









Report of the UK Federation of Primary Care Research Organisations



April 2006 – March 2007



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The past year has been a challenging one for those associated with NHS Primary Care research.

The implementation of the NHS research strategy document 'Best Research for Best Health' has commenced with vigour. The establishing of the eight local research networks (LRN) of UKCRN Primary Care Research Network has been a time consuming but successful undertaking. Alongside the Topic Specific Research Networks and the emerging Comprehensive Research Network the PCRN will endeavour to meet its objective of high quality research outputs that result in improved care delivery and a sustainable improvement in the health of the nation. The UK Federation Steering Group has been aware that the focus of initial UKCRN research activity has been in collaboration with academic units, pharmaceutical scientists and medical practitioners. The PCRN/UKCKRN has agreed to fund the Federation for a further eighteen months to ensure that the needs of all those engaging in primary care research can be supported and advanced.

The conference, held in Liverpool, again attracted over 200 delegates. The structure of the Adelphi Conference Centre lent itself easily to the networking opportunities taken by many, in between attending presentations of completed and/or recently published research. This year's conference is already planned and attracting interest. The opportunity to meet and discuss issues relating to the participation in and delivery of research within the primary care setting ensures that this conference is a regular feature in many diaries.

Individually the Federation Steering Group have continued to work to support the associated Primary Care research organisations and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for the support they have given to the aims and objectives of the UKFed, I would especially like to acknowledge the input and hard work of Caroline Gunnell (Vice Chair) and Louise Letley (Treasurer) who have both tirelessly maintained the momentum in obtaining the extended funding and in the preparation of the conference.

As you will be aware Denys Hancock retired as the Administrator at the beginning of 2007, he has been ably replaced by the staff at the Essex Primary Care R&D Office, who have 'hit the ground running' and have become indispensable as part of the conference organising team.

Terri Harding
Chair UKFed PCRO.
June 2007

1. Structure and Membership

History of the Federation

The establishment of Primary Care Research Networks (PCRN) and Research & Development Support Units (RDSUs) in the UK began in earnest in the early 1990s. The publication of the Mant Report in 1997, made two recommendations of particular reference to networks.

Recommendation 17: *R&D networking arrangements should be developed in each region to promote coordination of R&D activity and to provide expert support for local research. They must meet the needs of local network participants. They should support primary care pharmacists, dentists and optometrists as well as clinicians working from primary care teams.*

Recommendation 18: *Regional research network coordinators should meet regularly to form a national group to coordinate collaborative primary care R&D activity taking place in more than one region.*

A Guidance Group was set up by volunteers to lay the foundations of a "network of networks". The UK Federation of Primary Care Research Networks was established (hereafter referred to as the Federation), this later changed to the Federation of Primary Care Research Organisations.

Aims and Objectives of the Federation

The Federation brings together primary care research organisations from all disciplines from around the UK to facilitate their collective functioning and to promote their interests at a national level. The Federation aims to support its Members in their activities which increase the quality and quantity of primary care based R&D.

The objectives of the Federation are:

- Facilitating communication
- Sharing strategies and resources for success with respect to networking, training, research and development
- Providing representation of member organisations' visions, needs and views to outside groups including professional organisations, funding bodies and government
- Facilitating cross regional and cross-national research activity (for example multi centre research) which enhances the utility of study findings
- Coordinating a response to national activities, including R&D primary care agendas setting in liaison with the NHS R&D national programmes and UKCRN
- Nurturing and developing emerging organisations and providing support for existing ones
- Collaborating and liaising with national research interested organisations

Membership is open to any primary care organisation interested in being involved in high quality research. Members include PCRNs, RDSUs, Academic Units (ASUs) and practice or PCT consortia. The unit of membership is, therefore, one of organisations rather than individuals. Members pay an annual subscription, take part in all decision-making activities and representatives are eligible for election to the Steering Committee. Members receive financial benefits such as a discounted rate for conferences and eligibility for the Federation Bursary Scheme. A small number of organisations are affiliated to the Federation. They tend to be small organisations in receipt of little or no funding or networks/groups that are undergoing structural changes and, due to their circumstances, they do not pay a membership subscription. They are not eligible to vote or to be represented on the Steering Committee and do not enjoy the financial discounts of Members.

