIL training and provide further ongoing consultations to the researchers along with her supervisors to facilitate recruitment of South Asians into these trials. We plan to develop a consultation model to enable research teams to themselves enhance recruitment of South Asians, without us having to get directly involved in the recruitment process. This will help in wider dissemination of the model and its sustainability.”

The SPCR provides a very good platform to collaborate with like minded researchers spread across the participating centres.

Profile of Waquas Waheed

Waquas is Reader in Psychiatry at the University of Manchester’s Centre for Primary Care. In addition, he works as an honorary consultant psychiatrist in the NHS. His research focuses primarily on developing psychosocial interventions to address health inequalities, particularly for multimorbidity and in hard to reach ethnic minority groups. Waquas’ clinical work is based in the community and it is this contact he enjoys the most. When asked what he would have done if he had not chosen a primary care research career path, he said “Had I not been involved in primary care research perhaps I would still be involved in community based mental health research focusing on developing community based mental health interventions.”

Who inspired you to become a primary care researcher?

My original interest was in ethnic inequalities and I was always of the opinion that the greatest difference can be brought about by focusing my research on the community, with primary care as a starting point. My first research post under Professor Brugha at the University of Leicester convinced me that community based research was the area that I wanted to focus on. Discussions there led to my eventual move to research initially with Professor Creed and then gradually to primary care related research under the guidance of Professor Gask, who has always supported me in achieving my goals.

How does belonging to the SPCR facilitate collaboration?

The SPCR provides a very good platform to collaborate with like minded researchers spread across the participating centres. Perhaps I am the only psychiatrist in the School and my skills working with hard to reach ethnic minority groups can help collaborators broaden areas of research and make their results more generalisable by including these groups.

What advice do you have for younger researchers?

Primary care provides many opportunities and covers broad categories of research. This facilitates research in areas where there is an interplay of different illnesses, creating opportunities to explore new ideas and develop new interventions. My advice to young researchers will be to move into primary care to take advantage of these opportunities and be in a better position to make a great impact.

What do you do in your spare time?

In my spare time I enjoy maintaining contact with my friends and we regularly meet up. I follow cricket and like to spend time with my wife and children. My father has recently started living with us; it is enjoyable to regularly reminisce with him.

Recent publications

- Faecal carriage of antibiotic resistant Escherichia coli in asymptomatic children and associations with primary care antibiotic prescribing: a systematic review and meta-analysis. Ashley Bryce, Céire Costelloe, Claire Hawcroft, Mandy Wootton and Alastair D. Hay. BMC Infectious Diseases.
- Who cares for the clinicians? The mental health crisis in the GP workforce. Johanna Spiers, Marta Buszewicz, Carolyn Chew-Graham, Clare Gerada, David Kessler, Nick Leggett, Chris Manning, Anna Taylor, Gail Thornton, Ruth Riley. BJGP.
- Exploration of the psychological impact and adaptation to cardiac events in South Asians in the UK: a qualitative study. Mimi Bhattacharyya, Fiona Stevenson, Kate Walters. BMJ General /Family practice.
- “I was a full time proper smoker”: A qualitative exploration of smoking in the home after childbirth among women who relapse postpartum. Sophie Orton, Tim Coleman, Sarah Lewis, Sue Cooper, Laura L. Jones. PlosOne.
- Meeting the mental health needs of people with multiple sclerosis: a qualitative study of patients and professionals. Abigail Methley, Stephen Campbell, Sudeh Cheraghi-Sohi, Carolyn Chew-Graham. Disability and Rehabilitation.
- Using alternatives to face-to-face consultations: a survey of prevalence and attitudes in general practice. Heather Brant, Helen Atherton, Sue Ziebland, Brian McKinstry, John L Campbell, Chris Salisbury. BJGP.
- The impact on informal supporters of domestic violence survivors: A systematic literature review. Alison Clare Gregory, Emma Williamson, Gene Feder. Trauma Violence, & Abuse.
Having completed my PhD, I have had time to reflect on how funding from the School gave me the opportunities to progress as a researcher both through developing research skills and increasing my visibility. SPCR studentships are training awards and I made the most of attending relevant courses and training. However, increasing visibility as a researcher is a gradual and ongoing process. There are three aspects that I believe have helped increase my visibility and have been enabled through SPCR funding: (i) attending conferences, (ii) being a TUTOR PHC trainee and (iii) disseminating my research (through academic and non-academic routes).

Having the funding to attend national and international conferences has been hugely beneficial. Conferences are a great opportunity to showcase my work to experts in my field, build networks and get exposure to other research. I purposely targeted three primary care conferences which have links with each other: SAPC (Society for Academic Primary Care), NAPCRG (North American Primary Care Research Group) and PHCRC (Australian Primary Health Care Research Conference). Primary care is multidisciplinary and not disease-specific; therefore, I got the added benefit of learning how to present my research in a way which was accessible to a diverse audience. This is something I worked hard on and I was fortunate to win the PHCRC first time presenter award in Canberra. I also learnt how to write a good abstract which highlights the relevance and importance the research. It was these skills which I believe helped me achieve the distinguished paper award at NAPCRG and two NAPCRG Pearls (awarded for research presented at NAPCRG which is most likely to impact clinical practice).

The Canadian TUTOR PHC programme is a training opportunity only available for UK candidates through the School. I was fortunate to be the 2014/2015 candidate and hugely benefited from the experience. It enabled me to meet and work with Canadian researchers, who I was able to meet again at NAPCRG, and to have transdisciplinary input into my research.

