

## Promoting research for all doctors

When doctors and other healthcare professionals engage with research opportunities as part of their clinical work, there are demonstrable benefits to individual patients, patient care overall, healthcare teams, care organisations, practices and doctors themselves.

Our aim is to enable a culture in the workplace where doctors are encouraged to be research-aware and research-active.

This could mean:

- helping patients understand relevant research or access clinical trials and working with research teams to recruit patients into important research studies
- consenting patients for research,
- working on local clinical research initiatives
- initiating and developing new research ideas based upon their clinical insights
- pursuing medical academic careers,
- providing leadership.

Doctors also have an important role in disseminating research findings, explaining them to patients, and incorporating research evidence into practice.

We, and a range of organisations in all four countries of the UK, are working to raise awareness about the key contribution that health research can make to clinical work and care excellence:

- NHS Education for Scotland
- UK Foundation Programme
- Care Quality Commission
- Medical Schools Council
- Royal College of Physicians (England)
- Health and Care Research Wales
- National Institute for Health Research

- British Medical Association  
Medical Academic Staff  
Committee
- British Pharmacological Society
- Department of Health &  
Social Care
- Royal College of Paediatric and  
Child Health

## Barriers to change

Research saves lives, enhances the quality of life and improves patient care.

Every patient encounter is an opportunity to ask questions. Therefore all doctors and other clinicians should have time protected in their job to carry out professional activities like leading research. But, many end up deprioritising this work to manage increasing workloads and pressures faced by the health services.

Across the system, there is a commitment to facilitating changes that recognise the contribution and value of research activities that will support excellent clinical care and improve patient outcomes. Clinical activities need to be structured to facilitate delivery of research. The wider healthcare team must be supported and equipped with the skills and infrastructure support to engage in research and be encouraged to undertake/embed research activities into their working week. Embedding clinical research in the health services can only be achieved by empowering all health and care staff to recognise the need to participate in research as part of their job. This is one of five key themes in the four UK countries' [\*The Future of UK Clinical Research Delivery: 2021 to 2022 implementation plan\*](#).

Some doctors and patients face significant hurdles to engage in research opportunities because of their work role, race, gender, or socioeconomic status\*. By normalising research as routine for the clinical workforce, more people - both practitioners and patients - will benefit from it. Specific interventions must be introduced to ensure research opportunities are fully inclusive both for doctors and patients across the healthcare system.

## Enabling research opportunities throughout careers

We, the GMC, have clear standards and expectations for medical students and doctors in relation to research and scholarship.<sup>†</sup> We expect research outcomes to be met during education and training. Alongside these professional values, many colleges, professional bodies, and employers offer advice and support to encourage healthcare professionals to engage in research. Our goal is to build on this good practice to make research activities a

\* Jose A Sacristan, "Patient involvement in clinical research: why, when, and how," 2016.

<sup>†</sup> Good medical practice, Generic professional capabilities framework (GPCs) and Outcomes for graduates

customary part of a doctor's career by agreeing clear principles that should apply across all sectors.

## **Principles - promoting research for all doctors**

Our principles describe system changes that will help doctors and healthcare teams to engage and support more research as part of their clinical practice. They are the first step in embedding a culture of normalising engagement in research in all health service settings and organisations. We are working with a wide range of organisations who each play a role in addressing the barriers to greater participation in research.

### *Learning and development*

- Understanding research is an expectation for medical students and doctors as part of their postgraduate training. Medical students and doctors in training must be given opportunities to observe or participate in clinical research throughout their education and training.
- This means that at least some of those teaching and supervising medical students and trainees in all sectors also need time to participate in research activities.
- Medical students and doctors in training will engage in research differently depending on their learning outcomes and career goals. Opportunities must be offered and accessed fairly and should not be dependent on the sector in which they work.
- Doctors throughout their careers should be encouraged to use and enhance the skills and experience gained through research during medical education and training. This may occur at different times and in a range of ways as part of their lifelong learning.

### *Supporting a research-active medical workforce*

- All doctors should be encouraged to engage in the delivery of clinical research as part of direct clinical care.
- Some doctors may carry out clearly defined research roles and should have identified/protected time and the infrastructure to support this work.
- Organisations that provide healthcare recognise and encourage and - where necessary - prioritise research as a normal expectation for doctors and healthcare teams.
- Organisations should take steps to make sure research activities are inclusive and available to doctors working in different roles and healthcare environments.

- Research active environments save patient lives, and in the long term save money. But, recognising this, and retaining the medical workforce necessary for such environments requires resources. Therefore, there should be a requirement that all healthcare providers incorporate provisions for this aspect of medical practice in their budgets.

### *Enabling better research for patients*

- Many people who use care services face barriers to participating in health research, either through not being offered the choice at all, or having limited access to specific research studies or sites where research is carried out - this often occurs because of where they live. Doctors and organisations should make sure patients are offered opportunities to be involved in relevant research studies where available, and that they're supported to access appropriate information and support to make a decision on whether or not to participate
- By ensuring that doctors and other healthcare staff are research-aware, patients will be better able to access the latest diagnoses and treatments.

## **Taking this forward**

Working with organisation such as the National Institute for Health Research, we are tackling barriers to participation in research that we can address. Actions include:

### **Raising the profile of research**

- Raising awareness of evidence supporting doctors' involvement in research and facilitating opportunities to collaborate on ways to improve experience.
- Exploring how to develop and sustain clinical academic leadership. This is important to drive discovery science, its early translation, clinical trials and health service research (or say all aspects of research from bench to bedside).

### *Doctors*

- Enabling doctors throughout their career to engage with research from general foundation training posts.
- Encouraging the establishment of research mentors to facilitate greater participation in less research active trusts.

### *Patients*

- Promoting a culture of normalising research as part of the patient pathway.

## **Inclusive research**

- Working closely with partners in the health and research sector to encourage greater participation and a more inclusive approach to research.
- Incorporating our findings in wider differential attainment work in the GMC to address disparities in equitable access to involvement in research.