Membership of the Federation has increased from 26 members in 1998-99 to 38 members in 2006. The Membership changes constantly as new organisations emerge and existing ones are restructured or merged to form larger organisations. The 2006/7 membership is listed in Appendix 1.

The Steering Committee

The constitution allows for a Steering Committee of between eight and twelve elected members with additional members to be co-opted, as required, by the Committee. Candidates must be nominated by their own organisation and seconded by a different organisation. An election is held if the number of candidates exceeds available seats on the Committee and the results are presented to the membership for approval at the Annual General Meeting held towards the end of each calendar year. Committee members are elected to serve for a term of two years and are normally eligible to serve for up to two consecutive terms as an ordinary member and up to two consecutive terms in an officer position. Officers are elected by the Committee from within its membership. A list of Steering Committee members is shown in Appendix 2.

The Chair since December 2006 has been Terri Harding from NoREN, who had been vice-chair since January 2005. Caroline Gunnell from Essex PCRN, secretary since January 2005, became Vice Chair from February 2006. Louise Letley of the MRC GPRF has been the Treasurer since January 2005.

The Constitution

The constitution was developed by the first Steering Committee and approved by the first Annual General Meeting in October 1999. The constitution sets out the structure and membership, terms of reference and management of the Federation. An amendment can be made at an AGM if 50% of the membership is represented and two thirds of representatives support the amendment.

Administration

Denys Hancock has provided us over the last 6 years with reliable and efficient administrative support, as of November 2006 Denys retired and other arrangements have been put in place to support the Federation and its administration. The steering group decided that as the 2007 conference is to be held in the East of England and that the Essex Primary Care R&D Office are to be coordinating this it made sense to keep administration in one place. An agreement is in place for the Essex Primary Care R&D Office to provide the administration to the UKFed, not including financial management, until the end March 2008. This support will include;

- providing support to the Steering Committee
- contact point for enquiries
- disseminating information to and among Members and outside agencies
- updating the website
- Annual Conference planning and organisation.

2. Communication and Representation

Representation

Through its many links the Federation remains in touch with, and has actively participated in, consultation relating to the reorganisation that is underway within the NHD R&S in particular to support the *'Best Research for Best Health'* strategy.

The Federation work closely with the Society of Academic Primary Care (SAPC) and the NHS R&D Forum with the aim of presenting unified responses where appropriate to matters concerning primary care R&D. Many of its members have been influential in supporting the UKCRN in the process of developing the new Primary Care Research Networks (PCRN) for England, of which there are now eight providing geographical coverage for the whole of England. The Fed have representation on a range of national committees ensuring that Members' views are informing decisions about primary care research. These organisations are listed below:

- DH/RCGP PCRTA *Research Ready* scheme
- NHS R&D Forum
- RCGP Clinical Innovation and Research Centre
- RCN Research Society
- Society of Academic Primary Care Exec Committee
- UKCRN/PCRN
- Faculty of General Dental Practitioners UK
- MRC General Practice Research Framework

Collaboration with outside agencies

In addition to the representation described above, the Federation also provides a point of contact for the agencies seeking information or collaboration with the Federation or with individual member organisations.

Website

The Federation website : <http://www.ukf-pcro.org> contains details of Members, Federation activities, news and contains copies of Federation literature that can be downloaded.

Annual Conference

The Annual Conference is an integral part of the core communications strategy of the Federation. Conference runs over two days with a conference dinner on the first evening to encourage informal networking. The Annual General Meeting is held on the first day so that as many Members as possible can be present and have input into the running of the Federation. To facilitate wider involvement in these aspects of the Federation, the Annual Conference is held in different parts of the UK each year. The Conference programmes comprise a combination of keynote speakers, parallel sessions and workshops. Members are invited to submit papers and posters about research or network activities.

