The National Institute for Health Research and the School for Primary Care Research celebrate ten year anniversaries this year. One of the outputs of the NIHR’s anniversary is a commissioned report ‘The National Institute for Health Research at 10 years: An impact synthesis’ which highlights key impacts across the organisation. The NIHR were asked to consider the ways in which it has benefitted the health research landscape over the past ten years. Significant impacts of the NIHR’s support for clinical, applied health and social care research across ten themes were identified and 100 case studies were used to illustrate these. Included in the case studies are highlights from the following work conducted by School members since 2006.

Research to develop a smartphone app called the PainRecorder involved patients with musculoskeletal conditions in the design and functionality of the app, as well as in what kinds of data would be useful to collect.

The ‘Primary Care Research in Manchester Engagement Resource’ (PRIMER) promotes the involvement of the public in shaping research. As an innovative approach to involving patients and the public in the research process, PRIMER have run ‘hack days’ which were co-designed with patients and the public. PRIMER has also co-developed and co-delivered training with users, to provide input on how the public experience working with researchers, and to develop master classes on communications and how to set up and sustain public and patient involvement (PPI) groups.

Studies contributing to policy change include research which found that a mobile device that measures patients’ blood pressure while they are ambulatory is more accurate and cost effective than either clinical or home monitoring. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) updated its hypertension guidelines to recommend ambulatory monitoring.

Research with an impact on patient-centred care and the management of long-term conditions was highlighted in the report. Findings from research on the effectiveness of self-care strategies in non-communicable diseases is currently being used by the World Health Organization (WHO) guideline development group, to formulate WHO guidelines.

The ENRICH programme supports research into dementia. The report cites a paper co-authored by Steve Iliffe in 2014: ‘Enabling research in care homes: An evaluation of a national network of research ready care homes.’

Research is credited with advancing knowledge on how to prevent people from taking up smoking and on smoking cessation, in particular in less studied groups, such as pregnant women and children.
Helping GPs with the early detection of cancer

CANcer, Diagnosis Decision rules (CANDID) is the largest project funded by the School. The five year study, led by Paul Little from the University of Southampton, aims to use clinical information from 20,000 patients across England and Wales who visit their GP with possible symptoms of early lung or colon cancer.

In primary care the key areas of concern for both doctor and patients are delay in diagnosing cancer, getting high risk patients referred first, and keeping investigation to a minimum. There have been few valid studies to assist decision-making in primary care, either to get a patient referred quickly or to assist in making sure an anxious patient is effectively reassured. The CANDID study aims to develop ways of predicting who is more at risk of getting lung or bowel cancer. It hopes to improve early detection by identifying common early symptoms or combinations of symptoms and assist early referral, saving lives and providing long-term savings to the NHS.

In Oxfordshire, 222 patients have been recruited at the Eynsham Medical Centre making them the biggest recruiters in the county to date. Study teams across the country have recruited over 8,200 patients. Read the NIHR Clinical Research Network: Thames Valley and South Midlands press release.

Visit the CANDID website

An increase in clinical workload in seven years

An analysis of the workload in primary care from 2007 to 2014, conducted by researchers at the Universities of Oxford and Bristol, found that increases in average consultation rates rose by 13.5% over the seven year period. The research, published in The Lancet, found that people are visiting their GPs more often, and are having longer consultations than they were in 2007, resulting in a 16% rise in clinical workload. Researchers suggest that the overall primary care system in England may be reaching ‘saturation point’.

Lead author, the School’s director Professor Richard Hobbs, from Oxford University’s Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, said “Most English practices offer patients ten minute appointment slots, based on the expectation that some consultations will be shorter or patients won’t show up, so longer consultations can be accommodated within the booked clinic. Since the average face-to-face consultation is now approaching the ten minute threshold, there is no longer any slack - GPs and nurses are now consulting throughout the booked clinic without a break and demand for those clinic slots is rising.”

The study is the most comprehensive analysis of workload in primary care to date and involved an analysis of anonymised electronic health records from 100 million consultations with GPs and practice nurses in England. Read more.

