The Clinical Research Hub newsletter will be published twice yearly and aims to keep you regularly updated with the Hub’s news and developments.
About the Hub

The Hub was established in 2010 to enable increased NHS / University collaborative research in health and medicine across Lancashire and Cumbria. By bringing together service perspectives, professional interests and facilities within the partner NHS Trusts and the internationally-renowned research expertise in health, medicine and related fields in Lancaster University, the Hub will support the growth of high-quality, locally-led clinical research to underpin improved healthcare.

The Hub operates on a strategic basis, involving close liaison and co-ordination between the Associate Director of Clinical Research at Lancaster University (Dr Sally Spencer) and the R&D Directors and Managers in the partner NHS Trusts. The Hub also works closely with other key organisations – including the NIHR Cumbria & Lancashire CLRN, the NW Research Design Service and the Cumbria & Lancashire HIEC – to enable integration and full utilisation of all locally-available skills and expertise as appropriate.

This Newsletter will be produced twice yearly. It will provide information about the Hub’s activities and events, and also about staff, facilities and achievements within each of the partner organisations.

I am sure you will agree that the Hub is a very exciting initiative, and that it has the potential to make a major contribution to the growing national profile of Lancashire and Cumbria as a rapidly-emerging centre for high-quality research in health and medicine.

Professor John Goodacre
School of Health & Medicine
Lancaster University
j.goodacre@lancaster.ac.uk
The White Paper: Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS emphasizes the commitment to the promotion and conduct of research as core NHS business. It recognises the importance of research in increasing the quality and productivity of the NHS through the provision of the new knowledge necessary to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities and in supporting the growth of the economy. The ambition of delivering world class health services is now a common endeavour for all health care organisations in the North West but the NHS cannot achieve this alone.

Collaboration between Universities and the NHS continues to be of utmost importance for both the design and delivery of high quality research. I welcome the development of the strategic partnership model which the Hub provides and recognise its potential as a platform which will underpin and facilitate locally-led research across Cumbria & Lancashire. Building upon foundations previously laid by a number of other organisations and initiatives over recent years, this is an exciting opportunity for Cumbria & Lancashire to enhance its growing reputation in NHS R&D. I wish you every success.

Dr Stuart Eglin
Regional R&D Director
NHS Northwest

I am delighted to be supporting the Clinical Research Hub. I can think of few better strategic interventions that will help advance the R&D agenda in Lancashire and Cumbria. While the School is relatively new there has been a long history of productive collaborations between academics at Lancaster University and research-minded clinicians. These collaborations have led to high quality, high impact outputs (publications) but they have also helped establish some early careers that are growing the next generation of academics and clinical researchers. Despite current funding pressures for higher education we have been able to use resources from the Higher Education Innovation Fund to support the Hub. This, coupled with the excellent work being done in the CLRN and with the matching footprints of the Health Innovation and Education Cluster (HIEC) and the Research Design Service (RDS), means that the infrastructure is in place for a strong platform to advance the delivery of healthcare in this part of the North West. We appreciate the excellent support we have had from many partners and hope to be laying the foundation for further productive partnerships that benefit the health economy and all its constituents.

Professor Tony Gatrell
Dean
School of Health & Medicine
Lancaster University

Messages: Dr Stuart Eglin, Prof Tony Gatrell
Blackpool Teaching Hospitals is highly research active and has developed good relationships in supporting many research studies with other Trusts, Universities, charities and pharmaceutical companies. However we need to do more in terms of developing our own fully funded locally developed studies. As a Teaching Hospital the opportunity to join the Hub, to not only help the Trust’s busy clinicians in developing local studies but to work with the University and other local Trusts in shaping the direction of the Hub was an opportunity not to be missed. Seven months on, I can already see the benefits of the Hub, with one study about to be submitted to the NIHR Research for Patient Benefit programme and others in the pipeline.

Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust has a long standing commitment to lead, and participate in, high quality research; in order to improve the current and future health of its patients. The establishment of the Clinical Research Hub at Lancaster University is a fantastic opportunity for the Trust to further develop partnership working to increase the amount of locally led high quality research. In turn, this will result in improvements in practice, and knowledge of new treatments, reaching the trust’s patients earlier than if this knowledge had been generated in research led from outside Cumbria and Lancashire. The Trust looks forward to working with the Hub to expand research activity and expertise within the Trust to incorporate the new community services transferring in to the Trust, and to continue to ensure Cumbria and Lancashire is at the forefront of research and patients across the area benefit directly from this.

The needs of our patients will drive everything we do - this is the vision of our Trust. Being a partner of the Hub helps to underpin this statement. The NHS Institute for Health Research recently published the advantages of being a good research partner. Amongst these are improved patient outcomes and engendering a culture of quality, two key reasons for any hospital to be engaged in this exciting area.

We are pleased to be involved with the Hub and look forward to developing a collaborative approach to help us to achieve our vision and to deliver safe, evidence based quality care services for our patients.

“Seven months on, I can already see the benefits of the Hub”

“Aidan Kehoe, Chief Executive, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

“The needs of our patients will drive everything we do”

“Tony Halsall, Chief Executive, University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust

“The establishment of the Clinical Research Hub at Lancaster University is a fantastic opportunity for the Trust to further develop partnership working to increase the amount of locally led high quality research”

“Professor Heather Tierney-Moore, Chief Executive, Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust

Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust has a long standing commitment to lead, and participate in, high quality research; in order to improve the current and future health of its patients. The establishment of the Clinical Research Hub at Lancaster University is a fantastic opportunity for the Trust to further develop partnership working to increase the amount of locally led high quality research. In turn, this will result in improvements in practice, and knowledge of new treatments, reaching the trust’s patients earlier than if this knowledge had been generated in research led from outside Cumbria and Lancashire. The Trust looks forward to working with the Hub to expand research activity and expertise within the Trust to incorporate the new community services transferring in to the Trust, and to continue to ensure Cumbria and Lancashire is at the forefront of research and patients across the area benefit directly from this.

Messages: CEOs
Research features strongly in the N.H.S. Constitution and the N.H.S. operating framework. Research is of particular interest to all our patients and most are enthusiastic about helping in well designed research studies which advance our knowledge. The national target is to more than double the number of patients taking part in research. In the past, North Cumbria has been seen to be at a disadvantage because of its rural nature, but no longer.

In our Trust we now have around 40 principle research investigators recruiting patients for National research studies. We see the new research Hub as an excellent opportunity to collaborate further and improve patient care by the means of research and innovation. We are proud to be part of this important initiative and we look forward to further collaboration and development of new research projects relevant to more rural areas.

“We see the new research Hub as an excellent opportunity to collaborate further and improve patient care by the means of research and innovation”

Carole Heatly, Chief Executive, North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust.

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is very pleased to be joining the Lancashire and Cumbria Clinical Research Hub. The Trust has seen significant growth in its research activity and infrastructure over recent years and has enjoyed successful research collaborations with its partner organisations. Becoming a member of the Hub will provide an excellent opportunity to consolidate and extend our research partnership with Lancaster University’s School of Health and Medicine and with the other NHS Trusts. By sharing expertise and by leading and participating in new local research collaborations, both the Trust and its patients will ultimately benefit from this involvement. Strategically, the Hub also promises to strengthen our regional position and to establish Lancashire and Cumbria as an important research centre with the ability to attract national and international research funding and resources.

Tony Curtis, Chief Executive, Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

“The Hub promises to strengthen our regional position and to establish Lancashire and Cumbria as an important research centre with the ability to attract national and international research funding and resources”
The Hub offers excellent opportunities for developing and extending locally-led NHS / University collaborative research projects and programmes, drawing upon the many areas of research strength and expertise within the School, and enabling the skills and resources available in other local organisations, including the NW Research Design Services, the NIHR Comprehensive Local Research Network, and the Health Innovation and Education Cluster, to be fully and productively utilised.

