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Welcome

Welcome to the third edition of the Research Design Service - South West newsletter. The RDS-SW has now been operational for around 18 months and is firmly established across the region. Building upon the many local links and relationships already established by RDS staff, we have been delighted to be involved in providing specialist help and advice on a variety of methodological issues to researchers across the region.

One of our recent **grant application successes** is a pilot randomised controlled trial on *“Visual feedback techniques in the clinical assessment and treatment of speech disorders in hearing-impaired children”*. The research team, from Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Primary Care Trust was awarded £243,000 by the Research for Patient Benefit (RfPB) programme. This study is intended to pave the way for a definitive future randomised trial and is due to conclude in July 2012. Further details can be found on page 2.

Another **grant application success** is a Bath-based feasibility study into *“Contextual Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) for the Self-Management of Chronic Pain in the Community”*. The Research team from the Royal National Hospital For Rheumatic Diseases was awarded £180,000 by the RfPB programme. The overall aim of the study is to improve the life of the person suffering with ongoing distressing pain and to find new ways of treating the large number of people in

the community who at the moment do not access specialist services, and who often go untreated. The study is due to conclude in April 2012.

These projects outline some of the benefits of involving the RDS-SW in such applications. Please do take advantage of our **free** support service – there are 9 RDS offices across the South West and information on these can be found on page 4 or on our website at www.rds-sw.nihr.ac.uk under ‘About Us’.

Following last year’s success, the RDS-SW Residential Research School in Brittany will be running again this year and is due to take place after Easter. Further details of the School can be found on the following page. Also, our third Grant Applications Workshop took place on 18th March in Bath. Previous Workshops have been held in Plymouth and Bristol and, due to continuing demand, we aim to run further workshops in Poole and Exeter. Further details of all our current learning opportunities can be found on our website under ‘RDS Training’.

We are committed to providing the highest quality support to researchers across the South West and we look forward to continuing to work with you to produce many more successful grant applications.

Dr Paul Ewings

Director, RDS - South West

Successful grants: Electropalatography

A pilot trial of electropalatography (EPG) for children with hearing impairment is about to start in Cornwall with a Research for Patient Benefit grant obtained with RDS support. EPG is a biofeedback device that might be helpful to speech therapists working with children to encourage development of intelligible speech.



The device has many tiny sensors that detect where the tongue is making contact, displaying the results visually on a screen. The pattern generated while the child attempts a particular sound (e.g. “k”, “t”) can be compared with the target pattern for that sound.



Seeing the patterns may help the child, with support from the therapist, to move more quickly towards the intended goal therefore producing a better sound.



Although EPG has been used in a variety of settings, there is no definitive trial assessing its effectiveness in children with hearing impairment. Dr Lucy Ellis and Joanna Wallis are undertaking

this pilot to ensure a larger multi-centre trial can be planned with confidence. The pilot will test important issues such as recruitment, attrition and use of outcome measures. The views of participating children and parents will also be sought, on both the use of EPG and the experience of the trial.

The project began to take shape on the annual research school that the RDS-SW now runs. Three regulars from the RDS team continued to work with Lucy and Jo, helping them to build a wider research team and to develop the successful grant application. **“We would never have got a grant in a million years without the RDS”** says Lucy, adding *“It’s the level of support you get and also the quality of the people who help you develop your ideas to fruition - it means everything to have that door opened onto new ventures.”*

Public Involvement in Research

A new INVOLVE report was recently launched which explores the impact of public involvement through an in-depth review of published literature.

The new report: *“Exploring Impact: public involvement in NHS, public health and social care research”* draws together a wealth of examples of how public involvement is conducted, and what difference it is making. But it also raises questions of the quality of the evidence for the impact of such involvement, revealing huge variation in how this is assessed and reported and highlighting difficulties in judging it or drawing general conclusions.

However, although there is not a consistent approach to

assessing impact, or describing it, the same benefits and costs are being consistently reported:

- in clinical research it was found to be of particular value in ensuring acceptability of trials, and that participants felt them to be ethical, well-designed and have relevant outcome measures
- public involvement was reported to help increase recruitment to all types of research
- public involvement was reported to be of value in qualitative research

The Full Report and a 16 page summary are available at: www.invo.org.uk/All_Publications.asp

Residential Research School Update



The RDS-SW Residential Research School 2010 heads off to Qumper, Brittany in April. Once again, the School has been well supported by Trusts across the region with more Trusts keen to sponsor their researchers to attend the School than there were places available.

