

# Joint Research Management Office Research News Bulletin

Issue 118

17 June 2021

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## Celebrating International Clinical Trials Day 2021

May 20 marked this year's International Clinical Trials Day, a celebration that acknowledges the invaluable contribution that clinical trials make to improving global health.

Never has more hope been placed on clinical trials and the global clinical research community than over the past 18 months. During this time, our research community rose to the challenge Covid-19 presented and played a vital role in driving forward our understanding of the virus and the development of treatments and vaccines against it.

75 Covid-related clinical studies opened, including 13 studies badged UHP by the Department of Health and Social Care, 7 Covid-19 treatment studies and 28 other UPH studies.

Teams [enrolled over 12,000 participants](#) from across our workforce and local communities into these studies and set up a bespoke vaccines trials centre in the heart of East London at the [Bethnal Green Library](#), which was the highest recruiting site in the UK for the [Janssen ENSEMBLE-2](#) vaccine trial.

Barts Health researchers were also involved in the [RECOVERY trial](#), which established dexamethasone as a treatment for Covid-19 patients on oxygen or ventilators early on in the pandemic. Over 700 patients were recruited at the Barts Health site, making us the third highest recruiting site in the UK.

The collaboration that allowed this work to happen was incredible. Over 90 research doctors, nurses, data managers and administrators were redeployed to support

frontline Covid-19 research and clinical services. It was truly a team effort.

Our research impacts people's lives and gives our patients access to new treatments long before they are adopted into general use, enhancing the care we can offer to the people of East London and beyond. This is what defines Barts Health as being one of the foremost teaching and research trusts in the UK and maintains our international reputation for healthcare excellence.



Whilst large-scale celebrations of ICT Day were still not possible, four fascinating research-related stories were published on the [Barts Health website](#). These stories showcase some of the many positive R&D experiences of this last 'most interesting' year including how public and patient engagement focussed anew on those parts of our community that have suffered the most, and R&D support behind the scenes enabled us to both shut down our research in an orderly manner in 2020 and restart it as quickly as circumstances permit in 2021;

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**Updates and guidance for our researchers on matters relating to research and the Covid-19 virus can be found [on the JRMO website](#)**

## Barts 900 campaign launch

In 2023 Barts Hospital and St Bartholomew the Great Church will celebrate an amazing 900 years of existence.

To mark the launch of the [Barts 900](#) campaign a new website has been launched with a fascinating, well-made documentary that sets out both the history of the hospital and medical school plus a series of ideas for projects that can make this a landmark celebration.



Plans span world-leading medicine and research plus wellbeing for NHS teams and education that will together benefit millions of Londoners and secure our proud heritage for future generations. One of the proposed projects is for a new Clinical Research Facility – that item starts at around 28mins in.

You can find out more about the ambitious plans to celebrate nine centuries of Britain's oldest hospital and London's oldest parish church by visiting the website [www.barts900.org](http://www.barts900.org)

## NIHR survey reveals attitudes to health research

A significant disconnect appears to exist between people's perceptions of the importance of Covid-19 research, and their understanding of where it happened and who took part, a survey commissioned by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) to mark International Clinical Trials Day has revealed. The YouGov survey asked 2,023 respondents a range of questions on their understanding of coronavirus research - especially research in the UK - and the role it has played in tackling the pandemic.

The survey showed that the vast majority of UK adults think health research has played a very (71%) or fairly (19%) important role in the coronavirus pandemic. Perhaps in recognition of this, 29% said they trust health research more now than before the pandemic

began, and just over a quarter (27%) said they were now more likely to take part in health research.

Positively, the survey also found that 86% of people agree that the UK has played a leading role in the scientific coronavirus response, with two-thirds (65%) saying they would be confident (scoring 7+ on a scale of 0 to 10) taking part in NHS-funded or public sector research; 87% expressed pride in those UK researchers and NHS staff who identified coronavirus treatments and vaccines, and 91% think we should be grateful to people participating in Covid-19 research.

Despite these very positive views, the survey also suggested that perceptions of how that success was achieved did not reflect the scale of effort that has been put in by healthcare professionals and participants alike. For example, when asked how many UK participants there have been in coronavirus studies, only 8% knew it was over one million, with 23% estimating the significantly lower total of between 100 and 200 thousand. There have been 1,170,149 participants across 192 NIHR-delivered Covid-19 research studies conducted within the NHS.

Similarly, when asked whether health research should be offered as part of NHS routine care, 78% thought it should. Yet though every single UK public hospital has been involved in conducting some form of coronavirus research since the pandemic began, only 12% of respondents were aware that their local hospital offered opportunities to get involved, with 64% not knowing and 24% believing it did not. The same disconnect appeared with people's understanding of non-Covid-19 research, with only 13% aware that opportunities to take part in research existed in every UK hospital (with 73% unaware and 14% believing it was not).



The survey also shows that there is a significant difference between young and old when it comes to the assessment of how

important health research has been in overcoming the coronavirus. While 80% of those aged 55+ said it was very important, that dropped to 56% for those aged 18-24.

Similarly, for those aged 24-35, only 58% thought health research was very important. When asked about the UK's contribution to the development of treatments, tests and vaccines to combat the Coronavirus, a two-thirds majority of those aged 55+ (65%) positively acknowledged the UK's role, compared with just 29% for those aged 18-24.

Again, approval ratings rose incrementally at each age group asked. Most starkly, the strength of pride felt by respondents in the researchers and NHS staff who delivered coronavirus research was very diverse, with the oldest age group (55+) nearly twice as likely to feel proud as the youngest (18-24 years) (71% and 38%, respectively). Similar differences were revealed when people were asked to describe the sense of gratitude people felt to members of the public who had taken part in coronavirus research, with 57% of the youngest age group (18-24 years) feeling a strong sense of gratitude compared to 75% of those aged 55+.

For more information please see [the NIHR website](#).