The establishment of the Hub is a unique and exciting development for the School’s research profile and activities. We look forward to working with NHS partners to realise its potential.

North Cumbria University Hospital Trust through their Chief Executive, Carole Heatley, is very committed to Research. Leon Jonker continues as the Research and Development Manager, but there is a new R & D Lead in Jim George and a new Associate Medical Director for Education and Training, Gail Ferrier.

The number of research active consultants continues to grow to over thirty on the two hospital sites – the Cumberland Infirmary and West Cumbria Hospital. Similarly, the number of patients recruited to NIHR Portfolio Studies grows year by year. There is great enthusiasm for research supported by our Trust Management. The hospitals include a wide range of specialities serving an urban and a very rural population and there is a particular interest in research in providing services to rural areas.

Our initial efforts in contributing to national studies has opened up our minds to look for further opportunities in collaboration more locally – we are proud to be part of the new research Hub and we are confident that this will further stimulate research activity in North Cumbria and be of mutual benefit.

Messages: Prof Peter Diggle, Dr Jim George
The Trust joined the Hub in autumn 2010, with the aims of producing high quality, clinically useful research proposals of relevance to the local population; ensuring these research proposals are submitted to appropriate sources of funding in a format that maximises their chances of funding success; supporting the further development of research skills and experience, and achieving the priorities of the Trust’s R&D Strategy.

The Trust is now in a good position to develop its own research studies. It has a highly qualified and experienced research workforce – see page 12 of this newsletter for more details.

The Hub has enabled access to research expertise on site from Dr Sally Spencer as well as from other staff at Lancaster University. Based in the R&D Department with Michelle Stephens (R&D Manager), Sally’s presence has enabled clinical staff to meet and develop research ideas into fully developed bids. Sally’s expertise, experience and contacts in the academic community has allowed for a fostering of academic and clinical staff in developing and supporting research studies as well as working with managers and library staff, in helping to generate topics for future studies. Sally is also a member of the Trust’s R&D Committee and contributes to discussion about Trust developments, such as the Clinical Research Facility.

The Trust is preparing to submit its first study with the Hub for Research for Patient Benefit funding (Competition 16) in September 2011. Mr Gus Tang, Consultant Cardiothoracic Surgeon, and his research team have been expertly guided by Sally, who has brought University expertise and key academics together with the clinical research team to develop a clinical trial called ROLO. (More about this in the next e-Newsletter.)

Dr Peter Isaacs, R&D Director and Consultant Gastroenterologist.

Dr Megan Thomas, Associate R&D Director and Consultant Community Paediatrician.

Messages: Dr Peter Isaacs, Dr Megan Thomas
Research is very important to Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust (LCFT) because it ensures we are at the forefront of new developments, ensures that patients receive the latest treatments, attracts high-quality staff, generates income and raises the Trust’s profile and reputation.

The Trust has an excellent track record in leading, and participating in, high quality research. It is currently in the process of incorporating community-based primary care services, and is therefore very keen to foster and develop research activity and expertise in these new areas. The Hub will support the Trust to increase locally led, high quality grant funded research in these areas, and help ensure that the benefits and learning from locally led research are implemented quickly.

The Trust will launch its 2011/12 R&D strategy shortly, and will promote the Hub at the launch event. The Hub will enable us to support research within the new primary care community services, and will be instrumental in linking the Trust with academic researchers at the University. The Hub will also enable the development and implementation of agreed funding and costing arrangements with the University, and help increase research activity among Allied Health Professionals across the Trust.

Professor Jenny Shaw,
R&D Director
The Trust is the most recent partner to join the Cumbria and Lancashire Clinical Research Hub. We have an established research profile and infrastructure, with over 250 currently active research studies. Lin Nelson is the R&D Manager and we are currently in the process of appointing a new Director of Research to continue the leadership of the late Professor Douglas Mitchell. As a teaching hospital Trust, there is a strong emphasis on research for clinicians at all stages of their careers, and all staff are encouraged to develop their skills via education and research. The Trust aims to support staff with various levels of experience to engage in research and as a result we have research active consultants, junior doctors, Masters students, medical students, midwives and nurses.

