

BSW Research Hub Newsletter

Autumn 2021



Welcome to the spring edition of the BSW Research Hub quarterly e-newsletter. If you have an item to add to the next bulletin, [email us](#) by 20th December 2021.

About us

The BSW Research Hub supports all aspects of applied health research and innovation involving local primary and community NHS and HSC organisations. We can help with preparing research proposals and obtaining relevant approvals, to advising on involving the public in research. Find out more about our services [here](#).

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News

Primary care research sites across BSW CCG see a sharp rise in recruitment to research studies and are top of the primary care research site recruitment charts

For the period April 2021 to August 2021 primary care research sites across BSW CCG have collectively seen an increase in recruitment activity of 1146%, when compared with the same period in the previous financial year.

Primary care research sites across BSW CCG also have the highest number of recruiting commercial studies, along with the highest number of recruits to commercial studies, with Trowbridge Health Centre recruiting the highest number of patients to commercial studies between April and August 2021.

Heart of Bath top the recruitment charts – recruiting 922 patients to seven studies between April and August 2021.



Pioneering EEG test could dramatically increase early diagnosis of Alzheimer's

A simple but revolutionary approach to early Alzheimer's diagnosis is being pioneered by researchers from the University of Bath through an initiative that could pave the way for improved outcomes for individuals who develop the disease in the future.

The research uses a new method to passively measure brain activity. It involves participants looking at a series of flashing images on a computer over two minutes, whilst their brain waves are measured using an EEG cap.

The research shows that the technique is highly effective at picking up small, subtle changes in brain waves which occur when a person remembers an image. Crucially, the technique is completely passive, meaning the person doing the test doesn't need to understand the task or respond, and may not even be aware of their memory response.

The team behind the 'Fastball EEG' technology says the approach is cheap, portable and relies on pre-existing technology already available in hospitals, making it easily scalable. They are now beginning to use Fastball EEG in a study of the earliest stages of Alzheimer's disease in collaboration with the Research Institute for the Care of Older People (RICE).

By knowing more about people's disease at an earlier stage, drugs can be prescribed earlier when they may be more effective, such as the recently approved Aducanumab, the first disease modifying treatment for Alzheimer's disease. Lifestyle interventions can also be implemented to help slow disease progression. Current diagnosis for Alzheimer's typically occurs late in the progression of the disease.

Soon, the researchers hope that Fastball EEG could help lower the age of diagnosis by up to five years. Longer-term, they say it may offer opportunities to expand this further. They liken their future aspirations for its application to current screening tools used to test for high blood pressure in middle age.

Find out more [here](#).

Combining Influenza and COVID-19 Vaccination (ComFluCOV) study shows it is safe for people to be vaccinated against COVID-19 and influenza at the same time



Earlier in the pandemic, it was not known whether further booster doses of COVID-19 vaccines would be required to give continued protection, and how giving boosters may fit in with the seasonal flu vaccine programme.

The ComFluCOV study looked to establish the safety of co-administering the most widely used COVID-19 and influenza vaccines in the UK and describe the expected side effects and immune responses to the vaccines when they are given together.

A total of 679 volunteers took part in the study across 12 NHS sites in England and Wales, and were randomly allocated into one of two groups:

- A group who received their second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and the flu vaccine at their first study visit, then a saline injection (placebo) at their second visit
- A group who received their second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and a saline injection (placebo) at their first visit and then the flu vaccine at their second visit.

Participants also attended a third study visit to discuss any side effects they experienced following their second appointment and to give a final blood sample.

The most common side effects were pain around the injection site and fatigue. With some combinations there was an increase in the number of people who reported at least one side effect when both COVID-19 and flu vaccine were given together, but the reactions were mostly mild or moderate; 97 per cent of participants said they would be willing to have two vaccines at the same appointment in the future.

The study was led by researchers at the Bristol Trials Centre, University of Bristol and University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust (UHBW) and was funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR).

New NHS England Excess Treatment Cost guidance

NHS England has published [Excess Treatment Costs: Guidance on the national management model for England](#), which provides guidance for the process of managing excess treatment costs (ETCs) for research falling within the responsibilities of NHS commissioners in England. The purpose of the guidance is to assist researchers with navigating the ETC system.

It has been jointly agreed by NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE&I) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). It has been written with feedback from stakeholders including the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and the Health Research Authority (HRA).

Separate arrangements are in operation for ETCs in research for public health interventions that are not commissioned by NHS commissioners in England. Guidance on this process can be found [here](#).

NIHR Your Path in Research campaign

The NIHR Your Path in Research campaign aims to encourage health and care professionals to take the first or next step in their research career and build awareness about research and its benefits. The NIHR will be promoting this throughout October, and you can find out more about how you can engage more with research and support the ever-improving care the NHS can provide to patients [here](#).

Spotlight on

Vanessa Bishop, Clinical Research and Quality Manager at RICE

Vanessa Bishop is the Clinical Research and Quality Manager at [RICE](#), here she tells us about her role and her experiences of working at RICE.

When I joined RICE in 2013, with so much to learn about the world of dementia research, the one thing always at the forefront of my mind was that I wanted to work directly with the patients. Having experienced a grandparent with dementia, it was important to me to be able to understand more about how the condition affects people, their way of life and understanding, their families and their wellbeing, and to look at what RICE, as a dementia research centre, could do to help and support them.