## Covid-19 Review Committee

In April the JRMO's Covid-19 Review Committee held its last meeting. Since March 2020, all Covid-19 projects were reviewed by this committee which met weekly to review the impact and delivery of all Covid-19 projects taking place at Barts Health and Queen Mary. It met 52 times, reviewed 121 trust Clinical Effectiveness Unit (CEU) projects, 109 QMERC projects and 226 research projects, a total of 456 projects in all.

The committee had been receiving a reducing number of proposals and therefore, came to a natural end. Committee members are still available for guidance, advice and support, however, the set-up process now reverts to its normal process and remains a JRMO function. Please email the JRMO research governance team with all new proposals and these will be reviewed and set up as appropriate. If you have any queries about this, or any other study set-up issues, contact [research.governance@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:research.governance@qmul.ac.uk)

## HRA Now: changes to UK amendment process and updated SOPs for RECs

The HRA and MHRA have agreed to make two key changes to the UK amendment process.

In addition of a new NHS/HSC site or a change of PI at an NHS/HSC site for a CTIMP study will now be classified as a Non-Substantial Amendment. This was previously considered a Substantial Amendment. The change is designed to speed up new site set-up. This is possible because new sites were categorised as substantial due to EU guidance and therefore, from January 2021, we can take a different interpretation for NHS/HSC sites due to the UK system in place.

The amendment tool will provide the appropriate categorisation and guidance on the next steps to take. The [Standard Operating Procedures](#) for Research Ethics Committees have also been updated to reflect this change. There is no change to the classification of amendments relating to new sites/change of PI at **non-NHS** sites in CTIMP studies. In addition, the amendment tool can now be used to notify MHRA of substantial amendments in place of Annex 2. This should save the applicant's time by reducing the number of forms to be completed. Annex 2 may still be used to notify the MHRA of 'bulk' amendments (identical changes to multiple studies at one time) and will be available on the [MHRA website](#).

## Changes to the management of CRN research support funding

North Thames Clinical Research Network (CRN)'s delivery budget has been devolved to local NHS Trusts. This means that Barts Health is now taking responsibility for administering the funds that maintain the CRN's staff establishment in accordance with NIHR funding rules, allocating funding for new posts, and authorising the replacement of staff that leave.

Barts Health believes it is important that the allocation of these funds to our local research community is based on a process that is transparent and objective with clear assessment criteria used to underpin decision making.

As an interim measure, a panel will be established to manage the funds and an assessment system based on criteria drawn from the objectives set out in the [Trust's research strategy](#).

A panel will operate for the remainder of the current financial year, during which time the process will be developed and refined in consultation with our researchers, to establish a more permanent system. Forms will be provided for applications for funding or requests to replace established posts.

The budget is of course capped and funds limited which places restrictions on the panel's ability to fund all of the requests it will receive, but the Trust will also maintain a small contingency fund to assist researchers to build research capacity. Applications for that support will also be managed by the Panel.

Details of the new process and application form will be circulated to researchers by the end of June.

## Research restart update

The NIHR updated the implementation of the [Restart Framework](#) earlier this year. That had been developed in partnership with multiple stakeholders and the devolved nations, the framework provides a flexible structure for local decision-making. The goal was to restore a fully active portfolio of NIHR research while continuing to support important COVID-19 studies as part of the Government response to the pandemic.

Research staff, who had been redeployed in support of Covid research and patient care, were able to return to their usual research duties from early March 2021, following local agreement of prioritisation criteria.

If there had been a formal suspension of a study, during the first lockdown, then a formal restart process was required. But if a study was simply paused as part of the latest lockdown then no formal restart process was required.

Researchers were warned that the JRMO's set-up of studies would be slower than usual, and that prioritisation by study type would be implemented to establish which studies should be set up first. You can find this priority listing [on the JRMO website here](#). Please contact

[research.governance@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:research.governance@qmul.ac.uk) for further information.

The MHRA has [published guidance](#) on minimising disruptions to the conduct and integrity of clinical trials of medicines during C19 by suggesting certain actions that trial sponsors should consider to build resilience into clinical trial design. Additionally, in 2020, the MHRA published [guidance and information](#) for industry, healthcare professionals and patients covering the Covid-19 outbreak.

## Update on student research – new eligibility criteria from 1 September 2021

The HRA supported by the Wessex Institute at the University of Southampton, have reviewed their approach to study approval for student research.

The review aimed to ensure students have the best learning experience of health and social care research and to reduce the time that the HRA, DAs and NHS Research Ethics Committees (RECs) spend advising on and reviewing student applications. In March 2020 it paused student research approvals to create capacity for urgent Covid-19 research. Now, from 1 September 2021, we are introducing new eligibility criteria for standalone student research.

The new criteria mean that some Master's level students will be able to apply for ethics review and HRA/HCRW Approval or devolved administration equivalent. Standalone research at the undergraduate level, that requires ethics review and/or HRA/HCRW Approval (or devolved administration equivalent), cannot take place. Arrangements for doctoral research remain unchanged.

[Full details are in table one - permitted student research table](#). It has also been clarified when students can take the role of Chief Investigator, [see table two - which type of students may act as Chief Investigator?](#)

Students can learn about health and social care research without completing standalone projects. Looking at other ways to build skills and experience better reflects modern research and emphasises team science. More information is available on [the HRA website](#).

## Standard Operating Procedures

Since the last R&D News Bulletin was published, the following SOPs and associated documents have been updated and released:

### SOP 15: QMUL REC application procedure

- Associated Document 1a: QMERC Research Ethics Application Form
- Associated Document 1b: QMERC Research Ethics Application Form (DDS-approved)
- Associated Document 2a: QMERC Participant Information Sheet template
- Associated Document 2b: QMERC Participant Information Sheet template (DDS-approved)
- Associated Document 3a: QMERC Consent Form template
- Associated Document 3b: QMERC Consent Form template (DDS-approved)
- Associated Document 4: QMERC Annual Progress Report form
- Associated Document 5: QMERC End of Study Notification form

### SOP 42a: IMP Management Sponsored MHRA-Regulated studies

- Associated document 1: IMP management plan template
- Associated document 2: IMP manual template

