



Aberdeen Centre for Research Excellence in Musculoskeletal Health

Collaborate. Innovate. Translate.

Aberdeen Centre for Collaborative Excellence in Musculoskeletal Health (ABC-MSK)

Research Strategy

Vision

To undertake research which improves care, reduces inequalities, and makes a tangible difference for people living with musculoskeletal conditions.

Strategic Aims

- Advance clinically relevant research across the spectrum of musculoskeletal and autoimmune conditions, grounded in real-world NHS service delivery.
 - Strengthen joint working between **rheumatology and orthopaedics**, leveraging shared expertise to improve diagnosis, treatment, and long-term management.
 - Develop and evaluate innovative, **digitally enabled musculoskeletal care pathways**.
 - Embed **patient and public involvement (PPI)** to ensure research is shaped by lived experience and delivers meaningful impact.
 - Build research capacity and infrastructure to support collaboration across clinical, academic, and methodological domains.
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Unique Strengths

- **Integrated clinical-academic partnerships:** Physical proximity of university and NHS facilities in Aberdeen supports seamless collaboration between researchers and frontline NHS staff — particularly in rheumatology and orthopaedic surgery.
- **Joint specialty focus:** The centre bridges **rheumatology and orthopaedics**, creating a distinctive platform for addressing complex conditions such as inflammatory arthritis, fragility fractures, and musculoskeletal pain.
- **Remote and rural health expertise:** Strong track record in understanding and addressing geographical barriers to care, with potential application to other health systems, including in lower-resource settings.

- **Methodological breadth and rigour:** Use of linked administrative health data, imaging, qualitative research, and clinical trials to address NHS priorities, inform service redesign, and support personalised care.
 - **Innovative PPI:** Continuing to build upon existing expertise in patient and public involvement embedded throughout our research programmes, via well-established networks of people with lived experience, ensuring research relevance, accessibility, and patient benefit.
 - **Cross-sector collaboration:** Strong links with local NHS services, national audit and registry programmes, and academic partners in health economics, digital health, and surgical trials.
 - **Primary prevention:** Focus on the proactive promotion and preservation of musculoskeletal health across the lifecourse, encompassing evidence-based approaches at both individual and population level to prevent disease onset and optimise long-term musculoskeletal function.
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Key Deliverables

We will continue to secure large externally funded major programmes of research work to allow us to carry out the following key deliverables:

- Joint rheumatology–orthopaedics research initiatives addressing shared service priorities (e.g. early diagnosis, surgical decision-making, post-operative rehabilitation).
 - Evidence to inform **NHS service redesign**, including new models of care that integrate primary, secondary, and community services.
 - Digital tools and care pathways for use in diverse geographical settings, co-designed with patients and frontline staff.
 - Develop shared research infrastructure (e.g. imaging, registries, qualitative and health data expertise) to support interdisciplinary studies.
 - Support training and mentorship opportunities for early career researchers, clinical academics, and healthcare professionals.
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For more information or to get involved, please contact:



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