New strategies needed to increase identification of gambling problems

Participation in gambling is increasing in the UK with surveys indicating that around 59% of British adults reported gambling activities in 2010, up 7% from three years earlier.

In a School funded cross-sectional study Dr Sean Cowlishaw, and a team of researchers at the University of Bristol, explored gambling problems, and gambling related problems (anxiety, financial strain and relationship breakdowns) among 1000 patients attending general practices across 11 general practices in southwest England.

The study found that an improved understanding of the burden of, and responses to, gambling problems is required by general practices in order to address the health-related behaviour. The study highlighted the need for increased acknowledgement and capacity to respond to gambling problems through training and support for GPs in order to identify patients and help facilitate access to specialist services. Read more.

Gambling problems in primary care

BACKGROUND
Gambling availability has grown in the UK since 2007, along with numbers of people reporting problems with gambling.

1 in 20 patients in routine general practice reported a gambling problem

1058 patients in 11 GP surgeries

Vulnerable groups

Young males (aged 18-24) 25%
Drug use 16%
Risky drinking 10%
Possible depression 7%

OUTCOMES
Findings suggest an issue that is hidden from healthcare providers. There is need for recognition and responses to gambling problems in primary care.
The NIHR Dissemination Centre published a new themed review which focusses on women’s health before, during and after pregnancy.

The NIHR review ‘Health for pregnancy’ consolidates evidence to improve health and well-being across the areas of smoking, healthy diet and weight, alcohol and drugs, mental health, violence against women, and supporting families using multifaceted approaches. The review is aimed particularly at healthcare professionals working with women around the time of pregnancy but is also of interest to colleagues with a wider interest in women’s health.

A study funded by the School and conducted by Dr Katharine Bowker and Principal Investigator Dr Sue Cooper, both from the University of Nottingham, is featured on page 39. The aim of the study was to understand the experience of pregnant women who use NRT but discontinue this early or do not use the medication as recommended. The study concluded that many women underused NRT but simultaneously smoked. Challenging negative perceptions about NRT and educating women further about the risks of smoking may encourage them to use NRT products as recommended. These findings add to the research surrounding the efficacy of NRT during pregnancy by providing insight into how pregnant women use NRT during a quit attempt and how this may influence adherence. It may assist health professionals to support pregnant smokers by increasing their understanding about the differing ways in which women use NRT and help them address concerns women may have about the safety of NRT.

Read more from the NIHR Dissemination Centre.
Fellowship of the Faculty of Public Health

Professor Christian Mallen, SPCR Training Director and Deputy Director of the Research Institute for Primary Care and Health Sciences at Keele University has been awarded Fellowship of the Faculty of Public Health through distinction and in recognition of his clinical and academic contribution to public health.

As a Fellow, Christian will join the ranks of highly regarded standard-bearers for public health, providing opportunities to further shape the future of the Faculty and its scope through policy development and committee involvement in education.

Visiting Fellowship in Implementation Science

Dr Amy O’Donnell, SPCR Fellow, has been awarded a 2-year Visiting Fellowship in Implementation Science at the Linkoping University in Sweden. This exciting award will build directly on the work Amy has done during her SPCR fellowship. Starting in October 2017, Amy will work with Professor Per Nilsen (Division of Community Medicine) on a study to evaluate the implementation of preventative alcohol interventions in health care via a series of population surveys in England, Sweden and the Netherlands. The English arm of the study is being conducted in collaboration with University College London’s Alcohol Toolkit Survey.

RCGP Fellowship

Dr Toby Helliwell, recipient of a two year SPCR GP Career Progression Award in 2013, has been awarded a Royal College of General Practitioners Fellowship in recognition of his significant contribution to general practice. Toby is currently NIHR Academic Clinical Lecturer in General Practice at the Research Institute for Primary Care and Health Sciences (iPCHS) at Keele University. “I would like to thank the SPCR for awarding me the GP progression funding. This was critical for me to undertake further research investigating polymyalgia rheumatica and giant cell arteritis in primary care which allowed me to complete my PhD which has subsequently opened so many opportunities to develop my career in academic general practice.”

Best poster prize

PhD student Yumna Masood won ‘Best poster prize’ at the Primary Care Mental Health Research Conference, at Keele University on 16 March. Yumna, who is based at the University of Manchester, said the decision to award her the prize was based on the clear structure, layout, and great visual effect of her poster.

