

Collaborations and partnership: vital tools for successful research

A report from the annual PCRS research workshop for respiratory researchers by **Dr Helen Ashdown, GP and PCRS Research Lead**



This year our pre-conference research workshop was on the theme of collaborations and partnership and how to achieve this effectively for practice-changing research.

Attended by 19 delegates, the afternoon had three parts. The first was a talk from Amanda Roberts, a member of the PCRS Lay Reference Group, who discussed how researchers can work effectively in partnership with patients.

She gave us a useful perspective on the role of the patient in research, and how to get the most out of patient involvement, whilst respecting and providing for their physical and psychological needs. She stressed the importance of aiming to involve patients in research rather than just asking them. She highlighted resources to use for involving patients in research such as INVOLVE (invo.org.uk).

Then we heard from Steph Taylor, Professor in Public Health and Primary Care, Queen Mary University of London, who talked us through different collaborations and how to achieve them successfully. Collaborations can be within and between institutions, as well as with patients. The Asthma UK Centre for Applied Research (<https://www.aukcar.ac.uk/>) is a good example of an effective collaboration.

All delegates then gave an elevator pitch about their current role and research in progress. What struck me was the range of professional backgrounds of those currently doing primary care research and what a multi-disciplinary group we now are. We include health psychologists, physiotherapists, respiratory nurse specialists and this richness that adds to the research we can achieve.

Lastly we broke into small groups where we talked about various issues and shared experiences and solutions. One example discussed was that patients with COPD may have low

How to form successful collaborations

Steph Taylor suggested:

- Consider a mentor – ideally not too distant in career stage terms but from a different part of university, so not working with them directly
- Attend seminars, journal clubs, interest groups and writing groups – reach out across disciplines or establish a group with an identity
- Work towards internal collaborations as well as external. Useful external collaborations include SAPC (Society for Academic Primary Care), NAPCRG (North American Primary Care Research Group), WONCA (World Organization of Family Doctors), IPCRG (International Primary Care Respiratory Group), Soc soc med (Society for Social Medicine and Population Health) – many of these have bursaries for early career researchers
- Contact leaders and arrange visits to other institutions
- Invite speakers to come to your department
- Think about collaborations/involvement of other stakeholders (eg, respiratory nurses, physiotherapists, policymakers), not just patients

health literacy, and therefore postal recruitment discriminates against those who cannot read. Ethics committees have been persuaded of the importance of other methods such as telephone recruitment as an effective way of widening participation in research, so that as many patients as possible can be involved.

This was a very successful afternoon and several people realised through the presentations and discussions that they were doing similar areas of research and got together to discuss it further – so truly collaboration in action!