

# The Challenges of Clinical Engagement in Research

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## The importance of clinical research

- It is a key goal of the NHS for every willing patient to be a research patient. The greater the number of patients involved in research, the wider the public benefit<sup>2</sup>.
- The NHS bases its healthcare options on evidence-based practice. Evidence-based practice is the integration of best research evidence with clinical expertise and patient values.
- Research is central to ensuring our services are effective, and that we identify new treatments and ways of delivering care that can reduce disease burden, improve quality, increase productivity and promote recovery and prevention<sup>2</sup>.
- There is good evidence that participation in research improves health outcomes and improves healthcare processes<sup>1</sup>.

## The role of clinicians in research

- There are several ways in which clinicians within the trust can be involved in research, including:
  - Being a chief or principle investigator for a research study
  - Informing service users about research studies
  - Referring service users for a study
  - Permitting the research team access to screen their caseload for eligibility for research studies
  - Permitting the research team to attend their clinics to speak to eligible service users about research studies

## Meet the LYPFT Research Team



## The challenges faced

### Gatekeeping

- Some clinicians seem to ‘filter’ their caseload when considering who to share study information with based on factors not in line with studies’ inclusion criteria such as:
  - Service users risk e.g. vulnerability, risky behaviours
  - Age
  - Diagnosis/Needs e.g. Bipolar disorder, Learning disability
  - Assumed knowledge about the service users interest in research

### Clinical Priorities

- There is a sense that some clinicians do not see research as part of their job role or as a commitment, despite the NHS Constitution’s emphasis.

### Protocol Design

- Many research protocols require the first contact with service users about the research must come from the clinician.
- This means that the research team rely on clinicians to speak to service users about research; demonstrating how clinicians engagement is crucial to recruitment.

**“The NHS has a commitment to innovation and to the promotion and conduct of research to improve the current and future health and care of the population.” – NHS Constitution**

## Research Findings

- Several research studies have been undertaken to explore the levels of clinician awareness, engagement and participation in health research.
- In Roxburgh’s (2006) study, nurses were receptive to being involved in research however felt unable due to time constraints, lack of team support and limited knowledge about the research process<sup>4</sup>.

**“[I’d take part in research] if it’s relevant to the work you’re doing”<sup>4</sup>**

- Within a GP setting, barriers to research included the irrelevance of research to clinical practice, the need to protect their patients and their lack of skills and time constraints<sup>5</sup>.

**“Just haven’t got time to do it’s**

**“I’m not sure I want to try new things out on my patients’s**

- Paul’s (2018) study supports previous research which highlighted that clinicians had a vague awareness of research and it was not seen as a priority over other aspects of their role.

**“It’s really important, but...”<sup>3</sup>**

**“If you’re really interested in it you’re likely to invest more and make the time.”<sup>3</sup>**

## What can we do to improve clinical engagement?

- Feedback to clinicians about the findings of research studies they have supported.
- Feedback to clinicians about service users experience and the empowering impact of being involved in research.
- Speak to clinical teams about what research areas they are interested in. This can then inform decisions about the type of projects the trust takes on.
- Early engagement with managers and clinical teams to establish how clinicians can be supported and encouraged to engage in research activity as part of their role.
- Create open, honest and regular dialogues with clinicians about research. This will allow the research culture to further develop within the trust, embedding research within clinical practice.
- Through collaborative working with clinicians we can create a culture where service users feel comfortable to ask clinicians about research.
- We plan to develop our clinical letters to highlight that LYPFT is a research active trust and have an “opt out” option for research.

## Conclusion

- LYPFT is a research active trust and therefore research should be embedded in clinical practice.
- New innovative ways of working collaboratively with clinicians need to be added to current activity to ensure high quality research with meaningful outcomes.

## References

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