### SOP 45 Study Specific Essential File Documentation

***Please note: TMF Checklist will now be mandatory for all sponsored studies***

- Associated Document 1 TMF Checklist for MHRA regulated Studies (single site)
- Associated Document 2 TMF Checklist for MHRA Regulated Studies (Multi-Site)
- Associated Document 3 TMF Checklist for Interventional and Research Studies (Single Site)
- Associated Document 4 TMF Checklist for Interventional and Research Studies (Multi-Site)
- Associated Document 5 Source Data Agreement
- Associated Document 6 ISF Checklist for MHRA Regulated Studies
- Associated Document 7 ISF checklist for Interventional and Research Studies

- Associated Document 8 Pharmacy site checklist
- Template 1 Enrolment log
- Template 2 Site delegation log
- Template 3 Coordinating team delegation log
- Template 4 Document version control log
- Template 5 PIS ICF and GP letter version control log
- Template 6 Amendment Log
- Template 7 File note template
- Template 8 File note log
- Template 9 Deviation log
- Template 10 Study-specific training log

### SOP 46: Site selection, initiation and activation

- Associated document 1: Site assessment and selection Guidance
- Associated document 2: Site Initiation and minimum requirements guidance
- Associated document 3: JRMO site activation checklist template
- Associated document 4: JRMO SIV presentation
- Associated document 5: Site initiation report template
- Template 1: Site Selection Report Template

The following associated documents have been released. The SOP is still under review.

### SOP 16a - Data protection for research studies

- Associated Document 1: Data Protection Guidance Document
- Associated Document 2: Data Protection Impact Assessment screening checklist  
***Please note: The completion of associated document 2 by researchers is a new procedure and is mandated in the document submission checklist for MHRA regulated, Interventional and Research studies***
- Associated Document 3: Queen Mary CAG application form guidance
- Associated Document 4: Barts Health NHS Trust CAG (Section 251) application form guidance

All JRMO SOPs can be found [on the JRMO website](#).

# QMERC News

## Covid-19 Guidance

Queen Mary Ethics of Research Committee (QMERC) has updated the [Committee's Covid-19 guidance](#) for researchers who have already received ethical approval and those applying for it, with regards to restarting face-to-face research interactions in line with Government guidelines and the easing of restrictions.

## Generic Approvals and Devolved School RECs

The team is pleased to offer all Schools, Departments and module leaders the opportunity to apply for over-arching 'generic approval' from the QMERC, which would then allow the department to approve their low-risk studies in-house. You can apply for one or more generic approvals from QMERC for a related group of low-risk research involving human participants and their data.

Eligible studies need to be sufficiently similar in their aims and research methodologies and would have a robust process of review within the department, where ethical issues are considered by a panel of independent reviewers. Ideally, the individuals involved in leading this process at School/ Departmental level would also consider becoming a member of one of our central QMERC Review Panels ([role description of QMERC review panel members](#)).

For more information about the generic approval process or if you are unclear whether generic approval is the appropriate review route for your group of studies, please contact Katherine Ouseley: [k.ouseley@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:k.ouseley@qmul.ac.uk)

## Annual Progress Reporting

If your research was approved by a Review Panel of QMERC after December 2019 and is ongoing, please submit an [Annual Progress Report](#) to [research-ethics@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:research-ethics@qmul.ac.uk). For those studies approved by Panel, that have been conducted and completed since January 2020, please complete the [End of Study Notification](#) form.

## Volunteer as a QMERC Review Panel Member

Queen Mary staff, from across all faculties, are welcome to join our QMERC Review Panels as new members. For more information about becoming a member, please refer to the [role description](#).

## Call for Lay Members

The team is also keen to bring in individuals not employed by Queen Mary who are passionate about research and research ethics to join one of the QMERC Review Panels as a lay member. This is a varied and rewarding role and involves attending two meetings per year (currently held virtually), plus time for application pre-reading. For more information please see information on [the JRMO website](#).

## Application Form Review

A new application form was launched in October 2020 and the team is asking all those who have submitted applications since then to answer a [short anonymous questionnaire](#) about the form and their experience.

In an exciting development, the team is also moving its application process online, implementing a software solution that will allow researchers to view only the questions that are relevant to their research project.

## Research Ethics Team changes

After nearly 15 years of dedicated service to the QMERC, Hazel Covill retired from her position as Research Ethics Facilitator. We wish her all the best in everything she chooses to do, and thank her for her commitment and her long service to Queen Mary research ethics. We are delighted to welcome Lola Alaska as her replacement, who joins Mantalena Sotiriadou in our small team.

## Contact the team

Queries, applications and amendments should go to the shared e-mail inbox: [research-ethics@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:research-ethics@qmul.ac.uk)  
Telephone queries to 020 7882 7915 / 6947.  
[Full contact details online.](#)

## Our research

### Public consultations launch for Whitechapel Road – a new home for life sciences in London



Plans are underway to develop a new life sciences adaptable development across five sites at Whitechapel Road as part of the [Barts Life Sciences](#) programme.

The new development will provide the space and facilities needed for Barts Health NHS Trust, [Queen Mary University of London](#) and their partners to work together on innovative research projects. The programme will facilitate the development of new interventions, devices and services using digital, genomic, bioengineering and medical technology and ultimately, aims to improve the health and wellbeing of those who live in east London and beyond.

As part of this development, the [Department of Health and Social Care \(DHSC\)](#) and [NHS Property Services](#) are bringing forward proposals to public consultation for the new site at Whitechapel Road.

The vision is to transform a series of outdated buildings and empty sites around the Royal London Hospital to create a vibrant masterplan that provides space for a range of life science and complementary occupiers, as well as supporting uses including café and community uses.

The development has the potential to generate thousands of jobs in the area and includes plans to improve the streets and public spaces in the local vicinity. The pioneering project will also deliver benefits for the local community, researchers and entrepreneurs.

A public consultation has been launched to hear people's views on the proposals. For

more information and to complete an online survey please visit [the website](#).

Comments received during this public consultation will help the team working with DHSC and NHS Property Services to develop more detailed designs, which will be shared later this summer for further feedback before a planning application is submitted to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets later this year. They will also help shape the development of the project more widely, including the development of the life sciences campus so that it meets the needs of people who live and work in Whitechapel, east London and beyond.