Membership participation is integral to the organisation of the Annual Conference. The Ninth Annual Conference was organised by networks in the North West of England and took place in Liverpool on November 27th–28th 2006. The title was “Health and Opportunity” and the Conference theme was looking at strength and direction in primary care research. The 2006 Conference was attended by nearly 180 delegates. Over the two days there were six plenary sessions, six workshops, 53 oral presentations and 18 poster presentations.

The tenth Annual Conference will take place in Cambridge, November 29th–30th 2007. It has been organised by the Essex Primary Care Research and Development Office and is entitled *New Beginnings Fresh Opportunities*. It will be the first conference in partnership with the PCRN.

Educational and Information Sharing Events

Many Federation Members organise educational and information sharing events in the form of courses, seminars and conferences. The Federation’s role is to disseminate information about these events to encourage maximum uptake of research learning opportunities and this is done through regular dispatches by post and email.

Occasionally the Federation organises an event when it identifies an unmet need or it collaborates with other organisations on an event.

During the ten years that the Federation has existed, primary care research has developed significantly. The earlier emphasis on capacity

building has successfully enabled the development of a large cadre of experienced primary care researchers and an active portfolio of high quality research. Many Departments of primary care scored highly in the last RAE and a large number of service practitioners have now experience in collaborating with research, have received research training and are more confident in using research to support their practice. Consequently, the focus of networks has changed over recent years from dissemination, education and training to facilitating the recruitment of practices and patients to participate in high quality (externally reviewed) research. Some of this role is being taken on by the newly formed PCRNs and the role of the Federation is being redefined and developed to complement the role of the emerging R&D structure.

The Federation and its role in the future

The role of the Federation for the future is to engage the NHS Primary Care Researchers, as the new PCTs become established and new and innovative services are being developed, our members' role may be in supporting commissioning decisions and providing evidence based competitive services. Our future members are those already involved in research activity and those new to, or considering, research. At present there is no other organisation providing this service for so many disciplines working in primary care.

Our strategy will be to focus on raising awareness of our functions/abilities and demonstrate the benefits of accessing them.

Financial Summary

This report provides a financial summary of Federation income and expenditure for the period April 1 2006 – March 31 2007 (Table 1).

The Annual Conference fund is independent of the main Federation fund. Costs are met mainly by registrations. The financial summary for the 2006 Annual Conference is provided in Table 2.

NHS funding

The UKFPCRO received a three-year grant from the National Coordinating Centre for Research Capacity Development (NCCRCD). This grant award was completed during the 2005-2006 financial year. Due to the absence of DH funding spending was reduced on activities such as the production of printed newsletters, updating the members directory. The number of steering committee meetings was reduced and members self-funded travel where appropriate. The steering committee officers also donated their time and their organisations provided administrative support free of charge. A funding request to cover UKFPCRO activity 2007/8 has been submitted to the UKCRN

Annual Subscription

Since its inception in 1998 the Federation has raised an annual subscription from Member organisations. The amount is agreed by the membership at the Annual General Meeting.

At the AGM in November the membership supported a request to members for subscriptions, maintained at the 2005 level. This was to enable the UKFPCRO to continue to provide support to its members during the development of the new Primary Care Research Networks

| | |
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| Income | |
| Balance c/f from 2005-6 | 8, 803 |
| Subscriptions (38) | 9, 250 |
| Department of Health | 0 |
| Total | 18, 053 |
| | |
| Expenditure | |
| Administrator | 7,155 |
| Office consumables (including postage) | 56 |
| Office overheads | 297 |
| Steering Committee | 1,858 |

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| Officers' local support costs | 0 |
| Administrator expenses | 101 |
| Research Interest Groups | 0 |
| NetConnect newsletters (posted on website. No printed versions) | 0 |
| Updated Directory | 0 |
| Annual Report (in-house production) | 44 |
| Website | 333 |
| Publicity and promotion – Conference attendances | 523 |
| 2006 Annual Conference Bursaries (no applications) | 0 |
| Deposit for Conference 2007 | 0 |
| Total | 10,367 |
| Balance carried forward to 2007-8 | 7, 686 |

Table 1: Financial Summary April 1 2006 – March 31 2007

Since 2003, the Federation has been responsible for financial management of the Annual Conference. The Conference budget is independent from the main Federation budget and is totally funded from registrations. The Planning Team has successfully contained costs within budget while keeping the registration fee as low as possible. Evaluations conclude that delegates perceive the Annual Conference as providing very good value for money.