A valuable lesson I learnt from attending NIHR and SPCR trainee events is the importance of dissemination, not just through conferences and publications but also non-academic routes. Social media is great for reaching a wide audience and can be effective for interacting with users and key stakeholders. I also ensured that I engaged with the Media Team at the University of Birmingham and my research was recently picked up by the Daily Mail.

I encourage all SPCR trainees to use the opportunities provided by the School and, importantly, learn from and be inspired by other trainees.
The ‘TUTOR-PHC’ Experience

TUTOR-PHC is a one-year, interdisciplinary research capacity building programme that has been training primary and integrated healthcare researchers and decision-makers since 2003.

The School sponsors a place on the programme every year and the successful applicant initially spends a few days at a symposium in Canada. The University of Southampton’s Ben Ainsworth was selected for the programme this year and wrote a blog. Excerpts from his blog are included here.

“I was thrilled when I was awarded the NIHR School for Primary Care Research (SPCR) place on the TUTOR-PHC course this year. The course is a one-year programme that aims to support primary care research trainees in Canada.

This year there were 14 trainee places available – 13 Canadian researchers, who ranged across academic and clinical backgrounds – including Post-docs and PhD students, epidemiologists, sociologists, pharmacists, nurses and family doctors... and one psychologist (which was me!).

The course as a whole consists of a 3-day ‘intensive symposium’ (this year it was in Bromont, near Montreal in Canada) followed by online workshops and seminars that are conducted throughout the year. The symposium fully expects you to ‘hit the ground running’ – by which I mean there was a lot of pre-reading that was drawn upon throughout the three days. As well as being interesting in its own right, this pre-reading was actually really useful to ‘level’ the wide range of experience and disciplines that were represented by the trainees. Having a very experimental background, I used it as a chance to wrap my head around the Canadian healthcare system, and its differences and similarities with our UK system. What was notable was the emphasis that both systems put on research in primary care to help patients – as demonstrated by the investment into the TUTOR programme.

Throughout the symposium, trainees are encouraged to engage with mentors wherever possible (at mealtimes, during free time and also during specific sessions, such as the poster session in which we were able to present our own work). Mentors are, like the trainees, from a wide range of Primary Care backgrounds, and being able to chat to all of them informally was a great way to understand exactly how primary care can really benefit from collaborative, interdisciplinary research teams. The opportunity to sit down and really talk to the massively skilled primary care mentors (some of whom were even Tutor trainees 10 years ago!) was an incredibly motivating privilege, and something that the Tutor course is rightly proud of.” Read the full blog.

NIHR Doctoral Research Camp

Jane Vennik and Trishna Rathod were selected by the School to attend the NIHR’s Doctoral Research Training Camp held at Ashridge Park in July this year. Jane, SPCR doctoral student at the University of Southampton, wrote a blog ‘Learning about successful grant applications at Ashridge House’.

Trishna, doctoral student at Keele University, won a highly recommended prize for her poster presentation. She was also in the group who won best group presentation. She is pictured here with Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Scientific Adviser with Research and Development for the Department of Health.
Events

SPCR Annual Trainees Event 2016
www.spcr.nihr.ac.uk/events/queens-college
19 - 20 September
Queen’s College, Oxford

SPCR Ten Year Anniversary Showcase
www.spcr.nihr.ac.uk/events/ty
22 November
Wellcome Trust, London

NIHR Trainees Meeting
6 - 7 December
Queen’s Hotel, Leeds

NIHR funding opportunities

NIHR Evaluation, Trials and Studies Co-ordinating Centre (NETSCC)
- Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation (EME) Programme
- Health Service and Delivery Research (HS&DR) Programme
- Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Programme
- Public Health Research (PHR) Programme.

Find out more about NIHR CCF research calls and competitions, guidance notes and supporting information: www.nihr.ac.uk/about/central-commissioning-facility.htm

NIHR Trainees Coordinating Centre (TCC)
- NIHR Fellowships (Doctoral, Post-Doctoral, Career Development, Senior Research, Transitional Research)
- NIHR Integrated Academic Training (ACF, CL, IPF and Clinician Scientist Schemes).
- NIHR Research Professorships
- NIHR Research Methods
- NIHR Health Education England (HEE) Clinical Academic Training for nurses and midwives (Doctoral, Clinical Lecturer, Senior Clinical Lecturer)
- NIHR Health Education England (HEE) Healthcare Science Research Fellowships (Doctoral, Post-Doctoral, Senior Clinical Lecturer)
- NIHR Clinical Trials Fellowships.
- NIHR Knowledge Mobilisation Research Fellowships.

Find out more about our awards and the funding available from NIHR TCC: www.nihr.ac.uk/funding/funding-for-training-and-career-development.htm

Blogs

Roundup of the SAPC annual meeting
Domhnall MacAuley, CMAJ blog

Learning about successful grant applications
Jane Vennik, University of Southampton

Big data in healthcare: problems and potential
Sarah Stevens, University of Oxford

A remarkable turnaround for primary care academics
Richard Hobbs, University of Oxford, CMAJ blog

The ‘TUTOR-PHC’ experience
Ben Ainsworth, University of Southampton

Musculoskeletal pain and mental health: Is social participation an effect mediator?
Shula Baker, Keele University

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Round 5 of the NIHR Knowledge Mobilisation Research Fellowship (KMRF)
Open for applications

NIHR Knowledge Mobilisation Research (KMR) Fellowships are designed to build capacity within the fields of mobilising knowledge, whilst simultaneously researching implementation processes and impacts.

Round 5 of the programme is now open and closes on Thursday 15 September 2016.

For more information visit www.nihr.ac.uk/kmrf

New!
The Researcher
A digital publication created for health researchers by health researchers about what it’s like to be one.