### Your smartwatch could alert you to the risk of sudden death

Researchers have developed an algorithm that could enable smartwatches to alert wearers to potentially deadly changes in their heart rhythm. The research, presented at the British Cardiovascular Society conference, could help to identify people at risk of sudden death.

Every year in the UK thousands of people die of sudden cardiac death (SCD), where the heart develops a chaotic rhythm that impairs its ability to pump blood. Usually, identifying people at risk of SCD requires a visit to a hospital for tests. This new algorithm could, in future, enable everyday wearable technology to detect potentially deadly changes in the wearer's heart rhythm.



The algorithm was developed by researchers from Queen Mary University of London and University College London. They found that it was able to identify changes on

electrocardiograms (ECGs, which measure electrical activity in the heart) that were significantly associated with the risk of being hospitalised or dying due to an abnormal heart rhythm.

The team used data from nearly 24,000 participants from the UK Biobank Imaging study, which was part-funded by the British Heart Foundation, to get a reference for normal T waves on an ECG. The T wave represents the time it takes the ventricles (the two larger chambers of the heart) to relax once they have pumped blood out of the heart. An abnormal T wave can indicate an increased risk of ventricular arrhythmia, an abnormal heartbeat that begins in the ventricles (main pumping chambers) of the heart. Ventricular arrhythmias are a major cause of sudden death.

They then applied the algorithm to ECG data from over 50,000 other people in the UK Biobank study to look for an association between changes in the shape of the T wave on a resting ECG and the risk of being hospitalised or dying because of arrhythmia, heart attack or heart failure. They found that people with the biggest changes in their T waves over time were significantly more likely to be hospitalised or die due to ventricular arrhythmias.

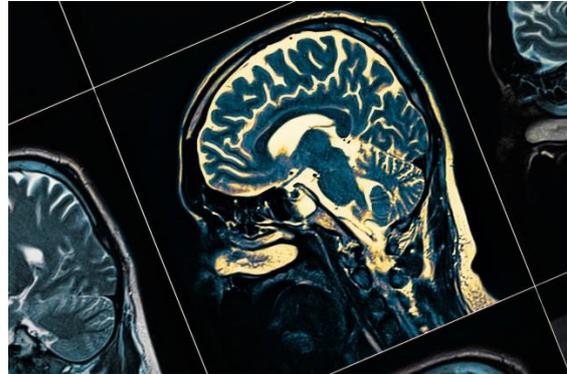
Dr Julia Ramirez, Lecturer at Queen Mary University of London, led the study. She reported that the team had been able to develop this algorithm so it can analyse ECGs from people taken while they're resting. This will make it much easier to roll this out for everyday use in the general population.

This algorithm was also better at predicting the risk of arrhythmia than standard ECG risk markers. We still need to test it in more people, including different cohorts, to ensure it works as it is supposed to. However, once we've done this, we'll be ready to start studying the integration of the algorithm into wearable technology.

The research was funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement by the Medical Research Council. More information can be found on the [Queen Mary website](#).

## Scientists uncover the secret of the hunger switch in the brain

A new study [published today in Science](#) has revealed how the master switch for hunger in the brain, the melanocortin receptor 4 (MC4), works.



The research team, including scientists from the Weizmann Institute of Science, Queen Mary University of London and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, also clarified how this switch is activated by setmelanotide (Imcivree), a drug recently approved for the treatment of severe obesity caused by certain genetic changes. The findings shed new light on the way hunger is regulated and could help to develop improved anti-obesity medications.

The study uncovered the 3D structure of the MC4 receptor, through the use of recent advances in cryogenic electron microscopy. The 3D structure revealed that setmelanotide activates the MC4 receptor by entering its binding pocket –directly hitting the molecular switch that triggers us to feel full- even more potently than the natural satiety hormone. It also turned out that the drug has a surprising helper: an ion of calcium that enters the pocket, enhancing the drug's binding to the receptor. In biochemical and computational experiments, the scientists found that similarly to the drug, calcium also assists the natural satiety hormone.

Dr Peter McCormick, Reader in Molecular Pharmacology, said: "This is the first time this receptor has been caught in action. Interestingly, we found that calcium helped the satiety hormone activate the MC4 receptor while interfering with the hunger hormone and reducing its activity. This was a truly unexpected finding," Dr Moran Shalev-Benami from the Weizmann Institute's Chemical and Structural Biology Department added. "Apparently, the satiety signal can successfully compete with the hunger signal because it benefits from the assistance of calcium, which helps the brain restore the 'I'm full' sensation after we eat."

Being constantly hungry no matter how much you eat is a daily struggle for people with genetic defects in the brain's appetite controls, and can often lead to severe obesity. The scientists have identified hotspots that crucially distinguish MC4 from similar receptors in the same family. This should make it possible to design drugs that will bind only to MC4, avoiding side effects that may be caused by interactions with other receptors.

More information can be found on the [Queen Mary website](#).

### **Pfizer's vaccine protects against Covid variants**

Pfizer's Covid vaccine will protect against mutated Covid variants because it produces such a massive immune response, a study has claimed. This research, covered in the [Daily Mail](#), consisted of Queen Mary and Imperial College researchers, along with experts from Queen Mary and University College London, testing the blood of NHS staff. There were 731 health workers in the study who had been tracked since the start of the pandemic in March last year, all of whom were given a single dose of the Pfizer vaccine. People who had been infected with the virus before getting their first vaccine had such extreme immune responses that they would almost definitely not get sick no matter which variant they were exposed to.

You can read the full story on the [Queen Mary website](#).

### **Three Queen Mary Scientists Elected to Prestigious Fellowship**

Professors [Patricia Munroe](#), [Steve Thornton](#) and [Chris Griffiths](#) have all been recognised for their innovative research in their respective fields of molecular medicine, obstetrics and primary care.

Each scientist has been noted by the Academy of Medical Sciences to have made a significant contribution in advancing medical science and helped both patients and wider society through their research.

