

Clinical Research Rotation Nurse – an innovative developmental role

- the result of collaboration between a CRF and local clinical research organisations

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Background

Since its publication *Best Research for Best Health – a new national health research strategy* (2007), the Department of Health – via its National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) – has built-up considerable national and regional clinical research infrastructure (including Clinical Research Facilities) to enable expansion of the conduct of high quality, ethical and scientifically robust clinical research. Subsequently, a considerable number of regional research networks/organisations focusing on different health briefs within the NHS have been established – each employing their own sets of Clinical Research Nurses.

Introduction

The NIHR is encouraging collaboration between NIHR funded organisations. In Cambridge – under the initiative and leadership of the Addenbrooke's Clinical Research Centre – a local collaboration has developed between nursing leads from five different clinical research organisations which in 2011 has led to the set-up of two research rotations posts across these organisations aimed at Band 5 nurses who are interested in commencing a career in clinical research.

Payment for the two posts for 12 months each was granted from the NIHR *Flexibility and Sustainability Fund*.

Aim of Research Rotation Posts

- to improve recruitment and motivation of junior nursing staff to work in research
- to provide a broad grounding in clinical research nursing through exposure and training in several different clinical research environments
- to ensure the development of a skilled workforce to meet the demands of increasing research activity
- to promote the role of the Clinical Research Nurse in supporting and advancing research on the Cambridge NIHR Biomedical Research Campus



Working in a range of clinical settings

Collaborators - Agreed Placements

- ACRC** Addenbrooke's Clinical Research Centre
 - NIHR Clinical Investigation Ward (day unit)
 - Clinical Research Facility (24/7 overnight unit)
- West Anglia**
 - West Anglia NIHR CLRN (outreach studies)
- Cambridge Cancer Trials Centre**
 - Cambridge Cancer Trials Centre (clinical trials coordination)
- The Cambridge BioResource**
 - NIHR Cambridge BioResource (community)
- DRN** Diabetes Research Network
 - Diabetes Research Network (epidemiology research studies / healthy volunteers)

Rotation Plan



Mentoring, training and education framework

Education Plan for Post Holders

- Overall *rotation mentor*: monthly formal progress reviews
- *Placement mentors* facilitate planning, review and final meetings for each placement and are in regular touch with *rotation mentor*
- Core (overall) objectives complemented by placement specific objectives
- Detailed research rotation portfolio to be taken into each placement to provide information continuity
- Education assignment for each placement, e.g. reflective account, presentations, poster – to augment placement specific objectives.
- Attending Higher Education module "Clinical Trials Roles and Responsibilities for Health Care Professionals"

Feedback from Post Holders

from both rotation nurses

- The rotation has been a wonderful opportunity for me as I particularly enjoy variety and being regularly exposed to new skills and learning.
- It is not for those who like to remain in their comfort zone. At times, it is rather demanding. You need to be adaptable and flexible for this post.
- I got to know many different aspects of the process of trial coordination and research facilitation. I had robust training for this.
- The post's dedicated Rotation Portfolio has been extremely beneficial. The objectives were clear.
- I have gained increased communication skills from liaising with such a variety of research teams and research settings.
- The Higher Education module was immensely informative and greatly helped to enhance my underpinning knowledge of the ethics and research governance in the conduct of clinical research.
- The Rotation has given me a bigger picture of clinical research. It has opened my eyes to further possibilities and wider opportunities within research nursing. It has definitely motivated me to pursue a career in clinical research.



New skills, e.g., clinical trials coordination

Discussion

The post has been a highly valuable experience for the post holders and for the participating organisations.

The collaboration has resulted in increased awareness of the working practices and the research in the different organisations.

After some logistical adjustments the post will be well placed to serve well as a long term investment in growing a motivated, knowledgeable and skilled workforce of clinical research nurses.

Feedback from Placements

- We have learnt a lot about the other clinical research organisations who participate in the scheme, via:
 - a. the rotation nurses talking about their placements
 - b. consulting the rotation portfolio
 - c. the set-up meetings for the collaboration
 - d. hand-over meetings
- A relatively long lead-in time for training and education required in each placement. Placements should last at least 3 - 4 months to make them worthwhile for the respective organisations.
- The expectations to what level the Band 5 nurse could be utilised in each placement has been quite inconsistent. To be reviewed and transparent guidelines to be agreed.
- It has proved valuable for the different placements to have a central rotation coordinator/ manager who has the overview of the progress of each rotation nurse and how this fits into the overall structure of the rotation.
- All were positive about the overall concept. Translation of concept into practice requires more fine-tuning.