Many thanks to everyone for their continued enthusiastic support and congratulations to the six teams who were successful in winning places on the School this year against stiff competition. They come from Trusts across the South

West including Royal Devon & Exeter NHS Foundation Trust, Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust, Plymouth PCT, University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust and Royal Cornwall Hospitals Trust. They have some excellent ideas to develop at the School and we are looking forward to working with them.



The Residential Research School is intended to help those who attend make accelerated progress towards submitting a funding proposal to a national competitive

the NIHR funding stream. It is designed to be fully integrated into the support the RDS-SW offers to all researchers who are preparing grant applications in the South West.



We are very pleased to say that, with continued support from the RDS-SW, four of the teams from the November 2009 School have already submitted proposals to NIHR funded schemes. A further team from last year's School is planning to submit a proposal in May. Well done to all of them and we hope that all their hard work will be rewarded with success!

New Funding Rounds

The Research for Patient Benefit Programme (RfPB), Invention for Innovation Programme (i4i) and the Health Services Research Programme (HSR) have recently opened their next rounds of funding.

Research for Patient Benefit (RfPB)

RfPB provides up to £250,000 for projects lasting up to three years which must demonstrate a direct patient benefit. RfPB is especially targeted at improving local healthcare and does not necessarily have to have a national impact in the short term. The registration of intention to submit deadline for Competition 12 is 9th April 2010 with the submission deadline on 21st May 2010.

Invention for Innovation Programme (i4i)

i4i aims to help accelerate the take-up and use of proven new treatments and devices by the NHS. Unlike

most other funding streams it looks for commercial partners from the outset. The deadline for applications to the various i4i streams can be found on our Funding Opportunities webpage at: www.rds-sw.nihr.ac.uk

Health Services Research Programme (HSR)

The HSR Programme aims to increase service quality and patient safety through better ways of planning and providing health services. The programme funds both primary research and evidence syntheses. It also funds all types of study proposals expected to enhance knowledge and understanding in the field of HSR.

Calls now open include:

- HSR002: Open call for research proposals
- HSR / INVOLVE joint funding call: Public involvement in research

The RDS – South West Needs You!

The RDS exists to provide help to people preparing research proposals for submission to National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) funding sources. One of the services provided by the RDS-South West is the option of submitting the proposal to one of the RDS-SW monthly Scientific Committee meetings for a full critical review of the draft application. This is a useful opportunity to draw on the extensive skills and experience of the Committee's members and gain feedback from them which can be used to revise and improve the application.

Having 'fresh eyes' look at the study proposal has proved to be extremely helpful in several ways; the Committee replicates as far as possible the way a real funding committee works and can help to readily identify gaps – or indeed

critical errors - in a research team's explanations and study methods.



Patient and public involvement in the design of research studies is a vital part of ensuring that the research focuses on questions that are important to clinical care and will benefit patients the most.

An area of the Scientific Committee

that is currently not adequately addressed is the involvement of a lay perspective. We are keen to address this and are therefore proposing to extend the membership of the Committee to include two non-clinical, non-NHS members who can provide a 'reality check' on the proposal from a lay perspective. In addition, we are hoping to have sufficient interest in the lay reviewer position to create a database of people who are willing to provide written reviews even if they are unable to travel to Taunton to attend the monthly meetings.

If you are aware of anyone who might be interested in becoming a lay reviewer for the RDS-SW and/or joining the Scientific Committee, please contact the RDS-SW Business Manager, Debbie Marsh, on 01823 344178 or via email at Debbie.Marsh@tst.nhs.uk

Contact Us

Each RDS office is run by an experienced researcher, well equipped to provide practical and user-friendly advice on the research process and applying for funding. If you are unsure of where your nearest office is, or who best to contact, simply get in touch with the **Co-ordinating Centre, Taunton** on **01823 342792** or rds-sw@tst.nhs.uk or visit our website at: www.rds-sw.nihr.ac.uk

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