Fifty biomedical and health scientists were chosen to be elected by The Academy of

Medical Sciences to its respected and influential Fellowship, out of a total of 384 candidates.

The Queen Mary scientists have been recognised alongside other notable inductees such as Professor Jonathan Nguyen-Van-Tam, the UK Government's Deputy Chief Medical Officer.

[You can read the full article on the Queen Mary website.](#)



### **Healthier heart associated with better problem-solving and reaction time**

[Dr Zahra Raisi-Estabragh](#), BHF Clinical Research Training Fellow at Queen Mary University of London said: "Heart disease and dementia are important and growing public health problems, particularly in ageing populations. We already knew that patients with heart disease were more likely to have dementia, and vice versa, but we've now shown that these links between heart and brain health are also present in healthy people. We demonstrated for the first time, in a very large group of healthy people, that individuals with healthier heart structure and function have better cognitive performance.

With more research, these findings may help us to establish strategies for early prevention and reduce the burden of heart and brain disease in the future.

The brain has previously been proposed as a target for damage from heart disease, and the risk factors leading to heart disease have also been associated with both vascular and Alzheimer's dementia. However, the mechanisms by which these associations occur are not well understood, and studies had not been carried out in large groups of people or those without the disease.

The new study, published in the [European Heart Journal Cardiovascular Imaging](#), examined links between heart health and cognitive function in over 32,000 UK Biobank participants. The team assessed heart health using measures of anatomy and function obtained from MRI scans. Cognitive function was assessed using tests of fluid intelligence (the capacity to solve logic-based problems) and reaction time.

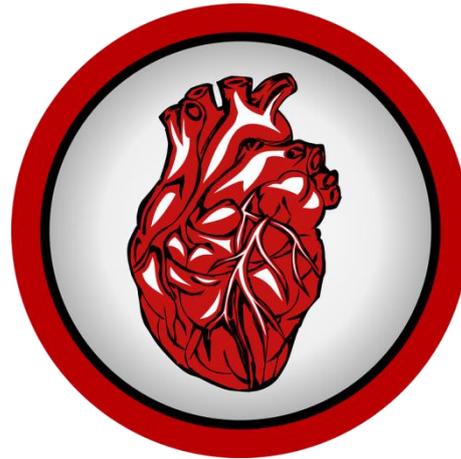
The results show that, in this large group of mostly healthy individuals, those with healthier heart structure and function performed significantly better in tests of cognitive ability. The team also considered whether the links between heart and brain health may be related to shared risk factors for vascular diseases, such as diabetes, smoking, high blood pressure and obesity.

They found that although these factors were important in determining both heart and brain health, they did not provide a complete explanation for the observed associations. This suggests that alternative mechanism may be important in mediating interactions across the heart and brain.

The researchers caution that, as this was an observational study, it is not possible to make any definitive inferences about causality and it cannot be stated that heart disease causes impaired cognition or vice versa. Researchers received funding from the British Heart Foundation, European Regional Development Fund, Barts Charity, UK Medical Research Council, Wellcome, National Institute for Health Research and the Alzheimer's Society. More information can be found on the [Queen Mary website](#).

## Sonic blast beats sky-high blood pressure

A radical new treatment for severe high blood pressure could slash sufferers' risk of heart attacks and strokes. The one-off therapy, which takes about an hour, involves blasting nerves in the kidneys with sound waves to stop them from sending signals to the brain that drive up blood pressure.



"It's conceivable it could become a treatment option in the very near future," says Professor Mel Lobo, Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine at Queen Mary University of London and a blood pressure specialist at Barts Health NHS Trust, who has pioneered the use of the ultrasound therapy.

This was covered in [The Daily Mail](#) and you can read the full story on the [Queen Mary website](#).

## Events

### #Red4Research – 18 June 2021

#Red4Research Day 2021 is on Friday 18 June 2021. It aims to get as many people as possible wearing red to demonstrate their support and appreciation for all those participating, undertaking and supporting Covid-19 research.

#Red4Research Day began in 2020. It is not country, group or organisation specific but powered by collective efforts. Research isn't undertaken by individuals working in isolation,

it is collegial, made possible by people around the world working together. Last year #Red4Research was supported by people in America, Australia, Chile, Italy, Spain, Malaysia and India as well as the UK.

The #Red4Research concept is very simple. Wear something red, it can be any item of clothing, then download/print or make a placard saying #Red4Research, take a photo and post it on social media with the #Red4Research hashtag.

It's all about positivity, creativity and support in the face of adversity. #Red4Research is completely inclusive – anyone, any age, anywhere can participate – children, adults, even pets! Hopefully, people might have a bit of fun along the way raising the profile and work of all those involved in the process.



Research doesn't just happen, people make it happen – research participants, patients, professionals, volunteers and regulatory bodies all collectively working together. Covid-19 has impacted all of us. Research offers a beacon of hope, it underpins the largest vaccine campaign in history and everybody has played their

For more information and resources to help with your #Red4Research events see the [R&D Forum website](#)

## New eligibility criteria for student research from 1 September 2021

As you will have seen the HRA is introducing [new eligibility criteria](#) for the review of student research from 1 September 2021. Applying across the UK, the changes are the result of the review, supported by the Wessex Institute at the University of Southampton, to ensure students gain the best learning experience of health and social care research.

To help course leaders to prepare for change and to share good practice, the Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA) and the NHS R&D Forum are hosting a round table discussion on Tuesday 29 June 2021 along with our Chief Executive, Matt Westmore.

For more information and to register for this event visit the [ARMA website](#)

## Training

### JRMO research governance training

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, JRMO GCP training is still being delivered online, using a mix of MS Teams tutorial, pre-reading and undertaking the NIHR Introduction to GCP. This approach helps keep the online element shorter and more focussed on Barts Health and Queen Mary requirements, CI responsibilities and JRMO SOPs. Please note that places on these courses are limited to 25 people per session.

Barts Health staff and Queen Mary staff and students should book research governance training using the [Queen Mary CPD online booking system](#), but please note you will need a QMUL email address to do this.