What I discovered, in meeting those patients, was a whole wealth of wonderful people who all coped in their own different ways and were often surrounded by supportive family, friends and carers who would go to any lengths to do whatever they could to make life better for their



Mum/Dad/partner. That RICE is able to be a part of this is really amazing. We're not a big health organisation but a small charity and limited Company of around 20 people, and I think it's because we are a small, close-knit team that there's a sense of intimacy about the service we provide - personal, one-to-one support for patients and their families.

It sounds like a hoary old cliché but my role, as Clinical Research and Quality Manager, is never the same twice. One day I'll be setting up a clinical trial, the next spending several hours phoning patients about taking part in research. From Zoom calls with pharmaceutical companies to liaising with clinicians, radiographers and University academics, it really does vary from one day to the next. Our research programme runs the gamut from international clinical drug trials to University Postgraduate grant studies and all of them are important and have specific requirements, paperwork, contracts, costings and - ultimately - patient recruitment that needs to be managed.

Over the past year, challenging though it has been, RICE has taken part in and/or supported Alzheimer's disease infusion and tablet trials, COVID/Flu vaccine studies, Parkinson's disease trials, an online dementia app project, a therapy study, a video diary project and there's still the Autumn to go, with more Alzheimer's and Parkinson's trials planned. I'm proud to have been a part of each and every one in some capacity - sometimes more directly involved in recruiting patients, at other times providing admin support to get the study up and running on site.

Although all aspects of my job are necessary in adding to the bigger picture, it's always a favourite kind of day when there's a list of patients to call and chat to about research. Of course, the conversation might start off as research but end up somewhere entirely different - a promise to chase up a prescription, some advice about dementia support services or just a bit of a lift and some jolly chat for someone on their own and feeling a bit isolated. That's the joy of the job and I'm very happy that it's mine.

Regulatory updates

HRA launch new student research eligibility criteria and toolkit

The [new criteria](#) mean that some master's level students will be able to apply for ethics review and Health Research Authority (HRA) and Health and Care Research Wales (HCRW) Approval or devolved administration equivalent. Standalone research at undergraduate level that requires ethics review and/or HRA and HCRW Approval (or devolved administration equivalent) cannot take place. Arrangements for doctoral research remain unchanged.

[The student research toolkit](#) shows the type of standalone research projects that students will be able to do. Standalone research means research where the student designs the study, submits for approval and conducts the project on their own with supervision. Students and their supervisors will need to use the toolkit and complete before being able to submit an application through IRAS.

Find out more [here](#).

Research support

Would you like the Research Design Service (RDS) to review your draft application prior to submission?

The RDS Project Review Committee (PRC) provides an excellent opportunity for you to obtain detailed feedback on your draft grant application prior to submission to the funding body. The panel of RDS advisers and public contributors brings the benefit of seeing the proposal with "fresh eyes", replicating as far as possible the way the real funding committee will consider the application, and will provide detailed feedback and suggestions for improving the competitiveness of the application.

The PRC meets on the third Tuesday of each month - if you would like to arrange for your application to be reviewed, book early to secure a slot. Find out more [here](#).

Training and events

NIHR Grant Applications Seminar ONLINE

Date: Tuesday 9th November 2021

Time: 10.00am – 12.30pm

Do you have a great idea for research in health, social care or public health?
Are you planning to submit a grant application to NIHR?

The popular seminar continues online and will next take place on Tuesday 9th November 2021 from 10.00am – 12.30pm. The seminar provides an overview of NIHR funding opportunities and research programme remits, requirements, and application processes. The RDS will give you top tips for your application and answer specific questions with experienced RDS South West advisers.

They also have a limited number of 20-minute 1-to-1 appointments available after the seminar should you wish to discuss your proposed study with an RDS adviser.

Find out more and book a place [here](#).

Ask The Experts: Diabetes Research

Date: Thursday 11th November 2021

Time: 7:00pm to 8:00pm

To mark World Diabetes Day on Sunday 14 November, guests can put their questions about the latest developments in diabetes research to leading experts in this Zoom webinar.

The event will also feature research supported by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), which is funded by the Department of Health and Social Care.

Find out more and register [here](#).

Virtual grant development & writing workshop

Date: 23rd and 24th November 2021

The 2-day workshop will provide a great opportunity to help researchers to make progress in developing their NIHR research proposal into a competitive application. There will be presentations from experts and advisers, and opportunities to ask questions along the way. There will also be an opportunity to hear from previous successful applicants, and their experiences of applying.

Find our more and register [here](#).

Funding opportunities

NIHR Local Authority Short Placement Award for Research Collaboration Round 1 (Pilot)

Closes: 1pm on 25 November 2021

The LA SPARC scheme supports individuals working in local authority settings and NIHR Academy members to design and apply for funds to undertake short placements allowing them to move between NIHR and Local Authority settings in either direction.

Individuals can apply to the LA SPARC scheme for up to £15,000 to undertake a bespoke short placement/taster opportunity. Applications are short/light-touch and will be assessed in open competition. Find out more [here](#).

Research for Social Care (RfSC) – Competition 4

Closes: 1pm on 19 January 2022

Applications are invited inviting research proposals that will generate evidence to improve, expand and strengthen the way adult social care is delivered for users of care services, carers, and the public. The research is expected to have a high degree of involvement from relevant users of social care and social care practitioners throughout the research. Find out more [here](#).

BSW Research Hub: <http://go.bath.ac.uk/bsw-research-hub>

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