The Trust has secured several major research grants amounting to several million pounds in external research funding over recent years and continues to work in partnership with local, national and international research teams. NIHR Flexibility and Sustainability (FSF) funding has enabled increased support to researchers, particularly by the team of Research Grants Officers to support preparation of collaborative research funding applications. Current external funding covers research mainly in stroke, women’s health, neurodegenerative diseases, critical care, and end of life care, but is also fostering the development of research teams in other emerging areas. The Grants officers are ideally placed to work with others across the Hub to increase the number of successful funding collaborations.

The Trust has strong existing links with its university and NHS partners, including several longstanding collaborations with Lancaster University. We hope that joining the Hub will result in new research collaborations, both with academics in the School of Health and Medicine, and with clinicians from the other Trusts. By working in partnership through the Hub, the Trust hopes to contribute as a strong research partner and also to benefit from the opportunities for shared expertise, networking and collaborative bidding across Cumbria and Lancashire.
The new Clinical Research Hub offers a much needed opportunity for all NHS Trusts within Lancashire and Cumbria to develop locally-led research. Lancaster University’s proximity to University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust (UHMBFT) provides unique potential for exploring, developing and maximising collaborations between highly respected university academics and aspiring research-motivated clinicians. The role of the Hub in marrying these two professional streams to build collaborations to address new and clinically relevant research questions is not only fundamental to its business but an exciting and hopefully fulfilling task.

Research activity within UHMBFT historically has been limited to a relatively small number of motivated individuals. However, times are changing. As funding has been transformed beyond recognition by the Comprehensive Local Research Networks, so research activity within UHMBFT has grown exponentially. Clinicians are becoming increasingly interested in education and research as the Medical School at Lancaster develops. This hopefully will be fertile ground for the Hub to identify and match-make collaborations with the long term goal of developing funded research programmes with home grown studies that will contribute to the national research portfolio. Already, there is a commitment to support MSc studentships for intercalating medical students co-supervised by University and NHS staff, and the first co-supervised PhD studentship began this academic year.

Much of the recent increase in research activity within UHMBFT has been underpinned by our improved infrastructure. More information about the Trust’s new research suites is given on page 12 of this newsletter.
Sally’s role is to identify, facilitate and develop collaborative research in health and medicine between the School of Health and Medicine and NHS partners across Lancashire and Cumbria.

Prior to taking up this role, Sally has worked in the field of patient-reported outcome measures (PROMs) for 15 years, including their design, development, evaluation and role in clinical trials. Her experience has encompassed partnerships with industry, (pharmaceutical and medical devices), charities and clinical colleagues, fulfilling a range of roles from consultancy to research management. She gained her PhD in Health Sciences (PROMs in clinical trials) from the University of London in 2003 and has since worked in the Universities sector publishing high quality, internationally relevant research. Her personal ethos is driven by a strong commitment to evidence-based practice where her publications include two Cochrane Collaboration systematic reviews. She has extensive experience of critical peer review and teaching evidence-based practice from a problem-based learning perspective. Sally is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and an Affiliate of the James Lind Alliance.
Royal Preston Hospital opens Research Directorate and Clinical Studies Centre

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals has recently celebrated the opening of its new Research Directorate and Clinical Studies Centre at Royal Preston Hospital. This follows the continued expansion of research activity within the Trust and the need for a dedicated space for seeing patients involved in clinical research. As research continues to develop in future, the longer term aim is to establish a full clinical trials facility on the Royal Preston site.

Research suites at University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay

In 2009, University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay bid successfully for a £250,000 NIHR award to build research suites on each of the two main sites and to relocate the R & D department to Pointer Court 1. The latter accommodates the RM & G team, the Associate Director for R & D, the Patient Safety Research Unit, hot desks for up to 8 research practitioners, and a fully equipped meeting room. The two research suites provide clinical consultation rooms for clinical trials patients, office space for research practitioners and designated pharmacy space for clinical trials. The Trust is now much better placed to work with partner organisations to realise its exciting potential for high quality clinical research.