If you are already booked on a course, you will not lose your place if you have an NHS.NET email address. However, if you wish to join a

GCP or Governance course or book onto one of these in the future and you do not have a QMUL email account, please email [cpd@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:cpd@qmul.ac.uk) and the team will manually add you to the course.

JRMO courses are also open to staff working on NIHR portfolio studies across North Thames free of charge and to external participants for a fee. Individuals in either group should contact [research.governance@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:research.governance@qmul.ac.uk) for course details and fee information.

Please note the following:

- New users need to register before booking (select the register button on the site and follow the instructions) with a Queen Mary email address
- All users will be asked to select an appropriate course

- Please ensure that you read the details of each course and meet the description of the target audience;
- Select a date and course to meet your needs
- Once you have made your booking, you will receive an automated email to confirm your place
- We can only accept booking through the above route

More detail on all these courses is available on the ['What training do I need' webpage](#).

## WFC Training

Current restrictions on travel and group meetings make it difficult to deliver face-to-face training at the moment, but WFC can arrange online training sessions or take face-to-face bookings for later in the year if preferred.

WFC recognises that your needs are unique and an off-the-shelf solution is rarely sufficient.

### WFC Training - get in touch to book now!

WFC recognise that your training and development needs are **unique**, and an off-the-shelf solution is rarely sufficient. As such, we offer our selection of training, education and workforce development courses **on a bespoke basis only** - select the topics you'd like to cover, and we will build you a tailor-made course to suit your team directly, **at no extra cost**.

[Contact WFC](#) to discuss your bespoke needs for 2021.

As such, we offer our selection of training, education and workforce development courses on a hosted basis only. Hosted courses are capped at 15 delegates (face-to-face) to ensure that an entire team can attend. Hosted courses are delivered upon the request of a client; the client provides the training venue and the course is scheduled according to their needs. The content of the course is developed to be fully bespoke to the client.

[Contact WFC](#) to discuss your bespoke needs for 2020.

Recent courses have included:

- Understanding and applying AcoRD principles (Including a module covering the use of the SoECAT and NHS England ETC process)
- Informed consent for research
- Clinical protocol development
- Principles of clinical research involving human subjects
- Regulatory compliance in clinical research
- Effective sponsorship of research

Recent courses that have been delivered include:

- Clinical Investigations of Medical Devices - Sponsor responsibilities
- The regulatory implications of Brexit for Clinical Research
- Understanding and applying AcoRD principles (Including the use of the SoECAT and NHS England ETC process)
- Informed consent for research
- Clinical protocol development
- Principles of clinical research involving human subjects
- Effective sponsorship of research

## Research funding

### NIHR Associate Principal Investigator (PI) Scheme

The Associate Principal Investigator (PI) Scheme aims to develop junior doctors, nurses and allied health professionals to become the PIs of the future and provides formal recognition of a trainee's engagement in NIHR Portfolio research studies through the conferment of Associate PI status endorsed by the NIHR and the following medical Royal Colleges:

- Royal College of Anaesthetists
- Royal College of Emergency Medicine
- Royal College of Physicians
- Royal College of Radiologists
- Royal College of Surgeons (England)
- Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine

Following a successful year-long pilot in Surgery and endorsement from the above colleges, the scheme is now also open to studies led, or co-supported by the following specialties: Cancer, Ear, Nose and Throat,

Gastroenterology, Hepatology, Anaesthesia and Peri-Operative Medicine and Pain Management, and Trauma and Emergency Care. The ambition is to obtain endorsement from all the Medical Royal Colleges and implement this scheme across all speciality areas.

To find out what studies we currently have registered for these specialties, please refer to the [NIHR website](#). To apply to be an Associate PI please also see the [NIHR website](#).

## NIHR funding

- [Policy Research Programme - NIHR Global Health Research Evaluation](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 31 August 2021  
The NIHR Policy Research Programme (PRP) is holding a research call for the delivery of a process and performance evaluation of the first phase of the NIHR Global Health Research portfolio (2016/17 to 2020/21).
- [Programme Grants for Applied Research - Competition 36](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 28 July 2021  
applications are invited for Stage 1 proposals to develop programmes of applied health research.
- [NIHR Clinical Research Facilities](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 29 September 2021  
The NIHR has launched a new, open competition to designate and fund NIHR Clinical Research Facilities (CRFs) in England.
- [21/521 Evidence Synthesis Programme Grant 2021](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 23 August 2021  
The NIHR Evidence Synthesis Programme Grant Scheme is accepting applications for their 2021 round.
- [21/54 Palliative and End of Life Care Research Partnerships](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 2 September 2021  
The NIHR is accepting stage two applications to this funding opportunity
- [21/513 Building clinical trials experience: Applications to lead an EME-funded clinical efficacy study as part of an NIHR Advanced Fellowship](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 10 August 2021  
The Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation (EME) Programme is accepting stage 1 applications to their commissioned workstream for this funding opportunity.
- [21/511 Health Technology Assessment Programme Researcher-led \(primary research\)](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 1 September 2021  
The Health Technology Assessment Programme is accepting stage 1 applications to their researcher-led workstream.
- [21/512 Health Technology Assessment Programme Researcher-led \(evidence synthesis\)](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 1 September 2021  
The Health Technology Assessment Programme is accepting stage 1 applications to their researcher-led workstream.
- [21/508 NIHR NICE Rolling Call EME](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 10 August 2021  
The Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation Programme is accepting stage 1 applications to this funding opportunity
- [21/506 Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation Programme Researcher-led](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 10 August 2021  
The Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation Programme is accepting stage 1 applications to their researcher-led workstream
- [21/510 NIHR NICE Rolling Call - HTA](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 1 September 2021  
The Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Programme is accepting stage one applications to this funding opportunity.
- [21/515 EME Mechanisms of Action of Interventions for COVID-19](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 10 August 2021  
The Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation (EME) Programme is accepting stage 1 applications to their commissioned workstream for this funding opportunity.
- [21/516 EME Mechanisms of Action of Health Interventions \(pilot call of expanded remit\)](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 10 August 2021  
The Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation (EME) Programme is accepting stage 1 applications to their commissioned workstream for this funding opportunity.
- [21/514 NIHR NICE Rolling Call HS&DR](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 07 October 2021

