

Centre for Health and Clinical Research

July 2020 newsletter

Introduction from the Director of CHCR

Despite the interruptions caused by COVID-19 and the ongoing adaptations to research and our ways of working, we have continued to achieve high levels of success. In the following pages, you can read about our bidding successes and doctoral completions amongst other activities. Many of our researchers have also been contributing to the COVID-19 response in a range of different ways as well as adapting protocols to minimise disruption.

In addition to the news from each of the themes, we have recently said farewell to **Dr Faith Martin**, who was successful in securing an Associate Professor position at Coventry University. At the end of July, we will also be wishing **Dr Vivien Gibbs** farewell as she retires from UWE Bristol and her position as Head of Department for the Allied Health Professions. Vivien has been a great supporter of Centre research activities and will be greatly missed. Finally, at the end of August, we will see the departure of **Janice St John Matthews** (Deputy Head of Department, Allied Health Professions), who has decided to take time out to focus upon completion of her Doctorate.

In February, we held our second doctoral showcase event with eleven students giving short presentations. The event was attended by over 50 people with representation from across the Faculty as well as external stakeholders. We will hopefully be back for a third doctoral showcase in 2021; if necessary, as a virtual meeting.

Also, in February, a networking event for Children and Young People's research took place. This provided an opportunity to reflect upon the activities and overall purpose of the Child Health theme. It has since been agreed that it will become the Children, Young People and Families theme, cutting across the clinical themes within CHCR.

This reflects the activities of the theme more accurately as the majority of researchers linked to theme are also aligned to a clinical theme.

Unfortunately, the CHCR showcase conference, due to take place in April, had to be cancelled. Prior to cancellation, we had received abstract submissions for poster presentation and shortlisted for our poster prize. We subsequently decided to continue with the competition and invited the presenting authors of the shortlisted abstracts to submit a three-minute recorded presentation. The submissions were judged by a panel of six postgraduate students and staff.

Congratulations to our overall winners:

- **Student winner, Dr Sarah Bennett**
'Developing a self-management intervention to manage Joint Hypermobility Syndrome and Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome Hypermobility Type: An analysis informed by behaviour change theory.'
- **Non-student winner, Dr Helen Nicholson**
'Paramedic perceptions of bleeding in trauma and the use of tranexamic acid.'

All shortlisted presentations can be found on the [CHCR News webpage](#).

I do hope that you enjoy reading the news from our themes and encourage you to get in touch for further information. To find out more about our research, please visit our [website](#) and follow us via Twitter @CHCR_UWE. For additional queries, please contact me by email Fiona.Cramp@uwe.ac.uk or telephone 0117 3288501.

Fiona Cramp
Professor of Long Term
Conditions and
Director of CHCR

Children, Young People and Families theme

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, the theme continues to make good progress and the report focuses upon a recent bidding success and the experiences of two doctoral students reflecting upon the challenges of COVID-19.

Dr Sally Dowling, Emma Douglass and Gerry Lucas, along with **Clare Johnson** from the Faculty of Arts, Creative Industries and Education (Visual Culture Research Group, UWE Bristol) were recently successful in the Vice-Chancellor's Challenge Fund competition for their project titled 'Supporting women with learning disabilities to make infant feeding decisions'. The main aim of this study is to understand more about how women with learning disabilities can be supported to make infant feeding decisions, particularly in relation to the use of appropriate and accessible images.

The team will draw upon their cross-disciplinary professional/academic expertise and interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives. Qualitative methods enabling an in-depth understanding of the issues being studied will be used to undertake a scoping review to understand more about the resources and information available to support women with learning disabilities in infant feeding decisions. Semi-structured telephone interviews will also be undertaken with health visitors, midwives and social workers to understand experiences of supporting this population to make infant feeding decisions and focus groups with women with people with learning disabilities to explore opinions/understanding of existing resources. Visual materials will be used as prompts (eg. formula advertising, breastfeeding selfies, Madonna del Latte paintings) to explore the benefits/accessibility of information using different media forms,

(eg. photography, animation, illustration, graphic novel, film). The inclusion of a visual arts specialist is key to this aspect of the methodology.

Pregnant women with learning disabilities struggle to understand the predominantly text-based antenatal information provided during pregnancy (Public Health England, 2020) and there is currently little understanding of the ways in which visual representations can aid communication.

