The School celebrated ten years of primary care research at the Wellcome Collection on 22 November. Delegates from around the country were welcomed with a programme of presentations and discussions highlighting research impact made since the School’s inception in 2006. They were also exposed to research in progress which promises to further impact on policy and practice, and add to the evidence base, in years to come.

The School’s first Director, Professor Martin Roland, gave the keynote address ‘How far has primary care research come and how far does it have to go?’ in which he laid out key markers, turning points and the potential challenges for the future of primary care research.

The SPCR wishes you a very merry Christmas and best wishes for the New Year.
There are three components that I would particularly applaud. Firstly, the creation of collaborative academic units that have allowed the development of a critical mass of expertise sufficient to undertake large trials. This underpinned many high quality research studies published in the top medical journals.

Secondly, the creation of an academic career structure that allows aspiring primary care researchers to access career development opportunities, join well mentored and supported PhD pathways, and progress to funded senior academic opportunities.

Thirdly, and possibly the most important, enabling this new wave of accomplished researchers ensures leadership for the future. We may recognise the current achievements of the SPCR but creating this cohort of skilled researchers will be its lasting legacy.

Domhnall MacAuley, CMAJ

Associate Editor

A primary care success story
Domhnall MacAuley, CMAJ

Happy Birthday SPCR
Roger Jones, BJGP

POSTER PRIZES

1st prize - Bethany Bareham, Newcastle University for her poster entitled: ‘A qualitative systematic review of older adults’ and health and social care practitioners’ perceptions and experiences of alcohol consumption in later life.’

2nd prize - Alison Gregory, University of Bristol, for her poster entitled: ‘Exploring the ripple-out effect: The impact of domestic violence on informal supporters of survivors.’

3rd prize - Gemma-Claire Ali, University of Cambridge, for her poster entitled: ‘Developing a dyadic mental health intervention for people living with chronic physical conditions and their supporters: The literature review phase.’
How has the fellowship helped shape your career?

The Fellowship has allowed me to gain valuable research experience, access training and learn from other researchers in a leading institution. I've developed research skills and interests, and have been able to make an informed decision about doing a PhD and pursuing a career in academic primary care.

Best Poster Prize at NIHR ‘Research leaders of the future’ meeting

The NIHR Trainees Co-ordinating Centre held its 10th Annual NIHR Trainee Meeting ‘Research leaders of the future’ on 6-7 December, where SPCR GPCP trainee Dr Shoba Poduval won Best Poster Prize.

Professor Dave Jones welcomed delegates and highlighted the NIHR’s achievements over the past ten years. In particular, he spoke of the role of the NIHR in building research capacity and providing support to trainees through the NIHR Trainees’ Co-ordinating Centre (NIHR TCC), indicating that NIHR TCC award numbers have grown from an initial 495 in 2006 to 2295 in 2015.

Prizes were awarded to posters that were engaging, readable and written in plain English. “It has been a useful reminder of the importance of making research clear to patients and the public, in order to foster public engagement and understanding of research” said Shoba. We asked Shoba about her poster ‘Online diabetes structured education: A mixed methods pilot study’, her research interests and future opportunities.

Why is your research topical?

People with type 2 diabetes need more options for learning the skills they need to take care of their diabetes. At the moment face-to-face group courses are available but not everyone who needs them is referred, and of those who are referred only a small percentage actually attend. Some people find it hard to get to face-to-face courses, or don’t like group education. Our online course, HeLP-Diabetes: Starting out, gives people another way of learning, and is easy to access.

Did your research reveal any gaps that warrant further investigation?

We still don’t know how effective, or cost-effective, HeLP-Diabetes: Starting out, is compared to the available face-to-face courses. This is the question commissioners need to answer to be able decide whether to offer it to patients. Ultimately we’d like to answer this question by conducting a definitive randomised controlled trial (RCT).

How has the fellowship helped shape your career?