- The Health Services and Delivery Research (HS&DR) Programme is accepting stage one applications to this funding opportunity.
- [Policy Research Programme - NIHR Global Health Research Evaluation](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 31 August 2021  
The NIHR Policy Research Programme (PRP) is holding a research call for the delivery of a process and performance evaluation of the first phase of the NIHR Global Health Research portfolio (2016/17 to 2020/21).
  - [Programme Grants for Applied Research - Competition 36](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 28 July 2021  
Applications are invited for Stage 1 proposals to develop programmes of applied health research.
  - [NIHR Clinical Research Facilities](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 29 September 2021  
The NIHR has launched a new, open competition to designate and fund NIHR Clinical Research Facilities (CRFs) in England.
  - [Mental health research in Northern England](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 22 June 2021  
The Research for Patient Benefit (RfPB) programme, including the Research for Social Care (RfSC) call, has launched a call for research to better understand and manage the health and social care consequences of mental health conditions.
  - [21/521 Evidence Synthesis Programme Grant 2021](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 23 August 2021  
The NIHR Evidence Synthesis Programme Grant Scheme is accepting applications for their 2021 round.
  - [21/54 Palliative and End of Life Care Research Partnerships](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 2 September 2021  
The NIHR is accepting stage two applications to this funding opportunity
  - [Development and Skills Enhancement Award](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 3 August 2021  
The Development and Skills Enhancement Award (DSE) provides a maximum of 1 year of funding for post-doctoral NIHR Academy Members to gain skills and experience for the next phase of their research career.
  - [21/513 Building clinical trials experience: Applications to lead an EME-funded clinical efficacy study as part of an NIHR Advanced Fellowship](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 10 August 2021  
The Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation (EME) Programme is accepting stage 1 applications to their commissioned workstream for this funding opportunity.
  - [21/511 Health Technology Assessment Programme Researcher-led \(primary research\)](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 1 September 2021  
The Health Technology Assessment Programme is accepting stage 1 applications to their researcher-led workstream.
  - [21/512 Health Technology Assessment Programme Researcher-led \(evidence synthesis\)](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 1 September 2021  
The Health Technology Assessment Programme is accepting stage 1 applications to their researcher-led workstream.
  - [21/508 NIHR NICE Rolling Call EME](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 10 August 2021  
The Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation Programme is accepting stage 1 applications to this funding opportunity
  - [21/506 Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation Programme Researcher-led](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 10 August 2021  
The Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation Programme is accepting stage 1 applications to their researcher-led workstream
  - [21/510 NIHR NICE Rolling Call - HTA](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 1 September 2021  
The Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Programme is accepting stage one applications to this funding opportunity.
  - [21/515 EME Mechanisms of Action of Interventions for COVID-19](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 10 August 2021  
The Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation (EME) Programme is accepting stage 1 applications to their commissioned workstream for this funding opportunity.

- [21/516 EME Mechanisms of Action of Health Interventions \(pilot call of expanded remit\)](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 10 August 2021  
The Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation (EME) Programme is accepting stage 1 applications to their commissioned workstream for this funding opportunity.
- [21/19 Low energy contact X-ray brachytherapy \(Papillon technique\) or local excision for people with early-stage rectal cancer where major surgery is not planned \\*Potential Australian collaboration\\*](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 28 July 2021  
The Health Technology Assessment Programme is accepting stage 1 applications to their commissioned workstream for this primary research topic.
- [21/20 Lipid-modifying therapy in children with familial hypercholesterolaemia \\*Potential Australian collaboration\\*](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 28 July 2021  
The Health Technology Assessment Programme is accepting stage 1 applications to their commissioned workstream for this primary research topic.
- [21/21 Percutaneous thermal ablation of benign thyroid nodules \\*Potential Australian collaboration\\*](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 28 July 2021  
The Health Technology Assessment Programme is accepting stage 1 applications to their commissioned workstream for this primary research topic.
- [21/22 Stretching programme for ambulant children with cerebral palsy \\*Potential Australian collaboration\\*](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 28 July 2021  
The Health Technology Assessment Programme is accepting stage 1 applications to their commissioned workstream for this primary research topic.
- [21/23 Strengthening programme for ambulant adolescents with cerebral palsy \\*Potential Australian collaboration\\*](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 28 July 2021  
The Health Technology Assessment Programme is accepting stage 1 applications to their commissioned workstream for this primary research topic.
- [21/24 Intrauterine insemination versus in vitro fertilisation for unexplained infertility](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 28 July 2021  
- The Health Technology Assessment Programme is accepting stage 1 applications to their commissioned workstream for this primary research topic.
- [21/36 Application Development Award - Mental health and wellbeing among young women](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 12 August 2021  
The Public Health Research (PHR) Programme is accepting Stage 2 applications to this funding opportunity.
- [21/37 Application Development Award - Core outcome data sets for population health research](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 12 August 2021  
The Public Health Research (PHR) Programme is accepting Stage 2 applications to this funding opportunity.
- [21/38 Which interventions are effective and cost-effective in impacting gambling-related harm?](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 12 August 2021  
The Public Health Research Programme (PHR) accepting stage 1 applications to their commissioned workstream for this topic.
- [21/39 Improving independence among older people or disabled people](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 12 August 2021  
The Public Health Research Programme (PHR) accepting stage 1 applications to their commissioned workstream for this topic.
- [21/40 Alcohol interventions in secondary and further education for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 12 August 2021  
The Public Health Research Programme (PHR) accepting stage 1 applications to their commissioned workstream for this topic.
- [Research for Patient Benefit - Competition 45](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 14 July 2021  
Applications are invited for research proposals that are concerned with the day-to-day practice of health service staff, and which have the potential to have an impact on the health or wellbeing of patients and users of the NHS.
- [21/16 Improving support for adult and/or older carer](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 5 August 2021  
The Health Services and Delivery Research (HS&DR) Programme wishes to

fund high quality, theory-led work on effective approaches to supporting carers.