Sam Burr, NIHR (National Institute for Health Research) Clinical Doctoral Fellow.

I am two and a half years into my four-year NIHR-funded PhD looking at infant feeding, sucking and speech sound development. My systematic review was accepted for publication in *Folia Phoniatrica et Logopaedia* in January 2020.

There are three strands to my PhD. The first two involve ALSPAC (Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children) and COCO90s (Children of the Children of the 90s) data (normal populations) and are at the data analysis stage. The third uses NHS data (disease population) and is in the recruitment phase. Due to COVID-19, I have had to stop recruitment until the HRA approve the use of remote consultation in place of face-to-face due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions. The findings from the systematic review and the ALSPAC strand of the study have been accepted for presentation at the International Clinical Phonetics and Linguistics Association conference in 2021 (postponed from 2020) and for publication in the pre-conference proceedings.

I am also working on a spin-off project around AHP clinical academic roles linked to my portfolio work on the Evidencing Work Based Learning module. I plan to develop a paper on this and an article for publication in the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists professional magazine, *Bulletin*.

Within my clinical service, I am leading on the transformation work stream project around digital innovations and COVID-19 working and am currently running a service evaluation looking at clinician feedback on remote consultations. This will be synthesised with feedback from our key stakeholders and patients to inform the changes and reshaping of our clinical service in response to the longer-term impact of the pandemic.

The main aim of this study is to understand more about how women with learning disabilities can be supported to make infant feeding decisions, particularly in relation to the use of appropriate and accessible images.

"If academia can adapt to allow intellectual debate to flourish via new routes of interaction, future PhD students won't just survive, but thrive."

Nicky Harris 'PhD and the pandemic, surviving or thriving? A student's perspective'.

Adaptability is an important survival skill for individuals, projects and organisations, and the onset of a pandemic in the middle of recruitment and data collection for PhD work highlights its significance. As one of the "shielded" clinically vulnerable group, the focus on PhD work has provided ongoing structure and purpose to long spells of isolation and has been a welcome distraction from the threat beyond my immediate environment. The lack of interaction with colleagues in the University and in my field of clinical work has meant that previous opportunities for progress are absent. Identification of study participants (either patients or staff) has been particularly difficult.

The need for a trusting working relationship remains important for participant recruitment and retention over the course of the project, but is more challenging without face-to-face contact. My enthusiasm for continuing with research needs to compete with their concerns about surviving the pandemic, both personally and professionally. Suffice to say, recruitment is at a standstill.

On a broader academic sense, options for scholarly discussion have dwindled with an ever-longer list of cancelled conferences just as I was feeling confident enough to submit abstracts for presentation. I am fortunate to have been a postgraduate student at UWE for long enough to have many personal and professional contacts to sustain me towards completion, and hope that I have sufficient flexibility to create an adapted PhD from the data I have managed to collect thus far.

Universities may need to develop novel approaches to provide support and encouragement for new and future PhD students. If academia can adapt to allow intellectual debate to flourish via new routes of interaction, future PhD students won't just survive but thrive.

For more information,
please contact the
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MAMBO (Musculoskeletal Management, Measurement, Behaviour Change and Outcomes) theme

MAMBO launched its new logo in April which was designed by theme administrator, **Jen Orme**. It will be used to promote the theme within UWE Bristol and beyond.



February saw **Beth Jones** successfully defending her thesis, entitled Patient Activation in Inflammatory Arthritis, at viva. Congratulations Beth!



Beth is pictured above with **Dr Emma Dures** (Director of Studies), **Professor Diana Harcourt** (supervisor) and **Professor Jo Adams** (Beth's external examiner).

The second edition of the 'Oxford Handbook of Musculoskeletal Nursing' was also published in February with **Dr Alice Berry** contributing to three chapters on osteoarthritis; care in the community; and non-pharmacological therapies.



Mwidimi Ndosu (pictured above) was invited to give a talk at the European Specialist Nurse Organisation Congress 2020 in Brussels. The talk was on the challenges of harmonising competences and training of rheumatology nurses.

EULAR 2020

The annual meeting of European Leagues Against Rheumatism went virtual for the first time in June. It was well-attended by MAMBO theme members including **Anne-Marie Sweeney** (pictured below) who gave a poster presentation on 'The patient perspective of Nurse-led care in early rheumatoid arthritis (RA)'.