Devolving health care decisions

Devolving health and social care decisions to local politicians and professionals adds further complexity to an already complex system. This is the argument researchers Julia Segar, Anna Coleman and Kath Checkland (pictured on the left) from the University of Manchester’s Centre for Primary Care in the Institute of Population Health make in a recently published article about the inclusion of health and social care as part of Greater Manchester devolution. Read more.

NIHR Senior Investigators

Senior Investigators are the NIHR’s pre-eminent researchers and represent the country’s most outstanding leaders of clinical and applied health and social care research. They are fundamental to the formation of the NIHR Faculty and form the NIHR College, a prestigious body with a programme of events. In the latest competition, the NIHR appointed 34 new Senior Investigators, many of whom are associated with the School. We would like to congratulate all those appointed, in particular School colleagues including Chris Salisbury (Bristol), Irwin Nazareth (UCL), Chris Butler (Oxford), Simon Griffin (Cambridge), Nadine Foster (Keele), Matt Hickman (Bristol) and Matt Sutton (Manchester). Richard Hobbs (Oxford) and Martin Roland (Cambridge) were appointed as emeritus Senior Investigators. Read more.
Management of depression

Research conducted at the University of Southampton has shown that rates of depression among working age men have risen in the past five years. The increase in rates of depression shows a reversal in the falling rates of depression seen in earlier years and is linked to rising male unemployment, mainly seen in the poorest areas of the country.

The research, led by Professor Tony Kendrick from the University of Southampton, studied GP records of depression before and after the recession, using anonymised data from 142 practices contributing to the Clinical Practice Research Datalink between 2003 and 2013. The overall rate of depression - recorded through either diagnostic or symptom codes - fell by 15% between 2003 and 2008, but then rose again, by four percent, up to the end of March 2013.

Shaping the development of a NHS England commissioned service

Researchers at the Universities of Bristol, Keele and University College London have fed back early research findings to help shape the development of a NHS England commissioned service for GPs with mental health problems.

High stress and reduced well-being are common amongst doctors, including General Practitioners (GPs). Doctors are more likely to experience mental health symptoms and are at greater risk of suicide compared with the general population. Despite this need evidence suggests that the NHS workforce, including doctors, have insufficient access and face barriers to mainstream healthcare provision. To date, little research has focused on the mental health of the NHS workforce, including doctors working in general practice.

After overwhelming interest from GP participants, from across England, the study researchers have reported that representatives from the Medical Directorate at NHS England have taken on board some of the emerging barriers and facilitators to help-seeking, as reported by their GP participants.

As Dr Ruth Riley, Principal Investigator from the University of Bristol, says “Our GP participants frequently report struggling in isolation or breaking down and burning out on the job. Meanwhile, support and provision is often patchy, inadequate and difficult to access due to the stigma of mental illness and concerns about confidentiality. Addressing workforce shortages to enable GPs to take time of work and accessing timely, good quality care and enabling doctors to return to work is therefore crucial in ensuring the mental health needs of doctors are met.”

Antibiotic resistance

Antibiotic resistance in children with urinary infections is high and could render some antibiotics ineffective as first-line treatments, warns a study published in The British Medical Journal.

Antimicrobial resistance is an internationally recognised threat to health and globally children are frequent consumers of antibiotics. The routine use of antibiotics has been shown to increase the probability of antibiotic resistance in adults with urinary tract infections. Yet little is known about the prevalence of bacterial resistance in children or the risk factors of importance in this group.

Lead author of the article and School trainee Ashley Bryce from the University of Bristol highlights that “Prevalence of resistance to commonly prescribed antibiotics in primary care in children with urinary tract infections caused by E coli is high, particularly in countries outside the OECD, where one possible explanation is the availability of antibiotics over the counter.”

NAPCRG Pearls awarded for research impact

Three North American Primary Care Research Group (NACRG) Pearls were awarded for School funded work this year by the Community Clinician Advisory Group (CCAG). Professor Alastair Hay (Bristol) received a Pearl for his presentation ‘Oral Steroids for Acute Cough (OSAC): A UK Multi-Centre, Placebo Controlled, Randomised Trial’. Dr Grace Moran (Birmingham) was awarded Pearls for two presentations from her SPCR funded doctoral research ‘Not as Transient as the Name Suggests: Fatigue, Psychological and Cognitive Impairment Following Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA)’ and ‘Missed Opportunities for Prevention of Stroke and Transient Ischaemic Attack (TIA) in Primary Care’.

