

Research Forum for Allied Health Professions



May 2006

Issue 3

Alliances across the Health Professions: Joining forces in research

Are you involved or interested in research? Do you want to find ways of meeting others from a range of professions with similar interests?

The National Physiotherapy Research Network (NPRN), funded by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, aims to encourage and facilitate involvement in research across the UK. Based on the principles of self-help and mutual peer support, the NPRN has a multi-professional and clinically relevant ethos.

To help bring together clinicians with managers, academics, students and Allied Health Professionals (AHPs), the NPRN has established regional research 'hubs' across the UK and the Republic of Ireland. There are 17 regional hubs, each of which is facilitated by one (or more) senior university researchers with excellent networking skills and clinical contacts. The hubs are points of advice and referral and to some extent, training. Through the hubs, individuals or groups with research needs and questions can be put in contact with others with cognate interests, or possibly offered support and mentoring.

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Each hub is developing differently according to the enthusiasm and expertise in the respective regions. Some hubs, for example, have already made plans to run workshops for novice researchers; some have begun to form collaborations with other regional groupings, including a range of Allied Health Professions' research networks; and others have focused on carrying out a learning needs analysis and seeking sources of research sponsorship.

If you, as an Allied Health Professional interested in research, would like to find out what the NPRN is doing in your region, a list of regional hubs and facilitators' contact details can be found at: <http://www.csp.org.uk/director/effectivepractice/research/nprn.cfm>.

For general information about the aims and work of NPRN and its regional hubs, contact Dr Philippa Lyon. Dr. Lyon is based in the Clinical Research Centre for Health Professions in the University of Brighton, and works full-time as NPRN Research Officer. You can contact her on 01273 643945, or by email, p.lyon@bton.ac.uk.

Philippa Lyon

NPRN

National Physiotherapy
Research Network

Supporting research development
and its integration into practice



Annual Report 2005

Introduction

The Research Forum for Allied Health Professions (RFAHP) was established in November 2000. The Forum comprises members and officers from the 11 Allied Health Professions regulated by the Health Professions Council. It represents approximately 130,000 practitioners working in the public, voluntary and private sectors throughout the United Kingdom. As a subsidiary of the Allied Health Professions Federation, members of the RFAHP are accountable to each professional body which they represent.

The Research Forum for Allied Health Professions (RFAHP) has now been in existence for five years. Its strategic aims are:

- To be the primary point of contact for matters relating to allied health professions research information and communication
- To enhance the research capacity and productivity of the allied health professions
- To contribute to national, regional and local R&D initiatives so as to reflect the full spectrum of health and social care
- To influence the funding of allied health professions' research through lobbying funders and policy-setting bodies
- To promote priority identification exercises for research
- To promote opportunities for multi-disciplinary collaboration
- To facilitate evidence-based practice through the promotion of research sensitivity

At the end of 2004, an ultra-long term vision was created from a joint meeting between the RFAHP and the Clinical Effectiveness Forum for Allied Health Professions (CEFAHP).

This vision, which states the intention that '*All AHP practice will be knowledge and evidence-based by the year 2100, within a respected culture of high quality research*' highlights the long-term nature of research endeavours that allied health professionals need to achieve. This vision has guided the work programme of the RFAHP during 2005.

Membership

In August we said farewell to Anne Whateley (RCSLT) who had held the convenor role for the forum for two and a half years. Forum members acknowledged the enormous amount of work Anne had done to ensure the ongoing success and strength of the group. Prof. Jennifer Klaber Moffatt (CSP) finished her term of office, and forum members wished her happiness in her retirement. The role of convenor has now been taken over by Dr Elizabeth White (COT) who agreed to a two-year term of office. Professor Wesley Vernon (SCP) was unanimously voted in to serve a third, and final, year as Chair. New members were welcomed during the year – Dr Vicky Slonims (RCSLT) and Prof Pam Eakin (COT) as member representatives, Dr Terry Pountney (CSP) and Dr Mary Hickson (BDA) as officer representatives.

Building research capacity

It has been widely acknowledged that the Allied Health Professions are emergent professions in research terms. Opportunities for research funding favour both researchers and institutions which hold established track records of research excellence. However, the breadth of AHP interests and expertise, and key role of rehabilitation services in many government priority areas, creates opportunities. The Research Forum has monitored research capacity within its member professions and a rising number of members with PhDs has been observed. However, a significant amount of AHP funding was noted as arising from the professional bodies themselves.

Newsletter

Following the production of the first edition of the newsletter in December 2004, work has taken place, lead by Ian Cunningham, to prepare for the production of a newsletter following each future meeting of the RFAHP. This will include updates on research activity from individual professional bodies, the annual report and items of general interest for AHP researchers.

Agenda for change

Concern has been expressed by researchers in NHS settings about how their work responsibilities will be recognized under Agenda for Change. The RF has worked with Penny Bromley of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy who is leading on work to develop researcher profiles across a range of AfC bands.

Responses to Consultations

During 2005, the RFAHP submitted responses to the following consultations:

- Research Assessment Exercise 2008 draft criteria
- DH Best Research for Best Health

Links with UKCRC

During 2005, the RFAHP has developed useful links with the UK Clinical Research Collaboration. CE Dr Liam O'Toole attended the September Forum meeting to provide an overview of the work of UKCRC and to discuss its relevance to allied health professionals. Forum members were particularly interested in the plan to build up the research workforce. Phase 3 of this work is targeted at AHPs and is due to commence in spring 2006.