Title: Strategies to recruit ethnic minorities to clinical trials in the UK: A Systematic Review. Masood Y, Bower P, Waheed W.
Medically unexplained symptoms: continuing challenges for primary care

Professor Carolyn Chew-Graham had an editorial published on medically unexplained symptoms (MUS) in the BJGP this month. “It has been estimated that MUS account for up to 45% of all general practice consultations, while a study based in secondary care indicated that about 50% of patients had no clear diagnosis at 3 months.”

The School funded research informing the piece asked “Can metaphors usefully represent underlying CBT principles for Medically Unexplained Symptoms (MUS), and how acceptable are such generic and MUS specific metaphors to patients and practitioners?”

More about the research can be found on the website

Read the editorial

NIHR highlight on patient experience of primary care

Every year since 2007 the NHS in England asked patients what they thought about their GP practice in a large national survey. The survey findings are intended to inform patients, healthcare professionals and planners about patients’ experience of the care provided by individual practices in England. Read more.

NIHR Highlights

Options in the care of people with depression

School funded research undertaken at the University of Manchester, on the association between chronic physical conditions and the effectiveness of collaborative care for depression, featured in a NIHR Dissemination Centre Highlight in March.

Depression may affect more than one in ten of the UK population at any one time, and cost the NHS in excess of £500m per year, with high additional costs in informal care and lost working time. Up to 90% of patients with depression are treated in primary care, but care can be complex, involving a number of different specialists and requiring access to different forms of treatment.

The School funded review assessed whether the effectiveness of collaborative care for depression is moderated by the presence, type, and number of chronic physical conditions. The evidence will help inform guideline updates but overall costs of implementation at scale will also be important for commissioners given the current pressures on the health service and the interest in new models of care. Read the NIHR Highlight: Options in the care of people with depression.

Congratulations

Professors Peter Bower and Louise Robinson have been named as NIHR Senior Investigators for 2017 for primary health care.

Prof Bower is head of Primary Care and Population Health at the University of Manchester. Prof Robinson is head of the Institute for Ageing at Newcastle University.
GP Tutor’s conference

Ruth Riley (Bristol) and Marta Buszewicz (UCL) presented the results of a School funded study at a workshop for GP tutors who teach UCL Medical School undergraduates. The study explored the barriers and facilitators to help-seeking by GPs with mental health problems.

Principal Investigator, Ruth, and co-applicant and academic GP, Marta, invited attendees to respond to the findings of their research, and discuss the implications for policy and practice. Those attending - all practising GPs - were surprised and shocked by the level of mental distress, isolation and lack of support experienced by the study participants.

**The main implications for policy and practice identified included:**

- To increase patient awareness of the pressures/constraints facing GPs
- To make it easier to recruit locums at short notice to cover for GPs when unwell
- To reduce GP workload by recruiting more nurse practitioners to manage minor illness and encourage patients to manage self-limiting illnesses where possible
- To engender a culture of effective support for colleagues and impart the importance of being open and honest at practice meetings, and coffee breaks.

Read more about the research and outputs. [Doctors as patients - a qualitative study to explore the barriers and facilitators to help-seeking by General Practitioners with mental health problems: improving access to care.](#)

Blog by Marta Buszewicz ‘Doctors as Patients’

Supporting SPCR research

Twenty SPCR administration, communication and patient and public involvement leads met in Birmingham on Monday 27 February to discuss better ways to support SPCR researchers and their outputs. The SPCR Senior Scientific Manager, Dr Georgina Fletcher, welcomed the group and spoke about the NIHR’s key research priorities and the direction the School’s funding rounds will take up until renewal in 2020. The groups spent the afternoon networking, discussing processes and planning for the year ahead.

