Participation in child health research - a survey of health professionals (2015)

Workforce team

Our survey conducted in 2015 aimed to determine the current level of paediatricians’ involvement in research and to use that understanding to influence the future direction of and resources for paediatric research. This will help us to support our members to maintain and increase research capacity. Download the full report below.

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Table of contents

- About the report
- Key aims
- Key findings
- Recommendations
- Downloads

The full report and findings of the survey can be downloaded below.

About the report

There has been concern that with pressures facing the NHS, the ability of the paediatric workforce to carry out child health research is declining. The number of academic paediatricians recorded in the RCPCH workforce census has decreased year on year, and there is evidence that supporting professional activities in consultant contracts are being cut, reducing the time available for conducting research.

In November 2012, the College launched Turning the tide: Harnessing the power of child health research. This report highlighted the need to increase research capacity through the collaboration of key stakeholders. (We have since published an updated report.)

In order to investigate in more depth the issues facing child health research, the College conducted a survey of all consultant, specialty and associate specialist grade paediatricians
working in the UK. This survey investigated the capacity of all members of the workforce to participate and the views on public and patient involvement (PPI) in research to inform the College’s &Us network.

The report makes recommendations for the RCPCH and other key stakeholders to address the issues highlighted by the survey, working with workforce planning bodies to maintain capacity for child health research in the workforce.

**Key aims**

- Establish changes in the level of paediatricians’ involvement in research from 2011-2015
- Identify any regional differences in research involvement
- Identify any differences in involvement in research across staff groups
- Establish attitudes towards - and ability to carry out - patient and public involvement (PPI) in research

**Key findings**

- 44.4% of eligible respondents replied to the survey.
- Almost a third of respondents (32.9%) hold a postgraduate diploma, 21.3% hold an MSc, 18.9% an MD (research degree) and 7.6% a PhD.
- 1311 (81.6%) of respondents did not have PAs for research in their job plan.
- Among consultants, 80.1% have no PAs in their job plan for research and over half, 50.8% undertake no research work.
- The average number of PAs for research in consultant job plans is 0.39 and the average number actually worked is 0.71 indicating that respondents spend almost the same amount of time again on research work which is unpaid.
- 65.2% of consultants have not authored peer reviewed original research papers and over four in five have not authored chapters in textbooks.
- On average male consultants authored almost twice as many publications as female consultants - 4.0 per whole time equivalent male doctor compared to 2.2 per whole time equivalent female doctor.
- Overall 213 respondents are in receipt of grants; 89.4% of survey respondents do not receive grants for research.

**Recommendations**

- The RCPCH supports members who wish to carry out research by advocating for appropriate supporting professional activity (SPA) time for all non-direct clinical care activities. We will continue to raise awareness of the importance of research to employers, policymakers and the public.
- The RCPCH will stress the importance of time being made available for research activity for general and community paediatricians who are considerably underrepresented in terms of research output compared to subspecialist paediatricians.
- The proportion of women authoring publications is worryingly low. The RCPCH will work with key stakeholders to understand the reasons for this so that consideration can be given as to what action can be taken.
- Given the reported low levels of research activity by paediatricians reported in this
survey, the College will investigate options for increasing paediatricians' involvement in research including:

- Ensure that training in research methods and associated disciplines in undergraduate and postgraduate curricula is effectively delivered so that all paediatricians have the opportunity to get involved in research and the skills to understand and use evidenced-based best practice.
- Highlighting and promoting key research successes by paediatricians, particularly where research has led to change and produced better outcomes for children.
- Improved communication to paediatricians and their employers of the routes to obtain funding research and the encouragement of collaborative work between organisations.
- Studying the processes for paediatric research activity overseas to learn from models of best practice which could be replicated in the UK.

Downloads
Participation in Child Health Research: A survey of the paediatric workforce.pdf 257.42 KB