

10,000+ participants recruited to Covid-19 studies at Barts Health NHS Trust

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This week, Barts Health NHS Trust reached a significant milestone in the fight against Covid-19. Since the pandemic started, the Trust has recruited more than 10,000 participants across 34 different Covid-19 studies, including 15 National Institute for Health Research 'Urgent Public Health' studies.

This major contribution to the national effort against the virus has been achieved in the midst of the huge pressures our hospitals and staff are under. The number of participants, including patients, that Barts Health staff have enrolled in Covid-19 studies is a testament to the collective commitment to tackle the pandemic.

Thousands of people have volunteered to participate in observational studies, which have helped us to learn more about the disease, interventional trials, which are investigating a range of potential treatments and vaccines against the virus as well as research into new ways to diagnose Covid-19.

Trust staff, alongside students and volunteers, have stepped up during the most challenging of times to deliver Covid-19 studies at pace and scale to help tackle this disease. Their efforts have enabled hospitalised patients to benefit from the latest, cutting-edge treatments for Covid-19, in addition to helping hundreds of people gain early access to the [Janssen vaccine candidate trial](#) at the bespoke vaccines trial centre at the Bethnal Green Library.

Among the studies that Barts Health NHS Trust have been involved in are the [RECOVERY](#) and [REMAP-CAP](#) trials. These high-priority therapeutic platform studies have already led to the development of life saving treatments for hospitalised patients with Covid-19. The trials, which were looking at using corticosteroids as a treatment for the virus, [found that](#) treating patients with the steroid dexamethasone reduced death rates by just over a third (35%) in patients on ventilators, and by 20% in patients needing oxygen. Nearly 700 patients have taken part in RECOVERY at The Royal London, Newham and Whipps Cross hospitals, with another 76 taking part in REMAP-CAP.

These studies have also been crucial in identifying medicines which do *not* benefit hospitalised Covid-19 patients. This is important because avoiding treatments which don't work can reduce harm to patients, and prevents the waste of resources. Results showed that neither hydroxychloroquine nor Remdesivir helped to reduce death rates in hospitalised patients.

Another, the [GenOMICC](#) study, aims to better understand more about critically ill Covid-19 patients. By looking for genetic differences between them and those who don't become critically ill, the study aims to find out if there are existing treatments that can help this critically ill group of patients. The GenOMICC study has [already identified five genes](#) that make people susceptible to life-threatening Covid-19 meaning they're more likely to become critically ill. And in some cases, has lead researchers to therapeutic targets that can help treat these patients.

The healthcare worker study 'Covid-19 Antibody Response in Healthcare Staff', led by Professor Patrick Kennedy, was one of the earliest studies looking at the prevalence and duration of antibodies. The study recruited over 2,000 Barts Health NHS Trust employees, many of whom were asymptomatic. The study reported more than 25% antibody positivity among staff, with prevalence higher in frontline staff, indicating a degree of protection against the virus. The findings also reflected the high prevalence of Covid-19 in the community, confirming east London as a hotspot for the virus during the first wave of the pandemic. The study results also provided an early insight into the utility of antibody testing and helped inform the development of faster, accurate testing for Covid-19.

As well as trials looking for Covid-19 treatments, Barts Health has also been involved in trials testing new vaccines against the virus. This includes the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) [ENSEMBLE-2](#) vaccine candidate clinical trial. [This phase III trial](#), which is in the early stages and is being carried out at the bespoke vaccines trial centre at the Bethnal Green Library, is showing promising early results. So far, over 600 participants have been enrolled in the study at the Barts Health site, making it one of the top recruiting sites for the study globally. It is hoped this study, which is examining the effects of a 2-dose vaccine regimen, will result in another vaccine to be licensed for use in the UK.

Karen Delin, who participated in the RECOVERY trial whilst an inpatient at Whipps Cross Hospitals said: "I feel so fortunate to have been offered the opportunity to take part in the Covid-19 trial, RECOVERY. The team were kind and supportive and answered all my questions.

"Clinical research is vitally important to find out best possible treatments for COVID-19 and I feel very privileged to have been part of this study. I'd like to express my thanks to each member of the clinical research team for the incredible hard work they are doing to find effective treatments during this pandemic."

Professor Rupert Pearse, Clinical Director for Research and Development at Barts Health and Queen Mary University of London, said: "This is a landmark achievement for the Trust, not only because this level of participation has significantly contributed to our collective knowledge base about the virus but particularly because we've achieved this during the most challenging period in the history of the NHS.

"The ways in which our medical, nursing, research staff, students and volunteers have tirelessly worked together, and supported each other, to set up studies and deliver them safely, has been

inspiring. Many Covid-19 patients have been given access to potentially life-saving treatments, including vaccines, through clinical trials, which would otherwise have not been available to them.

“I am truly humbled by the way our research community has risen to the challenges presented by the pandemic and extend my sincere thanks to each and every one of them.”

For more information about RECOVERY and other studies taking place at Barts Health, visit www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/takepart

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