The Fellowship has allowed me to gain valuable research experience, access training and learn from other researchers in a leading institution. I’ve developed research skills and interests, and have been able to make an informed decision about doing a PhD and pursuing a career in academic primary care. Read more
RUG at 10: Milestone moment for Keele’s Research User Group

The Keele Research User Group was initiated in 2006 to engage with and draw on the experiences of patients. Patient involvement plays an important role in the development of research questions, research methods and the implementation of research findings into practice. The Keele RUG began with 11 patients suffering from musculoskeletal conditions and has grown to now include over 80 members advising over 70 different research projects. Projects cover musculoskeletal health and pain, arthritis and long term conditions, implementation and mental health.

RUG Support Worker Laura Campbell writes about the recent RUG anniversary celebration.

A decade on from its tentative first steps into Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement, the Research Institute for Primary Care and Health Sciences at Keele University recently celebrated the ever growing success of its Research User Group (affectionately known as the RUG).

Held at Keele Hall on September 22nd, the RUG’s 10 year Celebration Event brought together patients, researchers, charity representatives and PPIE champions from all over the UK and Europe to recognise the group’s remarkable achievements and forward thinking in PPIE.

It’s hard to imagine that when it was first created back in 2006, PPIE in research was a rarity. But thanks to the determination of staff at the Research Institute (particularly Elaine Hay, Rhian Hughes, Pauline Ong, Clare Jinks, Krysia Dziedzic and Claire Ashmore) to incorporate PPIE into its research projects, the Research User Group now boasts over 80 members, who work on over 70 projects in a variety of conditions - arthritis, mental health, musculoskeletal health, long term conditions and implementation.

With a dedicated PPIE team (Adele Higginbottom, Steven Blackburn, Carol Rhodes, Laura Campbell and Robert Taylor), the RUG continues to play a large part in the development of Institute’s world leading research. Above all, its success is down to each and every one of its committed and hardworking members who have the courage to share their most difficult experiences in a bid to improve healthcare in the future.

One of the highlights of the event was a special video, produced and edited by Laura Campbell with support from Adele Higginbottom, Robert Taylor and the RUG members themselves.

Using interviews with RUG members, photographs taken over the years and poignant music and words, the video took the audience through the RUG’s 10 year history before underlining the reasons why the voices of patients and the public need to be heard in all aspects of research and implementation.

The lyrics to Emeli Sande’s ‘Read All About It’ were chosen as the soundtrack to the video. Emeli’s motivational words fitted perfectly with the history and raison d’etre of the Research User Group, describing how important it is to speak up and speak out; “You’ve got the words to change a nation, But you’re biting your tongue, You’ve spent a lifetime stuck in silence, Afraid that you’ll
say something wrong … we’re all a little different, there’s no need to be ashamed.”

Speakers on the day included Simon Denegri, who is the National Director for Patients and the Public in Research at the NIHR and Chair of INVOLVE. Simon discussed PPIE over the last ten years and emphasised that patients and the public should be valued and supported during the entire research process.

Representatives from NIHR, Arthritis Research UK, Primary Care Consortium, CRN, School for Primary Care Research, CLAHRC and a host of local groups were present.

As the event continued, several Primary Care Sciences research and clinical staff spoke about the various ways in which the RUG has created meaningful partnerships with patients, carers and the public within the centre, to design and deliver high quality research which is relevant to patients and their families. The breadth of PPIE at Keele was showcased with a poster competition, in which members of the RUG chose their favourite three posters, announcing the overall winner (Annabelle Machin) at the close of the event.

The day finished with an exciting overview of the future – Carolyn Chew-Graham spoke about the continued development of mental health research, Paul Campbell talked about his projects working with children and young people and Krysia Dziedzic presented the future of research implementation, unveiling for the first time the LINK Working Party (Lay Involvement in the Mobilisation of Knowledge) a newly-formed group which focuses on involving patients in translating research evidence into practice.

It’s true to say that the future of PPIE at Keele is bright and is rapidly expanding on an international scale in both research and implementation projects.

Ten years ago, no one could have anticipated the success of the RUG – a ‘jewel in the crown’ of the Research Institute for Primary Care and Health Sciences at Keele University.