In addition, Grace won the NAPCRG Distinguished Paper Award in 2015 for ‘Missed Opportunities for Prevention of Stroke and Transient Ischaemic Attack (TIA) in Primary Care’. 

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Read more.
A team of researchers from the Centre for Academic Primary Care (CAPC) at the University of Bristol hosted a unique event to celebrate the launch of the first UK archive of primary care consultations on 4 March.

The event was attended by academics and clinicians with an interest in consultations research from the UK and beyond. Professor Chris Salisbury, Head of CAPC gave the opening address, followed by Dr Terry Kemple, RCGP President and retired local GP who treated the audience to an illustrated history of different approaches to consulting in General Practice over the last 50 years. Dr Marcus Jepson then described the process of data collection and the contents of the archive, followed by Dr Rebecca Barnes who presented early findings from the team’s study of treatment recommendations in primary care. Kathrina Connabeer, a PhD student from Loughborough University, and the first official archive user, spoke about her study of lifestyle advice in primary care consultations. Professor Elizabeth Stokoe, also from Loughborough University, gave the audience pause for thought with her challenge concerning the lack of evidence behind the use of role-play and actor-patients in medical training. And finally Dr Stephen Gray from the University of Bristol Research Data Service outlined conditions and procedures for access.

Over a million consultations between GPs, patients and caregivers happen across England every day. Despite this, and the importance of communication for optimal patient care, high quality research using consultations data is relatively uncommon. In a bid to increase the evidence base for primary care, the NIHR School for Primary Care Research funded One in a Million study successfully video-recorded 327 adult patient consultations with 23 different GPs between July 2014-April 2015 and 89% consented to having their data archived for reuse by other researchers. To facilitate a wide range of research questions each recording is also linked to wider patient survey and anonymised medical records data.

For more information: www.bristol.ac.uk/one-in-a-million
Contact: one-in-a-million@bristol.ac.uk

Creating a data archive of GP consultations – the motivations and challenges
http://capcbristol.blogs.ilrt.org/2016/04/15/one-in-a-million/

Commonly used anti-depressants are not associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular conditions

Research recently published in the BMJ led by Professor Carol Coupland suggests that commonly used antidepressants, known as “selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors” (SSRIs) are not associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular conditions, such as heart attacks and strokes in people aged below 65.

Depression is known to increase the risk of cardiovascular problems, but whether antidepressants, particularly selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, increase or reduce this risk remains controversial. The results are significant because antidepressants are one of the most commonly prescribed drugs worldwide and cardiovascular diseases are a leading cause of death and disability.

The researchers examined associations between different antidepressant drugs and rates of three cardiovascular outcomes in people with depression. “We found no evidence that SSRIs were associated with an increased risk of arrhythmia, heart attacks, or stroke in people with depression over the five-year period. But there was a significant doubling of risk for arrhythmia during the first four weeks of taking tricyclic and related antidepressants” says Carol Coupland, Associate Professor and Reader in medical statistics, Division of Primary Care.

Read the full University of Nottingham press release. Read the publication in the British Medical Journal (BMJ)

Carol Coupland is Professor of Medical Statistics at the University of Nottingham’s Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences.
Gemma-Claire Ali, School funded DPhil student at the University of Cambridge Primary Care Unit, is using mixed methods research to design a mental health intervention for patient-carer dyads living with chronic physical illness, including those living with the long-term effects of stroke.

Gemma’s focus is on helping patients and their informal carers to better understand and support each other’s mental wellbeing. Stroke often has a negative impact on the mental health of both patients and their informal carers, and the prevalence of depressive and anxiety disorders is high in these groups. She explains: “As well as having a direct impact on quality of life, reduced mental wellbeing can negatively affect post-stroke outcomes and patient mortality. One mechanism for this is that feeling low can reduce people’s motivation to adhere to recommended treatment packages and lifestyle changes. Similarly, carer motivation and ability to care is negatively impacted by damage to their own mental wellbeing. There is therefore a strong argument for improving the mental health of patients with chronic conditions and their carers.”

