

Director's Message 3
First Projects Under Way
May 2007

Today we are announcing the first group of projects funded under the Research for Patient Benefit Programme. There are 25 research teams are now starting work. Once contract negotiations are complete, numbers will rise somewhat further. The list of projects can be found at the link below. It will be updated as soon as final details are confirmed.

<http://www.nihr-ccf.org.uk/site/commissionedprojects/>

A glance at what has been funded shows that even at this early stage we are initiating research that

- Attends to a good range of care groups and health problems – including for example children, older people, mental and physical health and health promotion
- Addresses issues in both primary and secondary care
- Concerns service developments and improvements that are both clinical and non-clinical
- Utilises a diversity of research methods

Three features are especially exciting. *First*, there is the sheer diversity of topics. Some projects are concerned with the clinical management of conditions. Others focus on patient self-care, patients' own use of diagnostic tools and the potential for patients and practitioners together to make use of new technologies in the better delivery of care. Some researchers are taking up, refining and developing themes that are already recognised and discussed in national health policy. In other cases, the day-to-day challenges of practice are leading in directions that at present are less widely acknowledged – though they may become the focus of local and national policy development in future.

Secondly, the pays-offs of partnership are evident in these successful project plans. Partnerships between clinicians and academics help to ensure a high quality and rigorous research design that is addressed to questions of practical relevance for the NHS. As many as 23 of the 25 projects are being conducted by collaborative teams from academia and the NHS. Partnerships with patient and members of the public are also evident. These confirm that the research is framed in ways that encompass patient perspectives and that research outcomes are going to be fully discussed with those likely to be directly affected.

Thirdly, the spread of projects in this programme is indicative of the wide span of activity that is the business of NIHR and the opportunities it provides not just for research to be conducted in established centres of excellence and recognised priority areas, but for sound research by local groups capable of making a difference to practice both in a local setting and more broadly.

RfPB came into being as a responsive mode, applied research programme focused on research arising from daily practice in the NHS and designed to contribute to the improvement of that practice. Its intention – well-reflected in these projects – is to demonstrate sometimes small changes to practice and procedure or refinements of interventions can create a better fit with the diverse care needs and lives of those using the NHS and can make a big difference.

My previous messages have been concerned with how to frame proposals and strengthen research designs to give greater chance of success. With details of the first set of projects now in the public domain, a key landmark has been passed. It is my hope that we will see an accelerating rate of growth in the funded project profile as the scope of the Programme and the opportunities it offers become more widely understood.