Dr Emma Palmer-Cooper started working as SPCR PPI Officer in October 2016. She completed her doctoral research at King’s College London and then held a post-doctoral clinical research position in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Oxford. We spoke to Emma about her PPI experience and plans for the School.

**What were your involved in prior to your current position as PPI Officer?**

I completed my doctorate at King’s College London in which I investigated self-awareness and cognition in psychiatric disorders. My postdoctoral work focussed on the prevalence and symptom profile of ‘antibody mediated psychosis’, as well as possible treatment options. I have been actively interested in PPI since beginning my postdoctoral work, after seeing how much patients and researchers alike can benefit and learn from the process.

**How did you include PPI in your doctoral and post-doctoral studies?**

My PhD involved lay reviewers commenting on the study design, and resulted in a better project that answered the research question more comprehensively. My post-doctoral work involved much more PPI. A LEAP panel reviewed the study design, information sheets and recruitment strategy for one study, ensuring the information was accurate to their experiences. Interestingly one member was a patient who had been involved in a screening study by our group, and wanted to give back to research after her participation led to a different course of treatment and subsequent recovery.

**Why is the integration of PPI in primary care research important?**

PPI is something that should be seen as essential to health care researchers. Service user and lay input can help shape a project to ensure the question is appropriate, methods are acceptable, and that results are meaningful and beneficial to the populations that it is designed to benefit. PPI allows service users to ensure that research is relevant. It also adds credibility to the research being carried out, and allows the wider public to have more ‘faith’ in research outputs.

**What do you hope to achieve as PPI Officer for the SPCR?**

I hope to bring together PPI knowledge, resources and training from across the nine member organisations. I also want to review PPI practice and make PPI reporting easier, to help inform best practice.

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**profile:**

**Emma Palmer-Cooper**

SPCR Patient and Public Involvement Officer

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From left to right: Georgina Fletcher (Senior Scientific Manager), Kate Farrington (Communications Officer), Emma Palmer-Cooper (PPI Officer), Karen Rhodes (Finance Officer) and Karen Morecroft (Project Officer).
Going the extra mile: PPI representatives meet to discuss recommendations

By: Emma Palmer-Cooper, SPCR PPI Officer.

On 25th November, INVOLVE hosted a meeting of PPI leads from across the NIHR to discuss their recently published recommendation for public involvement, and discuss suggestions for training and strategy improvements. The meeting included representatives from regional Clinical Research Facilities, Research Design Services, Clinical Research Networks, CLAHRCs, Academic Health Science Networks, Biomedical Research Centres/Units, Charities and the School for Primary Care Research.

**GOING THE EXTRA MILE**

Going the Extra Mile (GEM) is a set of recommendations developed by INVOLVE to help set goals for PPI and set precedent for best practice. The report highlighted how PPI has changed in the 10 years since INVOLVE was formally set up:

- Now PPI aims to encompass collaboration, rather than simple involvement, where the development of research is led by both researchers and members of the community that research will impact.
- The whole field of health research is now covered, as opposed to clinical research alone.
- PPI in the research process and outcomes are now equally valued.
- The benefits of a global, rather than national, focus are being recognised.
- The rise of digital technology and social media provide new avenues for involvement.

The 11 recommendations emphasise areas of best practice and key issues in current PPI practice, which centre on improvement and development of PPI processes and training, collaboration with PPI members, diversity, and review of processes over time.

**NIHR STRATEGIC OVERVIEW FOR PPI**

Chris Whitty, Chief Scientific Adviser to the Department of Health, explained that the impact health research has had on health outcomes across the board cannot be understated, thanks to all the individual participants of research. The population benefits from research, and they should be able to influence priorities and the way research is carried out. He also conveyed the NIHR’s commitment to ensure PPI is not just tokenistic in research, but should be present throughout, to ensure research cycle as standard. Diverse PPI communities are necessary to make sure that all patient and public voices are heard.

Issues raised are the visibility of involvement opportunities, especially to ‘seldom heard groups’ such as the elderly and minority communities. A new campaign to address this is being launched in 2017.

**LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS**

PPI attendees were asked to recommend areas of learning and development across the breadth of PPI, for researchers and lay members, so that INVOLVE can identify priority areas. These included issues surrounding diversity, training, development, impact monitoring, shared resources and platforms for dissemination.

A collaborative Learning & Development Project Group has been set up to include representatives across the NIHR, as a way of addressing these needs and developing suitable solutions to them. The SPCR will be involved in this, focusing particularly on issues of diversity Read more.
The annual trainees’ event was well supported this year with over 70 delegates attending a range of talks and poster presentations at the two day meeting on 19 and 20 September. The Queen’s College in Oxford houses a modern lecture theatre set within old stone walled gardens and 675 year old architecture. Undoubtedly the popularity of talks such as those given by Sophie Park and Sarah Tonkin-Crine on the academic support offered by Society of Academic Primary Care (SAPC), and the career progressions of Elizabeth Murray and Peter Bower, gave the early career researchers much food for thought when considering their own futures. “I have really enjoyed the conference. It was nice to meet colleagues from other centres and there was a good split between poster sessions which were kept to time exceptionally well. Very interesting and useful presentation topics.” said one trainee.

Senior Lecturer in Science Communication at University of Western England, Andy Ridgway, highlighted the importance of communicating research and pitching a story in ‘Disseminating research through the media’. Jennifer Harrison, HRA Approval Change Manager for the Health Research Authority spoke about the HRA approval process. Sophie Park, GP and Senior Lecturer in Primary Care at UCL spoke to delegates about Academic primary care for clinicians. She included a few practical questions for them to consider when developing a five year plan and the trainees enjoyed her interactive style.

Sophie Park, Health Psychologist and Senior Researcher at the University of Oxford, and Member of the SAPC Executive Committee, spoke about SAPC’s PHoCuS group for primary healthcare scientists, a multi-disciplinary research group open to any member of SAPC who is not medically trained. Sarah also spoke about the SAPC mentoring programme. Both described their different career paths and highlighted the need to diversify research skills and change research topic when considering an institutional change often needed for promotion.

Patient and Public Involvement Coordinator at the University of Oxford’s Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, Lynne Maddocks, gave the delegates key pointers to help make the inclusion and engagement of patients and the public beneficial to both the public and the research process in ‘PPI - 10 tips to make it easier’. 

“Fab talk @NIHRSPCR #spcrtrainees event from @JaneVennik and her experience at @NIHR_trainees doctoral camp! Make sure twitter.com/i/web/status/7...

“Gaining career insights at the SPCR trainees’ event”

Reducing burnout in doctors

Current approaches to dealing with burnouts in doctors on an individual case-by-case basis are not effective. According to recent research at the Universities of Manchester and Southampton, the issue should instead be tackled with organization-wide initiatives.

A meta-analysis study, which brought together the results of previously conducted research, was carried out to explore the effectiveness of interventions in reducing burnout in doctors. It explored the comparison between doctor-directed interventions that target the individual and organisation-directed interventions that target the working environment. The strength of the doctor’s experience and the particular healthcare setting they worked in was also assessed.

“Our findings clearly show that we need more effective intervention models to prevent burnout in doctors. Such models could be organization-directed interventions which promote healthy individual-organization relationships and view burnout a problem of the whole healthcare systems.”

Principal Investigator Dr Maria Panagioti, Research fellow in Primary Care, University of Manchester.

Read more
Recent publications


New NIHR funding opportunities available

from the Health Services and Delivery Research Programme and the Health Technology Assessment Programme
The RCGP is currently seeking submissions for the following awards:

The Yvonne Carter Award recognises earlier career researchers’ contributions in advancing academic primary care. The award enables the successful candidate to collaborate with researchers at an international level. Submission deadline is 31 January.

The Research Paper of the Year award recognises those who have published an exceptional piece of research relating to primary care. Submission deadline is 15 February.

To find out more, visit www.rcgp.org.uk/researchawards
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