*Left to right back row: Kate Farrington, Alex Mikulski, Emma Palmer-Cooper, Dan Richards-Doran, Luke Ashby, Georgina Fletcher, Christina Sheehan, Nadia Jackson, Karen Morecroft, Nancy Horlick, Claire Ashmore.*

*Front row: Maureen Glendinning, Jackie Seely, Helen Bolton, Karen Rhodes, Frances Cater, Terry Lisle, Susan Hrisos, Claire Planner and Steven Blackburn.*
International Women’s Day

This year International Women’s Day was celebrated under the banner of ‘Be bold for change’. Universities around the country took part in celebrations to promote the delivery of equality for women and to forge a better working world with gender inclusivity. The many and varied events taking place across SPCR partner universities in celebration of IWD can be viewed on the SPCR website alongside PhD student Kate Ellis’ account of her research on interventions to increase physical activity among postnatal women. Read more

The SPCR funded CANDID (Cancer Diagnosis Decision Rules) study is seeing positive results around the country. The School’s collaborative study investigates which of the symptoms and examination results received by clinicians are the most effective in predicting lung or colon cancer. CANDID will ensure that the right patient receives the right test at the right time which will be a considerable cost saving to the NHS and also reduce anxiety in patients by avoiding referral for unnecessary tests.

Dr David Patient is the lead GP for research at Parklands Surgery in Chichester working on the CANDID trial. Since September 2015, over 360 patients have been recruited to the CANDID study in the south east of England, and over 140 of these were recruited by the Parklands Surgery research team. The surgery was recently awarded Highly Commended in the Rising Star category in the NIHR Clinical Research Network Kent, Surrey and Sussex Research Awards.

Chichester GP surgery contributing to the CANDID trial

The five year programme will support the development of a strong cohort of clinical academics, by providing high quality training in applied research units, and supporting capacity development in a critically important but still under-resourced field. The Wellcome Trust PhD Programme unites four primary care departments, bringing together expertise in a wide range of methodologies and covering important clinical areas. The four host departments - Keele, Cambridge, Oxford and Southampton are members of the NIHR School for Primary Care Research and have a strong track record in collaborative research and developing clinical academic careers. Consideration is currently being given to how other members of the School will be included in the future. Find out more about the programme.

The Wellcome Trust PhD Programme for Primary Care Clinicians

The five year programme will support the development of a strong cohort of clinical academics, by providing high quality training in applied research units, and supporting capacity development in a critically important but still under-resourced field. The Wellcome Trust PhD Programme unites four primary care departments, bringing together expertise in a wide range of methodologies and covering important clinical areas. The four host departments - Keele, Cambridge, Oxford and Southampton are members of the NIHR School for Primary Care Research and have a strong track record in collaborative research and developing clinical academic careers. Consideration is currently being given to how other members of the School will be included in the future. Find out more about the programme.
School for Primary Care Research

Developing skills for patient and public involvement

Post-graduate training day for SPCR member institutions.

Newcastle University Institute for Ageing

Wednesday, 7 June
10am - 4.30pm

For more information, contact Beth Bareham:
b.k.bareham@newcastle.ac.uk

Another promising training day is being organised by SPCR doctoral students, this time at Newcastle University. The series of workshops, which started in February this year, aims to give students opportunities to learn from the expertise in member institute of the SPCR. The sessions are open to all doctoral students belonging to one of the nine SPCR member departments - they may or may not be funded by the School. The first workshop focussed on randomised controlled trials in primary care and was held in Cambridge. Contact Beth Bareham to find out more about the workshop.

Quality Improvement Learning Network

Quality Improvement (QI) is an evidence-based approach that helps primary care free up time to deliver and evaluate initiatives, and embed new approaches more effectively and efficiently into practice. Read more
**Dates for your diary**

**Developing skills for patient and public involvement**
7 June 2017
Newcastle University. [Website](#)

**Digital Health Working Group Meeting**
22 June 2017
UCL. Contact: nadia.jackson@ucl.ac.uk

**SAPC Annual meeting**
12 - 14 July 2017
University of Warwick

**SPCR Trainees meeting**
18-19 September 2017
Worcester College
University of Oxford

**SPCR Showcase: Working better together**
19 September 2017
University of Oxford

**NIHR Trainees meeting**
November 2017
Queen’s Hotel
Leeds

**Blogs**

**The Influence of PPI in Practice-Based Research: Authenticity and Impact**
Emma Palmer-Cooper

**What is the ‘3D approach’ for managing multiple long-term conditions?**
Mei-See Man

**Health care funding: is the grass greener on the other side?**
Chris Ham, The King’s Fund

**Publishing soon?**
Please send all SPCR funded publications and press releases to Kate Farrington before the proposed date of release. All info about outputs is available on the [website](#).