"I was delighted to present a poster with a systematic review of qualitative studies from my PhD at the international congress for rheumatology, EULAR 2020 (3-6 June). The findings of the systematic review presented nurse-led care as characterised by professionalism, person-centeredness and meeting holistic care needs of patients with early RA. The poster was accompanied by my pre-recorded oral presentation and can be accessed over the summer via EULAR. I was pleased to win a travel bursary which provided free access to the very successful e-congress. It was an amazing opportunity to participate in this important conference and to present my research."

Dr Sarah Bennet presented on 'Dissemination and assessing implementation of the EULAR recommendations for patient education for people with inflammatory arthritis across Europe. This study, led by **Dr Mwidimi Ndosu**, has been successful in securing a funded extension.

Study updates



The GCA-PRO study (Principal Investigator, **Dr Jo Robson**; Study Co-ordinator, **Celia Almeida**) is developing a

Patient Reported Outcome Measure (PRO) for Giant Cell Arteris (GCA). It has been running as normal over the past few months, with a third of collaborating sites continuing to recruit throughout this time. Despite the reduction of research activity due to COVID-19, we have received over 220 questionnaires so far, which is above our predicted target for this time point. Recruitment will continue to the end of the year.



The FREE-IA study (a feasibility study of a low intensity fatigue intervention for patients with

inflammatory arthritis) has entered an exciting phase as we start the data analysis. Our final few participants are returning their secondary endpoint questionnaires, and all the qualitative interviews with patient participants and with clinician participants have been completed. A small number of potential participants had their initial appointments cancelled due to the pandemic, but we have been very fortunate in that all the recruited participants received their one-to-one clinic intervention sessions before lockdown started. Because follow-up in this study is carried out by telephone and postal questionnaires, we anticipate a good level of data completeness despite COVID-19. A further consideration will be how we interpret participants' responses during these changing times, and possible future delivery methods for this type of intervention.

Dr Emma Dures, Dr Susan Bridgewater and Dr Alice Berry.

For more information, please contact one of the joint Theme Leads:
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Emergency Care theme

The Emergency Care Theme are delighted that two of their members were successful in their applications for the Vice-Chancellor's Early Career Researcher Awards. **Dr Laura Goodwin** will be carrying out a project to investigate paramedics' experiences of attending to babies who are born before arrival at hospital. **Dr Helen Nicholson** will explore the factors influencing paramedics' decisions to convey older adults with minor head injuries to the Emergency Department.

Both these projects will inform future research grants on the development of interventions to improve outcomes for patients. The team are looking forward to working with Laura and Helen on these projects and supporting their forthcoming bids.

Despite the challenges that we have all had to face so far in 2020, the team are progressing with funded work. Here are some of the highlights:

- **General Practitioners in Emergency Departments (GPED):** This project to investigate the role of GPs in EDs is nearing the end of its three year duration. Fortunately, data collection for GPED was completed in December 2019 and this study was not paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been an exciting few months for the team as data analysis is rapidly progressing. GPED is a mixed methods study and the synthesis of the qualitative and quantitative data is fundamental to the analysis.

Over the next few weeks, the entire study team will meet frequently to work intensively on interpreting the findings and determining the key messages. We have involved our PPI group in the review of the qualitative and quantitative findings and will continue this for the data synthesis. Work on outputs from the research is already well underway and the final report is due in autumn 2020.

- **Airway management for in hospital cardiac arrest:** We have undertaken some scoping work to explore the acceptability of conducting a trial of initial airway management during cardiac arrest in the hospital setting. We completed a survey of hospitals across the UK and found

that there is currently considerable variation in the airway management strategies used. The majority of respondents would be willing to take part in a randomised trial of airway management. These findings will be published shortly and we are in the process of applying for funding to carry out a large trial to determine whether tracheal intubation, or alternative airway management, is the optimal approach for cardiac arrests that occur in hospital.

- **Understanding and enhancing the assessment of neuropsychological and psychosocial function following out of hospital cardiac arrest (NorA):** Outcomes from out of hospital cardiac arrest are poor; for those who survive, cognitive and functional impairment are areas of considerable concern. As research continues to improve survival, it is especially important to focus on interventions that can enhance cognitive and psychosocial function; this will potentially enable meaningful recovery. However, there is no consensus on the best way to assess survivors.