Acknowledgements

Once again, officers and members of the RFAHP have worked enormously hard to represent their professional members and to forward the work of the Forum. Without the commitment and contributions of Forum members to the research agenda and the combined strength of joint representation, the profile of allied health professions in this context would be fragmented and progress in lobbying for research and development inclusion and opportunities would be reduced.

Dr Elizabeth White

Convener RFAHP

Art Psychotherapists Win National Award for Research Project

Art Therapy Practice Research Network (ATPRN) has been awarded a first prize in the prestigious UK Allied Health Practitioners and Healthcare Scientists Award 2005. The specific award was in the 'Innovation in Patient Care or Clinical Services' category for innovations which have successfully challenged the way services are delivered in order to directly benefit patients.

There were over 350 applications for the award across the eight categories. The judges commented that the ATPRN was 'A project that showed a high degree of innovation aimed at improving patient care. The team clearly demonstrated the development of the work, and gave insight into the impact on the therapist-patient relationship. The work crossed professional boundaries, and allowed development of new practice.'

The prize is a recognition that membership of the ATPRN effectively gives added value to the local service in that it helps art therapists to:

- Speedily disseminate best practice innovations
- Understand and use current research to improve services
- Evaluate and audit their practice
- Contribute to local clinical governance
- Understand the role of NICE guidelines and how to impact on them at National level

This is particularly important in a small profession. The entry was made arguing that ATPRN had been launched at a time when many professions were struggling to integrate the culture of Evidence Based Practice (EBP)

into a general 'practice-research divide'. By espousing a philosophy more of Practice Based Evidence (PBE: Margison, Barkham et al. 2000) and by actively encouraging research in all AT services including those in Adult Mental Health, Learning Disabilities, Child and Adolescent Services, School Exclusion, Trauma, and Visual Art generically. The PBE approach has enabled us to capitalise on the fact that Art Psychotherapists were trained primarily as clinicians and that best practice in Art Therapy had evolved pragmatically through service innovations. As a small profession most art therapists could not initiate large research projects into their ordinary work as many:

- worked in isolation, often part-time
- weren't familiar with research
- had complex patients

all problems for involvement in randomised controlled trials (RCTs) and the generation of "gold standard" EBP evidence. We don't see PBE is an alternative to EBP, just a

"A project that showed a high degree of innovation aimed at improving patient care"

complement and step on the way there. However, we believe that starting the PRN and PBE is the way to get a firm evidence base for all we do.

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The ATPRN Core Team consists of: Neil Springham, Chair of the British Association of Art Therapists (Neil@baat.org), Chris Evans, Honorary Professor of Psychotherapy, Nottingham University (Chris@psyctc.org) and Val Huet Executive Officer for British Association of Art Therapists (Val@baat.org).

Val Huet

Executive Officer for British Association of Art Therapists

Val@baat.org

Reference:

Margison, F. R., M. Barkham, et al. (2000). "Measurement and psychotherapy: Evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence." British Journal of Psychiatry **177**(August): 123-130.

Research governance for allied health professionals

26th September 2006
College of Occupational Therapists,
London

This one-day conference will be of interest to allied health professionals engaged in research in health and social care. It will explore the implications of the Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care, and enable delegates to gain up to date knowledge of recent developments in the regulation of research.

A series of presentations by eminent speakers will highlight the challenges and opportunities involved in undertaking ethical research. These presentations will focus upon research in the field of health, social care, student research, and research involving service users. In the afternoon, delegates will work in small groups to explore topics of particular interest. Delegates attending will be



able to:

- learn about the latest developments in research governance;
- gain practical guidance on obtaining approval from research ethics committees; and
- share experiences and address concerns with colleagues.

For an information pack, please contact: Aileen Toal, marketing department, COT.

Tel: 020 7450 2356;

fax: 020 7450 2349;

Email: aileen.toal@cot.co.uk

Dr. Elizabeth White

Convenor RFAHP

Allied



Health Professions Forum

Next Meeting

Friday 14 July
College of Occupational Therapy
106-114 Borough High Street
London
SE1 1LB

Updates from Professional Bodies

Chartered Society of Physiotherapy



Senior Researchers Forum

The CSP regularly holds Senior Researchers Forum to provide opportunity to discuss important research issues. A Forum was held on 27 January 2006. It was well attended by a range of AHPs and generated much discussion. There were 3 presentations and discussion sessions:

- Agenda for Change – generic research profiles
- Clinical Academic careers – in particular looking at the nursing model which is currently being developed
- Knowledge and Skills Framework – where does research fit in?

Delegates were also updated on the Best Research for Best Health Strategy.

British and Irish Orthoptic Society

Annual Conference
 26-27th June Birmingham



College of Occupational Therapists



Annual Awards

Awards cycle completed in January, exceptionally high level of interest due to world congress in Sydney in July

National project to establish current research priorities for occupational therapy

Consensus workshops complete, questionnaire to 7,000 members to be sent out in early March. Project due to complete at the end of July.

Annual Conference

Due to be held in Cardiff 21-23 June. R&D officers presenting sessions on the Foundation for Occupational Therapy Research, presenting research at a professional conference and writing successful research proposals

British Dietetic Association



Annual Conference

The research committee are encouraging submission of abstracts for poster and oral presentations.

Arts Therapies Advisory Group, The British Dietetic Association, British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists, British and Irish Orthoptic Society, British Association/College of Occupational Therapists, Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, Society and College of Radiographers, Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists.

Research Forum for Allied Health Professions

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