The Short Placement Award for Research Collaboration (SPARC) was launched by the NIHR on 4 October to support and encourage early stage researchers to spend time in other parts of the NIHR. SPARC is specifically designed to foster collaboration and enhance the researcher’s early career. It replaces the NIHR Infrastructure Doctoral Training Exchange Scheme (IDTE).

The scheme is open to early stage researchers fully or partly funded by the NIHR Infrastructure based at a Biomedical Research Centre (BRC), Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRC), Patient Safety Translational Research Centre (PSTRC) or the School for Primary Care Research (SPCR).

For more information on the scheme, eligibility and on how to apply, please see the [NIHR SPARC Guidance notes](#) and contact [Karen Fernando](#) at the NIHR TCC for further information. View the [case studies](#) from previous awardees.

Suggestions of where trainees can go to undertake a placement can be found in a [Google document](#).
Strengthening awareness on World Mental Health Day

Organisations and individuals celebrated World Mental Health Day on 10 October to strengthen awareness of mental health issues affecting all, from young to old. The Research Institute for Primary Care and Health Sciences at Keele University marked the day by conducting an internal seminar to showcase several of their ongoing and planned research projects focusing on self-harm and suicide in primary care populations. Professor Carolyn Chew-Graham highlighted the impact of self-harm in primary care and Ms Isabela Troya (PhD student) discussed the value of PPIE on her systematic review into self-harm in older adults. Researchers, Dr Faraz Mughal (NIHR funded) and Dr James Prior (NIHR SPCR funded) outlined their respective planned research projects, Faraz exploring self-harm in young people; and James leading a study on self-harm and suicide in patients with chronic MSK conditions. Linked to this seminar, the group held a cake sale to raise funds for a local self-harm support group, which has been instrumental in supporting Carolyn’s and Isabela’s work.

Identifying the GP practices prescribing “low priority” treatments

A new tool by Oxford University researchers launched on OpenPrescribing.net on 3 October identifies which individual GP practices are prescribing a range of ineffective and wasteful treatments that NHS England are spotlighting.

The 19 prescription items considered as “low priority” for NHS funding are the subject of a national consultation on new commissioning guidance, and were selected based on lack of evidence of their clinical effectiveness, concerns for their safety, or cost-effectiveness grounds.

OpenPrescribing.net is the first website of its kind to enable health professionals, patients and the public to easily explore patterns of prescribing nationally, in CCGs and by individual GP practices. It is supported with funding from the NIHR Oxford Biomedical Research Centre and the NIHR School of Primary Care Research. Read the full story.

Best Doctoral Research Thesis prize

Congratulations to Dr Mairead Murphy (Centre for Academic Primary Care) who won £500 for Best Doctoral Research Thesis in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Bristol. She was awarded the prize for the exceptional quality of her SPCR funded research degree thesis.


Read more.
Let’s talk about weight

SPCR doctoral student Charlotte Albury (NDPCHS, Oxford) is a contributing author on the Public Health England’s step-by-step guide to conversations about weight management with children and families for health and care professionals.

We asked Charlotte about her research and her involvement in the development of the guidelines.

How does your research relate to child weight management?
My research explores conversations about weight management in primary care where patients are offered a free referral to commercial weight management services. My work looks at how to have often sensitive conversations about weight management in a ways which are helpful, useful and which facilitate action.

The area of child weight management has a smaller evidence base, so I contributed areas of my work which could be transferrable to child weight management where parents are offered a free referral for their family. This included first hand research combined with my systematic literature review of health behaviour change talk across medical settings which enabled me to identify common strategies aimed at facilitating helpful and useful conversations about changing health behaviours.

How did your choice of conversation analysis enable the research findings?
Conversation analysis pays detailed attention to the exact words or phrases that are used in a conversation, and how people respond to them. I then associated conversational data with what patients did next, to find relationships between conversations and patient action. This enabled me to find ways of talking about weight which were well received and led to patient attendance at weight watchers or slimming world.

How did you initially get involved in working with PHE?
We initially discussed my work on adult weight management, and gave brief advice to PHE for their adult weight management guide. Due to this existing relationship they knew about my systematic review of health behaviour change talk, and asked for input on their weight management guide for children and families.

What impact do you expect the guidance will have?
I hope this guidance will impact doctors, in that it will support them to have helpful conversations with their patients in an appropriate way. Overall, I hope it will impact patients, as their doctors will be able to confidently and appropriately offer free referrals and they can engage in conversations which could have a real health benefit.

What has emerged from this research as an important area to look at in the future?
Listening to audio recordings of primary care consultations, and conducting conversation analysis highlights overwhelmingly some excellent ways that doctors and patients can communicate. This research gives the opportunity to uncover these strategies and make them available for other doctors to use. There are many other conversations in primary care than can be difficult or sensitive and I think finding out ways to facilitate these is important for both doctors and patients moving forwards.