There is a wide and increasing body of literature investigating the effectiveness of interventions designed to improve the mental wellbeing of stroke patients and their informal carers independently of each other, but according to Gemma, very little research has looked at how patient-carer dyads can support each other. Gemma’s formative research involves literature reviews as well as interviews and focus groups with patients and informal carers. “Findings from these phases of research will be used to design and pilot a flexible, active-learning intervention, potentially delivered via a website or phone app, with components that patient-carer dyads can select based on their individual needs and preferences.”

At PCU, Gemma’s work fits into a broad portfolio of stroke research which encompasses both prevention of stroke and its long term consequences in primary care settings. It fits particularly well with the NIHR Programme Grant on Developing Primary Care Stroke Services, led by Professor Jonathan Mant. This programme develops and tests two interventions which aim to support people with stroke and their carers in primary care. The first looks at how to make best use of general practice and its interface with specialist services, while the second, in collaboration with the University of Leicester, develops a ‘managing life after stroke’ programme which will enable people with stroke and their carers to better understand and manage the consequences of stroke and to be better able to access services when they need them.

www.phpc.cam.ac.uk/pcu/
Developing future research collaborations with the NIHR doctoral exchange scheme

**John Ford** is a Public Health registrar currently out of programme on a NIHR doctoral fellowship at the University of East Anglia. After attending a qualitative methods course at UCL’s Department of Primary Care and Population Health early in 2015, he was encouraged to apply for the NIHR exchange programme.

John talks about his experiences of the exchange programme and how it helped him develop future collaborations with a range of researchers in the department. “I met several members of the team at the workshop and it was clear that we shared common interests around older people and primary care. My NIHR fellowship explores how deprived older people in rural areas access their GPs. I believe that primary care is the cornerstone of the NHS and that health services should target those most in need. Many health services interventions however are universal, leading to uptake by already healthy people, and vulnerable groups can find them difficult to access. My research aims to understand why a group of vulnerable older people find it difficult to access their GPs and what society can do to improve access.

My exchange at the Centre for Ageing & Population Studies at UCL was for 1-2 days a week over a 5 month period, during which time I undertook a latent class analysis of an existing dataset. I had never used this technique before, so I was able to learn a new statistical skill while collaborating with a range of academics from several different universities. Our analysis has been accepted for an oral presentation at SAPC this year and we are currently re-drafting a journal article.

The research on ageing at UCL overlaps with my fellowship at UEA. Opportunities to learn from what researchers in the department had done by sitting in on training and informally discussing research with different members of the team was helpful in the development of my current fellowship. Additionally, discussing my research with a range of different academics and being able to learn from their experiences was invaluable.”

**Kate Walters** is Director of the Centre for Ageing & Population Studies at UCL, with research interests in ageing, primary care epidemiology and trials of complex interventions in primary care and community settings.

As the Departmental Graduate Tutor, Kate was very positive about participating in the programme, saying “It was certainly one that I would repeat and recommend to others. We worked with John to identify something he wanted to do in his time with us that would be mutually beneficial. By doing his own project - a secondary analysis of an existing dataset held at UCL- he was able to have ownership of a discrete piece of work and also have the benefits of being able to have input from an already existing team of people. As an NIHR funded clinical doctoral fellow he was very able to work independently to develop hypotheses and an analysis plan with us and lead the work. From a relatively short placement with us he has been able to complete all the planned work which has been accepted for an oral presentation at SAPC and he has already drafted a publication. There has been the additional benefit of meeting and working with his supervisors from UEA for the first time too, with shared research interests. We anticipate that this exchange placement will lead to longer term collaborations in the years to come.”

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The Infrastructure Doctoral Training Exchange (IDTE) Scheme allows doctoral trainees supported by NIHR to spend time in other parts of the infrastructure to network, train in a specific technique or collaborate with other researchers in their topic area. The scheme is open to all NIHR trainees, that is trainees undertaking a PhD or an MD, and whose research training is funded by an NIHR infrastructure award, or whose supervisor is supported by an NIHR infrastructure award.

