

New logo and rebranding

A rebranding exercise has recently been completed in order to raise awareness of the alignment of the research networks as part of NHS

Research Scotland (NRS). As a result, all of the research network logos and names have changed. **The Scottish Primary Care Research Network (SPCRN) will now be known as the NRS Primary Care Network.** Our new logo (above) will now replace the SPCRN logo. We will still fulfil the same role in supporting researchers to recruit in Primary Care and to support practices to take part in research studies.



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Research Site Initiative (RSI)

Research Site Initiative (RSI) schemes have been very successful in England at increasing capacity to deliver recruitment and research in GP practices over the last 10 years. The network has secured funding from five Health Boards in Scotland to run RSI schemes in 2016-17 (Fife, Highland, Lothian, Lanarkshire and Grampian). Practices which have participated in the scheme are RCGP Research Ready accredited and have undertaken GCP training. Additional objectives for practices enrolled in the scheme for a second/third year of funding include running their own database searches using templates provided by the NRS Primary Care Network and undertaking feasibility work for studies.

'As a practice, we have undoubtedly benefitted from our research activity. Individually, Sue and I learnt a great deal at the GCP training day. Most significantly, our patients like the fact that they have opportunities to enter research trials, and I know that some have had amazing benefit (for example, 5 out of 6 patients with diabetes are now in remission due to the DIRECT trial intervention!). We would be delighted at the opportunity to continue this work.'

Dr Russell-Smith

NRS Primary Care Network: Research update

The **NRS Primary Care Network** is involved in studies with varying recruitment priorities. Below are examples of recent ways in which the network has been utilised in order to facilitate recruitment.

Large-scale, national recruitment



The NRS Primary Care Network invited patients with COPD to the **TWICS** study (determining whether adding low dose oral theophylline to inhaled corticosteroids reduces the risk of exacerbation and whether it is cost effective, improves quality of life and lung function and reduces mortality). Participants across Scotland were recruited in 2014 - 2016. In total 77 GP practices assisted with the study, and the network facilitated the invitation of 1870 potential participants.



The NRS Primary Care Network identified and invited all adults aged 50 and over, who were registered with participating GP practices, to respond to the **USEFUL** study. This was a general population questionnaire to determine the prevalence and patterns of the main symptoms associated with colorectal, lung, breast and upper GI tract cancers and how people respond to these symptoms. In total 121,783 surveys were sent. Over 16,000 (33%) people completed the surveys (7910 from Scotland). The research team were clear that it would not have been possible to undertake this study without the network being involved.



ECLS was the largest lung cancer study to be conducted in primary care in the UK. A total of 166 GP practices were recruited in Dundee, Glasgow and Lanarkshire, the majority from areas of high deprivation. Many practices had never worked with the network. Over 77,000 patients were invited and a further 47,000 reminder letters were sent. Just over 12,000 patients were randomised over the course of three years. The study involved close collaboration with Glasgow CRF.

Targeting specific population demographics and prodromal conditions



Specific population demographics may be required for some studies. The **YouR** study, wanted to recruit young people aged 16 – 35 years who were experiencing severe anxiety and depression and possible prodromal psychosis. We were able to access the health centres that are affiliated to the major universities and invited large numbers of potential participants using this targeted approach. Patients experiencing early symptoms were invited, long before they access specialist services or receive any diagnosis.

Recruiting conditions predominantly managed in primary care



Studies led by hospital consultants may require to recruit patients in primary care, as eligible participants are not accessing secondary care clinics (unless symptoms are particularly severe). The network is currently recruiting to two studies targeting women with heavy menstrual bleeding (**UCON** and **DexFEM**). Studies such as these can be popular with GP practices who have exhausted treatment options for these women and wish to offer an alternative.

Recruiting healthy Controls



Studies may require large numbers of healthy controls to take part in observational cohort research. The network is currently involved in recruiting healthy volunteers, aged 60 – 80 years, to take part in the **Chariot Pro** study. This study aims to look at cognitive and functional changes in those at risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. Response rates have been very high, with individuals expressing genuine interest in being able to contribute to ground-breaking medical research.

Patient and Public Involvement Group

The NRS Primary Care Network PPI Group was established in January 2016. Group participants contribute their views on primary care research. This may be on the suitability of study invitation letters, on what is acceptable to patients in terms of study requirements or on the readability of summary study findings. Meetings are constructive and supportive, and no background in research or academia is required. Following a successful first year, the NRS Primary Care Network would like to express their gratitude to the patients and carers in our PPI group who have generously given their time, experience, views and insights to inform primary care research. The group is expanding, meaning more opportunities for researchers to involve patients and carers in primary care research.

At their next meeting, the PPI group will review a research proposal 'Effects of more than one illness on cancer diagnosis' for a future funding application for colleagues at the University of Glasgow. In 2017 the remaining group meetings will be held in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow on the following dates:



Wed 20 Sept 2017 12.00 – 14.30

Wed 6 Dec 2017 17.30 – 19.45

If you have a patient who wants to find out more about becoming involved, please email Tracy.ibbotson@glasgow.ac.uk or telephone 0141 330 8309. If you are a researcher wishing to get advice or feedback regarding any aspect of your research proposal or project, please get in touch with Tracy. PPI input is now a requirement for most funders and accessing this group is an opportunity to meet with patient representatives to obtain a valuable perspective about your project, prior to submitting your proposal. Involving patients and the public in research can help to: understand the outcomes which are most important to patients, explain clearly what your research is about, improve recruitment by improving study materials and protocols, and provide a greater insight into the patient experience of illness.

Researching recruitment

The NRS Primary Care Network has always sought to improve the efficiency of recruitment, and in the last two years we have begun developing research projects in relation to this to ensure that our work is evidence-based. Two active projects have been embedded in large research studies that the network are supporting, the first, examining possible reasons for variation between practices in recruitment rates in the ECLS study, and the second using a proof of principle embedded randomised controlled trial to examine whether recruitment rates to the MAMMOTH study vary with different salutations in the letter from the practice (Dear Mrs McDonald vs Dear Senga). Once proof of principle and feasibility can be demonstrated, the NRS Primary Care Network will seek to externally fund this work to contribute to the very limited evidence base on how best to recruit to research in the primary care context.



The **NRS Primary Care Network** was established in 2002 to co-ordinate national research activity in primary care. We are funded by the Chief Scientist Office (CSO) with the overall aim of increasing the amount of research relevant to patient care which is undertaken in a primary care setting. This involves network staff facilitating high-quality research studies, both academic and commercial across the full range of physical and mental health areas. The network contact information is below.

Node	Health Boards covered	Staff	Email address
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