

Report of Round 2 Sheffield Clinical Research Academy

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The Sheffield Clinical Research Academy (CRA) was established in 2015 with the aim of supporting Sheffield to build capacity in high quality applied clinical research, and to increase grant capture from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and other peer reviewed national funding programmes.

Following on from the successes of round 1 CRA fellows, a further three clinicians were appointed from Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in 2017:

- Professor Alan Lobo, Professor of Gastroenterology
- Professor John Snowden, Professor of Haemato-oncology and Stem Cell Transplantation
- Professor Jaydip Ray, Professor of Otolaryngology and Neurotology

The CRA fellows were released from the clinical responsibilities for one day per week for two years, and were hosted within SchARR (School of Health and Related Research, University of Sheffield), where dedicated support was provided from existing infrastructure, by way of senior academic mentorship and methodologists to help with development of grant applications. Support from the NIHR Research Design Service (RDS) and the Clinical Trials Research Unit (CTRU) formed a large part of this.

CRA Outputs

During the two-year period 2017-2019, a number of funding applications were made by the second round CRA fellows in collaboration with staff from SchARR and TUOS:

- Seventeen full applications submitted, eight of which were to NIHR programmes (four HTA, two EME and two RfPB) and five to national charities.
- Twelve grant applications funded (including two HTA, two EME and one RfPB)
- Six funded as lead (including one HTA and one EME)
- Six funded as co-applicant (including one HTA, two EME and one RfPB)

In addition, the CRA fellows published 29 journal articles and 4 reviews whilst with the CRA.

Benefits of the CRA

CRA fellows identified a number of benefits of the scheme:

- Dedicated time and space to undertake research activity
- Value of senior research mentorship
- Opportunity to build collaborations and networks, and to support more junior clinical research colleagues
- Improved knowledge of funding schemes and realities of grant application processes
- Broadened knowledge and understanding of methodological approaches

Quotes from CRA fellows on added value

'This has been a great experience – which in turn relates to the calibre of the individuals with whom I have collaborated... As a result, I have learned about a range of approaches and frameworks for research and out with the models with which I (and most clinicians) am most familiar... I would certainly recommend this (the CRA) to others.' **Alan Lobo**

'The achievement of a large NIHR grant for a national trial is highly valued and will fill a significant part of my time for the remainder of my career. I thank all involved for the opportunity to develop the grant application successfully. I am grateful (and proud) to be able to conclude my career in the NHS leading a NIHR EME multi-centre randomized clinical trial coordinated from Sheffield, which will hopefully result in world class practice-changing publications in years to come.' **John Snowden**

'I have benefited immensely from the CRA and would highly recommend the opportunity to any aspiring or even established clinical academic looking at refining and sharpening their research focus and impact. The benefits are long lasting and should pay dividends to the trust and university through a pipeline of research active clinical academics who would go on to deliver high quality grant funded research that would benefit delivery of healthcare globally.'

Jaydip Ray

Next steps

Subsequent to this, a further four clinicians were appointed for round 3 of the CRA in January 2019 – Matthew Lee, Ms Carla Gianfrancesco and Sean White from STH and Laura di Bona from SHSC, and three more were appointed from STH for round 4 from October 2019 – Ali Ali, Cath O'Connor and Emily Mayberry.