If you’d like to find out more, read the guidelines.

Congratulations

The following people were recently appointed as Founding Fellows for the newly formed Faculty of Clinical Informatics. They will be responsible for establishing informatics as a recognised and respected profession by building the new faculty and for providing professional leadership in the UK. Read the full list.

Christian Mallen (SPCR Training Lead, Keele)
Sarah Slight (former SPCR Trainee, Nottingham)
Brendan Delaney (SPCR external reviewer, Imperial College)
ATAFUTI makes primary care researchers smile at the GRIN conference

The University of Southampton’s Professor Michael Moore recently presented findings from the SPCR funded ATAFUTI project at the annual General Practice Research on Infections (GRIN) meeting in Oslo.

The GRIN conference was hosted by The Antibiotic Center of Primary Health Care and The Department of General Practice, University of Oslo. The GRIN group is an international network of researchers studying respiratory tract and other infections in primary care.

“Our presentation at the GRIN annual conference generated a wide international audience as well as comment from international experts and potential for future collaboration.”

Michael Moore

New recommendations for academic training and career development

NIHR announces publication of its report 10 Years On: Adapting and Evolving to New Challenges in Developing Tomorrow’s Health Research Leaders and a series of recommendations that the organisation is now starting to implement. The recommendations include a move to a more strategic approach to complement the traditional ‘response-mode’ funding model and also more integration of the current programmes. They were based on a review process comprising an analysis of the evidence collected and a consultation process.

Over the next year all NIHR’s academic training and higher career personal awards will be integrated into a new structure, The NIHR Academy with an associated academic strategy. The programmes and schemes overseen by the NIHR Academy will also be simplified to become fully flexible to meet the needs of the workforce and a portfolio management approach will be developed to address current and future skills and discipline gaps. Read more.
Knit a neuron

This year the School for Primary Care Research hosted a science engagement activity at Oxford University’s Curiosity Carnival.

Held on European Researchers Night (Friday 29 September 2017) the whole event aimed to ‘showcase the world-leading research taking place here at Oxford to a large and diverse audience through a programme that will include live experiments, debates, bite-sized talks and other activities.’

‘European Researchers’ Night [is a] Europe-wide celebration of academic research for the public, supported by the European Commission.’

‘Knit a Neuron’ was the brain child of Dr Anne Cooke from the University of Bristol as ‘a collaborative, knitting, art project’. Since its inception in 2010, events have spread throughout the UK and beyond, as a fun and creative way to engage the public with science.

Researchers from across the University of Oxford came along to help knit neurons and talk science. Everything from basic neuroscience to treating mental health patients in primary care.

Emma Palmer-Cooper and Karen Morecroft (SPCR) attended, along with Oxford University colleagues Anne Ferrey (Primary Care), Anna Mitchell (Experimental Psychology), Amanda Kerr (Population Health), Vasiliki Economopoulos (Oncology), Liz Tunbridge and Sally-Anne Vincent (Psychiatry), and Alison Brindle (Medical Sciences), and NIHR colleagues Polly Kerr (Oxford BRC) worked with members of the public to craft neurons and create a giant neural network in their ‘Make a Memory’ installation.

Attendees attached their neurons to make new connections, or ‘memories’, and were able to take a neuron home to keep the memory alive. Members of the public from aged 4 years and upwards sat with scientists to learn about healthcare research, and how they can get involved in the future as participants or public contributors.

RCGP Conference highlights 2017

The RCGP conference was held in Liverpool this year. Watch the highlights and register for next year’s conference in Glasgow (4-6 October 2018).

http://www.rcgpac.org.uk/
Dates for your diary

**NIHR Trainees’ meeting**
14-15 November 2017
Queen’s Hotel, Leeds

**SAPC North**
23 - 24 November 2017
Castle Green Hotel, Kendal

**SAPC SW**
13 - 14 March 2018
Plymouth

**BJGP Research Conference**
23 March 2018
Call for abstracts open

**GP ACF conference**
12 - 13 April 2018
Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford

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**Blog**

**Utilising patient power to evolve research implementation**
Robyn Till, Keele University

**What makes me passionate about communicating my research?**
Nadine Mirza, University of Manchester

**Researchers: to make an impact, write less and talk more**
NIHR Dissemination Centre

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**Round 11 of NIHR Fellowships Programme now open**

**NIHR Funding**
October 2017

**NIHR News and Research**
October 2017

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**James Lind Alliance Adult Social Work Priority Setting Partnership**

The JLA wants to find out what research needs to happen in future to improve social work with adults. Find out more and complete the survey.

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**NICE update for primary care**

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**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.