The first stage of NorA is underway. We aim to investigate sensitive and efficient measures of executive function, attention and memory that can be used to assess cognitive deficits in survivors. We are carrying out a systematic literature review and interviewing survivors and their families about the aspects of their cognitive function that are important to their recovery.

Coming soon...

- **Health promotion advice in urgent and emergency care:** An investigation of emergency and urgent care staff and patients' attitudes, barriers and facilitators to staff health promotion practice behaviours.

- **Virtual visiting in emergency and critical care:** We will shortly be commencing some exploratory work to investigate the impact of virtual visiting on patients, visitors and staff.

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ACTiON (Action, Care, Treatment in Neurology) theme

Unsurprisingly, our research activities as a theme have been disrupted with the NIHR funded studies HABIL (Hemianopia Activity-Based InTervention; **Dr Ailie Turton** and **Dr Alex Palombi**) and ADAPT (Asian Dementia diAgnosis PaThway; **Professor Rik Cheston** and **Dr Emily Dodd**) amongst those having to be paused or delayed. However, theme members have been active in responding to the pandemic – both in adapting existing projects to meet the changing circumstances, and in helping to adapt services.

Theme members contributed to the British Gerontological Society's annual conference which went ahead as a virtual conference – with, amongst other highlights, UWE Bristol's Vice-Chancellor, **Professor Steve West**, welcoming participants and a flagship symposium in dementia friendly communities being chaired by **Professor Cheston**.

Dr Ailie Turton has worked on a video conversation and presentation with **Professor Alan Wing** (University of Birmingham) and **Professor Paulette van Vliet** (University of Newcastle, Australia), for the International Conference of Robotics and Automation, for a workshop on Grasp. The video discusses what has been learned about reaching and grasping from experiments with healthy participants and with people with neurological conditions. It will be available on YouTube.

Professor Rik Cheston chaired a webinar for the Dementia HIT (Health Integration Team) on the impact of the pandemic on research, with contributions from the NIHR, ARUK and RDS amongst others. **Rik** also contributed to an NIHR ARC (Applied Research Collaborative) West rapid review on the impact of COVID-19 on people with dementia walk while **Dr Faith Martin** similarly contributed to one on mental health outcomes.

We have also had a number of successful research applications. Through the BABCON (Bladder and Bowel CONFidence) HIT, **Dr Nikki Cotterill** became a lead co-applicant on a project that secured £5k funding through the Elizabeth Blackwell Institute's Rapid Response COVID-19

Call titled, "Understanding the perceived impact of service changes due to COVID-19 on adults and children with incontinence". This funding this will enable the team to provide a nationwide snapshot of the impact on continence services and underpin future directions of travel.

Nikki was also successful with an application to UWE Bristol's Vice-Chancellor's Mid-Career Accelerator programme and is a co-applicant on three Nursing and Midwifery research internships funded through the Clinical Research Network with interns based at Dorothy House, North Bristol NHS Foundation Trust and at the Children's Hospital.

Dr Mary Cramp and **Dr Emily Dodd** (pictured below) worked with **Dr Jo White** (Centre for Public Health and Wellbeing, UWE Bristol) and have secured funding from Bristol North Somerset South Gloucestershire CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group) to develop a national grant application on the impact of stroke in the Black African and Caribbean community in Bristol.



Professor Cheston and **Dr Dodd** were successful with an application to the NIHR RfPB to establish how to create an augmented care pathway for people living with dementia and their carers who are from South Asian communities. Dr Dodd's time in setting up the study has also been supported by an RCF grant from Bristol CCG.

Emily also successfully completed her DPhil for a thesis titled 'Enhancing communication and engagement between people living with dementia and health care professionals across the Well Pathway for Dementia'.

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PROactive (Pain, Rehabilitation and Innovation) theme

The first half of 2020 has inevitably seen everyone dealing with difficult moments, grappling with new technology and adapting to new ways of working. However, we start with congratulations to **Sharon Grieve** (pictured below) who had a successful DPhil viva following submission of her thesis titled 'Improving health outcomes in Complex Regional Pain Syndrome to inform chronic pain practice'.