- [NIHR Clinical Lectureships in Medicine 2021](#)  
**Closes:** 30 June 2022  
NIHR IAT CLs provide opportunities for postdoctoral research and facilitate applications for further research funding.
- [21/10 Health Services and Delivery Research Programme \(Standard Researcher-led\)](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 5 August 2021  
The Health Services and Delivery Research (HS&DR) Programme are accepting stage 1 applications to their researcher-led workstream.
- [20/115 Health and social care workforce](#)  
**Closes:** 13:00 on 5 August 2021  
The Health Services and Delivery Research Programme is accepting stage 1 applications for this funding opportunity.
- [Global Health Policy and Systems Research - Researcher-led call](#)  
**Closes:** 4 August 2021  
These awards will provide funding to research consortia to deliver global health research to improve whole health systems and health services for people in LMICs through equitable partnerships.
- [IAT Clinical Lectureships in Medicine 2020](#)  
**Closes:** 30 June 2021  
NIHR IAT CLs provide opportunities for postdoctoral research and facilitate applications for further research funding.

Information on all NHIR funding can be found on the [NIHR Funding website](#).

### Research funding opportunity - Great Ormond Street Hospital Charity and Sparks National Funding Call 2021/22

The Great Ormond Street Hospital Charity and Sparks National Funding Call for child health research was launched last month. Under this call, £2m is being made available to support project grant applications on complex or rare diseases from researchers across the UK. We are inviting applications from independent researchers at any stage in their careers but are particularly interested in supporting projects from promising early career researchers. The deadline for outline applications is Wednesday, 7 July 2021 at 5 PM. Further information about the call can be found on [the GOSH website](#).

Please direct any inquiries to the GOSH Charity Grants team at [grants@gosh.org](mailto:grants@gosh.org).

### MRC 3.5 - Year Industrial Collaborative Award in Science and Engineering (iCASE) - PhD studentship in Translational Biology

Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry have been successful in securing an MRC iCASE award to fund one PhD student from September 2021.

PhD projects may be conducted within Translational Immunology, Translational Inflammation or Translational Cancer and require sponsorship from an industrial partner, providing stipend top-up, consumables top-up (to be negotiated by PI), and a three-month (minimum) work placement.

\*Please note: Supervisors with PhD students already funded by an **MRC iCASE** award are ineligible to apply, however, may do so if their students hold an alternative iCASE award or are an MRC DTP student. For further details please see [the MRC website](#).

The stipend is approximately £19,000 pa (including the industrial top-up) in addition to £5,000 consumables pa and home fees paid. **To apply, please provide a completed** proposed project outline, including details of proposed supervisors and potential industrial partners and send these, as one complete PDF to [a.wilkinson@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:a.wilkinson@qmul.ac.uk)

Deadline: Wednesday 30 June 2021.  
Queries regarding applications may be addressed to Dr Katuscia Bianchi [k.bianchi@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:k.bianchi@qmul.ac.uk)

### Newton International Fellowships Scheme 2021

The British Academy is now inviting applications to the Newton International Fellowship scheme, which is run jointly with the Royal Society. The application form is now available online on the Flexi-Grant Application system. The deadline for applications is **Wednesday 16 June 2021, 5 pm UK time**.

The Newton International Fellowships aim to attract the most promising early-career post-doctoral researchers from overseas in the

fields of the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities from around the world. The fellowships enable researchers to work for two years at a UK research institution to foster long-term international collaborations. Applicants must have a PhD or be in the final stages of their PhD and should have no more than seven years of active full-time postdoctoral experience at the time of application. For further information and a full list of eligibility criteria, please consult the [scheme notes](#).

Newton International Fellows will receive an allowance of £24,000 (tax-exempt) to cover subsistence and up to £8,000 to cover research expenses in each year of the fellowship. A one-off payment of up to £3,500 for relocation expenses in year one only is also available. Awards include a contribution to the overheads incurred, at a rate of 50% of the total award to the visiting researcher. Awards available to start date between **1 January 2022 – 30 June 2022** (preferably the first of the month). For more information [visit the British Academy website](#).

### **The Polish Academy of Sciences and the British Academy Knowledge Frontiers Symposium**

The British Academy and the Polish Academy of Sciences are inviting early career researchers in the humanities and social sciences to participate in a [virtual Knowledge Frontiers Symposium on the broad theme of Just Transitions](#) in November-December 2021. The symposium will include opportunities for seed funding of up to £5,000 per project.

The symposium aims to encourage international engagement and collaboration

between early career researchers based in Poland and the United Kingdom, including through seed funding opportunities. The virtual format will allow for extensive dialogue and debate, discussion of works-in-progress, exploratory roundtable conversations and less structured opportunities to discuss participants' ideas for collaboration, as well as allowing time for feedback and presentations on those ideas to the wider group.

Participants must be based at research institutions either in Poland or the UK. The activities will be conducted in English. Written and spoken fluency in English is required.

Applicants should provide a completed application form (including a CV which must not exceed two pages). The deadline for submissions is Wednesday 21 July 2021 at 17.00 (UK time). Further information is available from Emily Zerling, [e.zerling@thebritishacademy.ac.uk](mailto:e.zerling@thebritishacademy.ac.uk).

### **Call for proposals: publishing in the 'Proceedings of the British Academy'**

The British Academy has been publishing books for over 100 years. From early-career scholars to established authors, our publishing programme showcases scholarship in the humanities and social sciences, enriching and shaping academic discourse. We are now accepting proposals for themed, edited volumes for publication in the 'Proceedings of the British Academy' series. Themed volumes do not need to derive from a conference. Proposals should, however, focus on an area of research that will engage our wide readership. Submit your proposal on [Flexigrant](#). The next deadline for proposals is Wednesday 28 July 2021 (5 pm UK time).

### **Research professional**

Research Professional (formerly Research Research) has an easy-to-use sign-up process: <http://www.researchprofessional.com/>

**Funding information:** [Up-to-the minute-information about all types of research funding can be found on the Research Professional website – to access this click here \(account and password required\).](#)