For more information, visit the website: [http://www.nihr.ac.uk/our-faculty/infrastructure-doctoral-training-exchange-scheme.htm](http://www.nihr.ac.uk/our-faculty/infrastructure-doctoral-training-exchange-scheme.htm)
Recent publications

Using alternatives to face-to-face consultations: a survey of prevalence and attitudes in general practice.
Heather Brant, Helen Atherton, Sue Ziebland, Brian McKinistry, John L Campbell, Chris Salisbury (2016) BJGP


Gout characteristics associate with depression, but not anxiety, in primary care: Baseline findings from a prospective cohort study. James Andrew Prior, Christian D. Mallen, Priyanka Chandratre, Sara Muller, Jane Richardson, Edward Roddy (2016) Joint Bone Spine


Understanding tensions and identifying clinician agreement on improvements to early-stage chronic kidney disease monitoring in primary care: a qualitative study. Rosemary Simmonds, Julie Evans, Gene Feder, Tom Blakeman, Dan Lasserson, Elizabeth Murray, Kristina Bennett, Louise Lcock, Jeremy Horwood (2016) BMJ Open Renal Medicine

Congratulations

1. Professor Elaine Hay has been recognised with a Distinguished Member Award by the British Society for Rheumatology. The award acknowledges an individual's achievements ‘above and beyond’ the duties involved in their normal job and is open to current members of the BSR.

2. Ben Ainsworth has been selected to represent the School on the Transdisciplinary Understanding and Training on Research Primary Health Care (TUTOR PHC) programme. The one-year inter-disciplinary research capacity building programme in primary health care research skills and theory & processes, begins with a workshop in Canada in May 2016.

3. Jane Vennik and 4. Trishna Rathod have been selected to attend the NIHR doctoral training camp, a three day intensive annual event for NIHR trainees in July 2016. The camp offers workshop, guest speakers, poster presentations and opportunities for networking and mentoring.

5. Fiona Hamilton and 6. Adam Geraghty have been selected from 21 applicants to represent the School on the Oxford International Primary Care Research Leadership Programme, hosted by the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences. The programme fosters and develops future leaders in primary care research and is designed to help participants explore different aspects of leadership in primary care research.

7. Kamal Mahtani is the 2016 winner of the Royal College of General Practitioners’ Yvonne Carter Award for outstanding new researcher. “We were delighted to present the award to Kamal. The panel were particularly impressed with his plans to support further development of an international network of primary care academics” said SAPC Chair Joanne Reeve. Read the RCGP’s interview with Kamal.
### Events

**SPCR Annual Trainees Event 2016**
- **Date:** 19 - 20 September
- **Location:** Queen’s College, Oxford

**SPCR Ten Year Anniversary Showcase**
- **Date:** 22 November
- **Location:** Wellcome Trust, London

**NIHR Trainees Meeting**
- **Date:** 6 - 7 December
- **Location:** 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: [www.nihr.ac.uk/funding/nihr-themed-research-calls.htm](http://www.nihr.ac.uk/funding/nihr-themed-research-calls.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](http://www.nihr.ac.uk/funding/funding-for-training-and-career-development.htm)

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### Blogs

**Is this the rescue package general practice needs?**
- Martin Roland, University of Cambridge

**Text reminders – a low-cost strategy for type 2 diabetes?**
- Ignacio Ricci-Cabello, University of Oxford

**Supporting research capacity building in Sri Lanka**
- Toby Helliwell, Keele University

**The future of academic primary care on display**
- Sam Merriel, Jessica Watson and Debbie Sharp, University of Bristol

**Why are so many children given antibiotics for a cough?**
- Christi Cabral, University of Bristol

**Implementation science applied to maternal health**
- Sophie Orton, University of Nottingham

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**Department of Health Policy Research Programme Invitation to tender for the following:**
- National evaluation of the New Care Models programme
- The Policy Research Programme: A review of self-inflicted deaths in the Criminal Justice System
- The specificity and sensitivity of medical examiners’ review to identify potentially avoidable deaths due to problems in care

For more information visit: [http://prp-ccf.org.uk/](http://prp-ccf.org.uk/)

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**Pre-workshop invitation to contribute to a sandpit on primary care trials and analytics**

**2016 International Population Data Linkage Conference**
- **Date:** 23 August 2016
- **Website:** [www.ipdlnconference2016.org/](http://www.ipdlnconference2016.org/)