Getting Started in Research: Top tips

Introduction
Getting involved in research can be motivating and enrich your professional development. However, it is recognized that there can be a number of barriers to undertaking research, including time, funding and organisational culture. Often it is simply that the individual concerned does not know who to contact or where to go to find further information.

This document has been developed by the North West Multi-professional Research and Innovation Group to support professionals who have previously had little or no involvement in research, but who are keen to find out more.

These ‘top tips’ are designed to help you to find appropriate contacts and sources of information to get started in research.

Construct your rationale for the project

- **Undertake an audit or survey first.** This will help to develop experience of dealing with outcome measures, collecting data and analyzing data. There is usually full in-house support for audits within NHS organisations.

- **Undertake a literature review search** using key words in areas of interest using databases e.g. PubMed (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/) and the Cochrane library (http://www.cochrane.org/). It is essential to be aware of what has already been done and to identify gaps in knowledge and evidence. Your organisation’s librarians can help with this.

- **Check DUETS** (Database for Uncertainties of the Effectiveness of Treatments). This houses information on gaps in evidence based practice http://www.library.nhs.uk/duets/.

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• **Check the James Lind Alliance** for lists of research priorities for various conditions. [http://www.lindalliance.org/](http://www.lindalliance.org/)

Contact people who may be able to help you get started

• **Contact your organisation’s R+D lead.**

• **Contact professional society/body research leads** as the experience you may need from others may not be local to you. National organisations can point you to suitable expertise.

• **Link with a team** and/or develop a team around you with the experience needed to take your idea forward, e.g. senior staff with experience, established researcher, statistician, etc.

Look for clinical partnerships

• **Contact local clinical research networks** to find out what research studies are currently taking place [http://www.crn.nihr.ac.uk/about-crn/](http://www.crn.nihr.ac.uk/about-crn/)

• **Attend meetings** where you will meet researchers and actively build up a network of research ‘friends’ (e.g. AHP research networks, see above, and other specialty groups)

• Take the opportunity to **be involved in other people’s research projects** to gain ‘hands on’ experience.

• **Contact your regional AHP research forums:**
  - Cheshire and Merseyside: Dr Fiona Rowe: rowef@liverpool.ac.uk
  - Cumbria and Lancashire: Dr Hazel Roddam: HRoddam@uclan.ac.uk
  - Greater Manchester: Dr Abebaw Yohannes: A.Yohannes@mmu.ac.uk
Access training and support to help with the development of your project

- **Check the Health Research Authority (HRA) site** for ethics information and guidance on what is required for ethical submissions and patient information.
  
  http://www.hra.nhs.uk/

- Look into **formal research training** through universities. Check university websites for details and then check on CPD Apply (https://wsecure.wirral.nhs.uk/PQCPD/) to see if the training can be funded through regional CPD monies.

- Most universities host **research seminars** which are often free – go along to these to learn about the subject and to network. Again keep an eye on university websites for events.

- Find out if there are any formal or informal arrangements within your trust or local university for **research mentoring**. Your local Research and Development lead should be able to help.

**Other useful links**

The Research Design Service for the North West

http://www.rds-nw.nihr.ac.uk/

National Institute for Health Research, Trainees Coordinating Centre

http://www.nihrtcc.nhs.uk/

NIHR Funding – Research for Patient Benefit

http://www.ccf.nihr.ac.uk/RfPB/Pages/home.aspx

NIHR Applied Programme Grants

http://www.ccf.nihr.ac.uk/PGfAR/PDG/Pages/default.aspx
Health Services and Delivery Programme
http://www.nets.nihr.ac.uk/programmes/hsdr

North of England EU Health Partnership
http://northofenglandeuhealth.eu/

NHS Research and Development North West Early Career Researcher Network

Cheshire and Merseyside AHP Research and Development Network
http://www.cmahpresearch.org/

Cumbria and Lancashire AHP Research and Development Hub
http://uclanahp.blogspot.co.uk/

Council for AHP Research (formerly AHP Research Network) (National)
http://www.csp.org.uk/professional-union/research/networking/allied-health-professions-research-network