Identifying and Improving the Capacity of Health Service Staff to Conduct Research

Cancer Research UK (CRUK) is funding a project to explore the scale of the challenge associated with health service staff lack of capacity to conduct research and identify solutions to improve this situation utilising the existing workforce. While this is a CRUK-funded project, the focus will be broader than cancer and will focus on the types of research carried out in the health service e.g. clinical trials.

Analysis will concentrate on ‘research directly impacting patients’, including academic and industry research. We are defining ‘research directly impacting patients’ as areas including clinical research and research that harnesses existing patient data. This study will examine the staff time element of capacity only; capability is outside the scope.

Background and rationale

Supporting research is critical to the delivery of high quality healthcare and in ensuring the continuing prominence of the UK in the medical research field. Barriers, both real and perceived, to carrying out research are clearly documented and this issue of capacity to do research has become more pressing in recent years.

There is a lack of information available as to the practical policy solutions to these barriers (the enablers to research) and the examples of different practices adopted within institutions to help overcome these. The solutions developed in this study will aim to support the NHS and Departments of Health across the UK in policy making around optimising the health service research environment.

Steering Group

The steering group for this study has been developed to represent the breadth of the medical research community. Members include health service staff from a cross-section of professions, academics, patients, and research funders such as the National Institute for Health Research, the Wellcome Trust, Medical Research Council, Association of Medical Research Charities and industry.

Methodology

This research being undertaken by the Centre for Health Services Studies at the University of Kent. The research project will consist of five work packages:

1) Scoping review of existing literature
2) Analysis of current research activity
3) Survey/interviews of health service professionals, health organisations and research funders
4) Development and analysis of case studies
5) Development of policy and practice initiatives

Timescale

This research commenced in February 2019. Work packages one and two have been completed. We expected completion of work package three in Autumn 2019, followed by work packages four and five, as well as publication of a policy report in the Winter of 2019/20.

For more information, please contact Jessica Newberry Le Vay at jessica.newberrylevay@cancer.org.uk or Angeliki Yiangou at angeliki.yiangou@cancer.org.uk.