January saw the official re-launch of the Chronic Pain HIT, which is now under the leadership of **Professor Candy McCabe** with part-time project management support from **Dr Alison Llewellyn**. A successful workshop event helped to shape the HIT's new direction, and one of the key aims is to establish a resource hub for people living with persistent pain and for healthcare professionals.

In February, **Kathy Rogers** presented a poster abstract at the British Psychosocial Oncology Society Conference in Edinburgh. This related to her work exploring the holistic experiences of adults living long-term with the consequences of cancer and its treatment.

Dr Jen Pearson and **Jessica Coggins** presented the initial FALCON study findings to therapists from Bristol Community Health; a feasibility trial of a fibromyalgia self-management programme in a community setting. Three PROactive-themed oral presentations were given at the Royal United Hospital's Clinical Pain Research Meeting in early March, which was an excellent opportunity to showcase our varied research portfolio to clinical colleagues.

Many of our members have been working remotely during the COVID-19 response, with some redeployment or changes to clinical staff roles. Aspects of assessment and treatment have been adapted to be undertaken virtually using video-conferencing technology.

We also held our first virtual PROactive meeting in May, as a replacement for our usual face-to-face format. Whilst recruitment for the majority of research studies has been paused, some have been able to continue throughout this period:

- COMPACT is an international study with six participating countries, testing the acceptability of collecting outcome measure data for Complex Regional Pain Syndrome clinical trials. Data collection in the UK was completed in June, and recruitment at most sites has now closed. To date, 84 patients have been recruited across all participating sites and 31 completed datasets have been received. A special mention goes to all of our international colleagues for their ongoing commitment, enthusiasm and hard work.
- PROactive researchers are testing a Sensory Training System for people with persistent limb pain. The participant undertakes the treatment themselves at home, so as a response to COVID-19, we are making adaptations to enable us to deliver all other aspects as a remote study using video-conferencing or telephone contact, online consent and questionnaires.
- In a wider research context, colleagues at the Royal United Hospital have been involved in recruitment to two of the major COVID-related clinical trials.

Throughout all of this change and uncertainty, we have had eight research papers published online during the past six months, with another four that have been accepted for publication - journals include PAIN, Hand Therapy, Musculoskeletal Care, British Journal of Pain, and Current Treatment Options in Rheumatology. Topics have covered conditions such as fibromyalgia, rheumatoid arthritis and Complex Regional Pain Syndrome, but also broader research into paediatric chronic pain and first contact physiotherapy.

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Knowledge Mobilisation theme

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted research projects, with most being suspended from mid-March. We are slowly starting to see some reintroduction to recruitment, but don't anticipate return to more normal function until the Autumn.

The unprecedented impact of the pandemic has seen academic staff from UWE Bristol, along with other institutions across the area, working with the ARC West. This initiative, in response to queries from local CCGs and Public Health, provided rapid evidence reviews, to help with decision making around health impacted by COVID.

As part of this initiative, **Dr Alison Diaper** has been working with the local CCG in 'cells', or small working groups, looking at the process of 'System Recovery' and identifying evidence gaps that could feed into future research opportunities. Many thanks to all staff who have been involved in the important initiative in support of our local partners. More details can be found [here](#).

Project news

Kate Beckett (pictured below) recently completed her NIHR funded Knowledge Mobilisation Research Fellowship.



Her research project entitled 'Enhancing Post-Injury Psychological Intervention and Care ('EPPIC') sought to:

1) improve the uptake of evidence regarding the need/best means to address common

debilitating and costly post-injury psychological problems such as PTSD and,

2) test an innovative/inclusive approach to Knowledge Mobilisation using a form of participatory theatre called Forum Theatre. She has recently launched a film called '[Altered states: Using Forum Theatre to enhance NHS care](#)' about her research methods and their impact on YouTube.

Staff news

Many congratulations to **Leah Morris** (pictured below) who was awarded her PhD for a thesis entitled "Patient acceptability of the physiotherapy first contact practitioner (FCP) role in primary care: A realist evaluation".

Leah, who now holds a Research Fellow role within CHCR, is publishing papers from her thesis. Well done Dr Morris!



Harley Anderson was successfully appointed to a Partnership PhD studentship with Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire CCG. Harley will be commencing in October, and will investigate the role of Value based healthcare in managing life limiting conditions. This important work will allow her to consider how we determine 'value' in conditions that have a significant impact on quality of life.

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