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| Income | |
| C/F from 9 th Annual Conference (2006) | 2,682 |
| Exhibition space | 1,050 |
| Registrations | 34,812 |
| | |
| Total income | 38,544 |
| Expenditure | 32,023 |
| Carried forward to 10th Annual Conference | 6,521 |

Table 2: Annual Conference Financial Summary

Appendix 1

Members of the Federation in the year ending 31st March 2007

Bedfordshire Primary Care Research Network

Bolton Research Forum for Health & Social Care

BRG-Wandsworth Primary Care Research Centre

Cambridge and Peterborough Primary Care Research Network

CAPRICORN: Cymru Alliance of Primary Care – Orientated Research Network

College of Optometrists

Dumfries and Galloway Research and Development Support Unit

EastRen

Essex Primary Care Research Network (NEEssex PCT)

EyeNET

Faculty of General Dental Practice (UK) (Royal College of Surgeons)

Gloucestershire(RDSU)(was Bristol Bath & Swindon PCRN)

Halton & St Helen's PCT- on behalf of CHAMP (the Cheshire, East Mersey and Wirral Partnership)

Health R&D North West

HertNet 07

Hull and East Riding Pharmacy Research Network

Kent and Medway Primary Care Research Network

Lewisham Research Unit (Lewisham PCT)

Lothian Primary Care Research Network

Mersey Primary Care R&D Consortium

Midlands PC-CRTU

MRC General Practice Research Framework

NELCRAD: North East London Consortium of Research & Development

NoCLoR: North Central Thames Primary Care Network

NoReN: Northern Primary Care Research Network (Northern & Yorkshire)

North Staffordshire and Central Cheshire GP Research Network

NRTA: North Trent Research Alliance

PenRen: Peninsular Primary Care Research Network

RCGP Clinical Innovation and Research Centre 07

Scottish Practices and Professionals Involved in Research (north node)

Scottish School of Primary Care (NHS Education for Scotland)

SIREN: Surrey/Sussex Integrated Research Networks

SuNet: Suffolk and Norfolk Primary Care Research Network

Thames Valley PCRN

Thames Valley Research Development Support Unit

Trent RDSU

Warwick - West Midlands Primary Care Research

WeLReN: West London Research Network

WReN: Wessex Primary Care Research Network

Appendix 2

Members of the Steering Group

Chair followed by Committee members in alphabetical order

from Nov 2006

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|---|--|
| Terri Harding <i>NoREN</i> | Chair, Feb 06- present Vice Chair, Jan. 2005-Feb. 2006 Comm. member since Nov. 2003 |
| Sue Wilson <i>Midlands PC-CTRU</i> | Chair, Dec. 2001- Feb. 2006 Comm. mem Dec.2001- Nov 2006 |
| Paul Batchelor <i>FGDP(UK)</i> | Comm. member since Nov 2006 |
| Fenny Green <i>RCGP Research Group</i> | May 1998- Nov. 2006 |
| Caroline Gunnell <i>EPCRN</i> | Vice Chair Feb.2006-present Secretary,Jan.2005-Nov.2006 Committee member since Dec. 2002 |
| Rhian Hughes <i>North Staffordshire</i> | December 2002-present |
| Mike Kirby <i>HertNet</i> | October 1999-present |
| Louise Letley <i>MRC GPRF</i> | Treasurer, January 2005-present Comm.. member since 2004 |
| Keith Meadows <i>NELCRAD</i> | November 2005-present |
| Lucy McCloughlan <i>SSPC</i> | April 2002-present |
| Michael Moore <i>WReN</i> | November 2005-present |
| Amy Scammell <i>BRG</i> | Communications, November 2003-present |
| Andrew Wilson <i>Trent RDSU</i> | November 2005-present |
| Denys Hancock <i>UKFPCRO</i> | Administrator June 2001- November 2006 |