

**NIHR Collaboration for Leadership in Applied
Health Research and Care South West Peninsula (PenCLAHRC)**

**NIHR CLAHRC Research Capacity in Dementia Care Pilot Programme (RCDCP)
1st April 2015 – 31st March 2016**

In 2015 we recruited four students: Lisa Burrows (nurse), Andrew Hall (nurse), Abi Hall (physiotherapist), Emma Kirk (occupational therapist). The students were registered at each of our constituent Universities – Exeter and Plymouth – (two in each university), located in both Devon and Cornwall. All started their studies by 1st April 2015 for three years full time in three people's cases; 3.5 years full time for the final student (Abi Hall). Students were appointed on a bursary with some research costs included as detailed in our application for funding.

Two students - Andrew Hall and Emma Kirk withdrew from the RCDCP programme within the first year of their studies. Andrew Hall found the uncertainties involved in applied health services research too difficult to manage personally (having had previous experience as a biomedical researcher). He is finishing a scoping review paper with support from his supervisors so that he has some output to show for his initial year of study. Emma Kirk left the programme to return to clinical practice, a personal decision. She remains interrupted in her doctoral studies at Plymouth University with the intention to return to part time study, albeit without the RCDCP support. Both Andrew and Emma had excellent academic records and performed very well at interview. We do not believe we could have anticipated their decision to leave the programme.

Consequently, we have recruited two further students who will be commencing their studies in April 2016. One, Chloe Wood, is a nurse with a clear research career trajectory and ambition to be a clinical academic researcher. She is registered at the University of Exeter. Louise Wilkinson, a recently qualified dietician, has a previous career as an Operations Manager for BT before moving to a clinical qualification. She was interviewed and was appointed on the basis of her excellent CV and desire to apply scientific rigor to the problems of nutrition in people with dementia. She is registered at Plymouth University. Both partner universities have supplemented the RCDCP funding in order to facilitate the late start.

All students, both those in the first tranche of recruitment and those from the April 2016 intake, have been allocated three supervisors, the main two from the host university and a further supervisor from the partner university.

We continue to meet as a 'Community of Research Practice' with the students and programme director (Richards) and programme deputy director (Kent) in attendance for fortnightly meetings, alternating between the Universities of Exeter and Plymouth. These meetings are for four hours duration and the students run a journal club, receive guest speakers, catch up, and engage in methodology discussions and general problem solving session as part of the meetings. Every six

months a larger meeting is held where all supervisors are present. Other CLAHRC PhD students working with dementia care are also involved in this community and its meetings.

Our students attended the two day residential meeting for all the four CLAHRC RCDCP programmes held at Cumberland Lodge, Great Windsor Park. Speakers included John Wilkinson from the DH, Martin Rossor (NIHR Dementia Director), Simon Denegri (NIHR PPI Director) and James Pickett (Alzheimer's Society), as well engaging in a poster presentation session where all students displayed and discussed their projects with their peers and tutors present.

They also attend numerous internal and external training courses, specific to their identified research training needs including systematic reviewing, complex interventions development, and personal researcher development.

PROJECT DETAILS:

Abi Hall

Aims:

1. To determine the current evidence base for physiotherapy interventions for people with dementia who fracture their hip
2. Explore the experiences of physiotherapists treating people with dementia who fracture their hip
3. Determine the experiences of patients with dementia who receive physiotherapy
4. Determine what carers/next of kin felt about the physiotherapy treatment and how these could be improved

Progress:

1. Scoping review completed and submitted for publication
2. Poster presentation at BRITISH GERIATRICS SOCIETY, Falls and Postural Stability Meeting 2015, London
3. Qualitative study 1 – “The experiences of physiotherapists treating people with dementia who fracture their hip” University REC approval obtained. Participant recruitment commencing
4. Qualitative study 2 – “The experiences of patients with dementia and their next of kin of receiving physiotherapy”, Submitted to University REC for approval
5. Feasibility study – “Functional exercise in the rehabilitation of people with dementia who fracture their hip – a feasibility study” Protocol written

Lisa Burrows

Aims:

1. To identify what philosophy informs how memory cafes are structured and delivered
2. To explore how and why memory cafes are working
3. To identify the optimal components that trigger beneficial outcomes for people with dementia and their carers

Progress

1. Realist review protocol written and registered on PROSPERO - Understanding the impact of memory cafes for people with dementia and their carers: a realist review (PROSPERO registration number CRD42016035257). Participation confirmed for expert advisory

group for review (Nurse Consultant, Commissioning, Memory cafes). Poster presentation at PhD/ECR event at The State of the Art of Realist Methodologies Conference in Leeds, November 2015. Preliminary searches commenced

2. Quantitative data. Identification of number of cafes, frequency etc. – through Cornwall Memory café Network Forum
3. Realist evaluation of memory cafes in Cornwall, Ethics application underway. Six memory cafes have confirmed they would like to be part of the study once ethics approved. PPI through the Leadership Group Alzheimer's Society, planned in the next couple of months – to look at participant information leaflets, interview questions.

CHALLENGES FACED DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

As indicated above, two of our students left their studies through reasons unrelated to the RCDCP programme. Once we knew this to be the case, we moved quickly and recruited two further students to start in April 16.. Whilst we regret their departures, we were unable to identify factors that could have prevented this. We will continue our close supervision of all four students, the existing two of whom are delivering against their study timetables, in order to ensure that all of them achieve their PhD qualifications.

FORWARD LOOK

All students are encouraged to write and submit publications at an early stage of their CLAHRC RCDCP career. One has already done so (Abi Hall) within the first 12 months of their studies, an excellent achievement. Our existing students have based their projects on our three principles (1 research on priorities for people with dementia and their careers; 2 research to develop or evaluate interventions; 3 research which is directly relevant to allied health care professionals). We intend to ensure that our two new students do exactly the same.