Research practitioner workforce at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals has a highly qualified and experienced research practitioner workforce, made up of medical and nursing staff working across a number of specialties including Haematology/Oncology, Cardiology, Stroke, Gastroenterology, Respiratory, Critical Care, Paediatrics and Midwifery. The research practitioner workforce maintains close links with the clinical teams in their departments, to ensure that our research is answering questions relevant to improving patient care. The research nurses also assist with the implementation of research findings into clinical practice. The research practitioner workforce is supported by a Trials Pharmacist, Senior Trials Technician, Trials Technicians and Trials Administrators. In the summer of 2011 the research practitioner workforce will be moving to the Trust’s new on-site Clinical Research Facility.
Hub launch at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals’ involvement as a partner in the Hub will be formally launched at a Trust event in June 2011, with both University and Trust speakers. It will demonstrate how developing our own funded studies is just as important as participating in studies developed elsewhere. Six months in, the Trust can already see the benefits of collaboration, expertise, raising the profile of research through working with the Hub. We expect the next six months to be just as rewarding.

Hub funding success — Senior Research Associate to be based at Lancaster

Professor Andrew Smith, Head of the Patient Safety Research Unit at University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay, is working with the Hub to develop a series of Cochrane Reviews. A Senior Research Associate will be appointed for the project, who will be based at Lancaster University for three years. This important evidence-based research represents the first funded collaborative success for the Hub.

NIHR Clinical Lectureship

Dr Jane Martindale is a Clinical Specialist Physiotherapist at the Wrightington Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust. She was awarded her doctorate in 2008 from the University of Central Lancashire for her study entitled ‘Disease severity and psychological status in Ankylosing Spondylitis’. She was recently awarded a prestigious NIHR Clinical Lectureship award to extend her research in this field. During her Lectureship, Jane will be supported by the Hub to undertake a multicentre, long term outcome study of people newly-diagnosed with AS across the North West region. Jane has also played a leading role in setting up the Ankylosing Spondylitis Special Interest Group North West (ASSIGNw) for physiotherapists, and it is hoped that through these links that the project will encourage other physiotherapists to become involved in research.
Talking to the Hub - Professor Peter Selby – 10th March 2011

“Focusing research on benefits for patients – the National Institute for Health and NHS research agenda”

Peter is Professor of Cancer Medicine at Leeds University, Director of the Cancer Research UK Clinical Centre in Leeds, former Director of the National Cancer Research Network and Joint Director of the NIHR Clinical Research Network Coordinating Centre. His research interests include biological therapy and biomarkers, clinical trials and psychosocial oncology and his clinical work is mainly with urological cancer patients.

The talk focused on the impact of research activity at an organisational level on patient care, both nationally and globally. The event was well attended with an audience of approximately 60 people drawn from the Hub’s University and NHS partners. His talk subsequently prompted a lively discussion on the nature of the relationship between research active organisations and improved health outcomes. Informal discussion and networking opportunities subsequently continued over a generous buffet supper enjoyed by all.

We would like to thank Peter for a very stimulating and thought provoking talk.
Contact details

For further details about the Hub, please contact:

**Sally Spencer,**
Associate Director of Clinical Research
s.spencer1@lancaster.ac.uk

**Helen Griffiths,** Administrator
h.griffiths@lancaster.ac.uk

**Contact details in partner Trusts:**

**Michelle Stephens,** R&D Manager
Michelle.Stephens@bfwhospitals.nhs.uk

**Louise Worrell,** R&D Manager
Louise.Worrell@lancashirecare.nhs.uk

**Lin Nelson,** R&D Manager
Lin.nelson@lthtr.nhs.uk

**Leon Jonker,** R&D Manager
leon.jonker@ncuh.nhs.uk

**Andrew Higham,** R&D Director
Andrew.Higham@mbht.nhs.uk