

Exeter Clinical Research Facility

Newsletter

Issue 5, Winter 2015

Welcome to the 5th issue of the NIHR Exeter Clinical Research Facility (CRF) newsletter.

The aim of this newsletter is to highlight the achievements of our facility, provide an overview of some of our main projects, and show how you can become involved, or continue to be involved, in helping us to improve healthcare through research.

If you have recently moved house or changed your telephone number, and would still like to remain on our database, please let us know on 01392 408181 or crf@exeter.ac.uk. Also if you have received this letter in the post but are happy to help us reduce postage costs by receiving it via email instead, please email us at crf@exeter.ac.uk

Update on Exeter 10,000

We are now 6 years into the Exeter 10,000 project, and are pleased to report that nearly 9,000 people have participated, the majority of whom have also participated in another research project within the CRF. As a result of taking part and consenting to their blood and urine results being sent to their GP, some volunteers' health has benefitted by anomalies being flagged up to study staff, who are then able to inform the volunteer and their GP. Many participants have let us know how useful catching conditions early has been in giving them the opportunity to improve their lifestyles. Some participants have been surprised by how good their health check results are, and feel lucky to have such good health. One remarkable lady, following her Exeter 10,000 appointment, decided to become a kidney donor to share her good health with someone in need. We are so humbled by the kindness of everyone who gives their time to help us improve healthcare through research. We feel very proud to live and work in such a wonderful community.

In addition, 216 additional research projects have now been added to the CRF portfolio of projects. This means that our researchers, clinicians and academics are working in collaboration to help improve many different areas of healthcare, including diabetes, ageing, mental health, stroke, and sports science. This extensive research has led to numerous publications in high profile academic journals, a list of which can be assessed at <http://exeter.crf.nihr.ac.uk/node/224>.

All of our research projects benefit from being able to access the thousands of urine and DNA samples and other medical data, which have been kindly provided by Exeter 10,000 volunteers. The decision about which research studies can use the samples/data and can re-contact our volunteers, is made by the Peninsula Research Bank (PRB) Steering Committee, which currently has 28 lay members who ensure that our research focuses on questions that are important to clinical care and will benefit patients the most. If you would like to become a lay member of this Steering Committee, please see more information at <http://exeter.crf.nihr.ac.uk/PRB> or contact Louisa on 01392 408182 or l.allen@exeter.ac.uk.

Exeter CRF Research News

Devon students in exciting new engaged research project supported by the CRF

NIHR Exeter CRF staff are currently working with Professors Lorna Harries and Tamara Galloway from the University of Exeter to facilitate a new form of engaged research project with 124 Year 12 students from 6 schools across Devon. The project, funded by a Wellcome Trust People Award, aims to assess whether we can minimise exposure to a chemical commonly found in food packaging, Bisphenol A, by altering our diet. The students have participated in a week-long BPA avoidance diet which they have designed themselves, and then provided urine and blood samples for analysis of BPA levels. Once the data are complete, students will contribute to the analysis, interpretation and publication of results.



NIHR Exeter CRF help researchers reveal lung disease as a possible trigger of rheumatoid arthritis

Dr Paul Eggleton, an Immunologist at the University of Exeter Medical School, has been investigating the immune aspects of bronchiectasis triggering rheumatoid arthritis. He says, "As a researcher, I am hugely grateful for the opportunity to utilise samples from Exeter 10,000 and the support I have received from the CRF in obtaining anonymised patient data. I have been able to use these resources to understand how immune factors in our patients differ from age-sexed matched control individuals". This is extremely important as it has allowed an international research team to identify diagnostic markers and proinflammatory molecules that differ between our bronchiectasis, asthma and rheumatoid arthritis patients, and Exeter 10,000 controls. These studies have made breakthrough discoveries which have been published in 4 clinical journals in the past year (*Arthritis & Rheumatology*, *The European Respiratory Journal*, *International Journal of Rheumatic Diseases*, and *Rheumatology*).

In addition, Dr Eggleton and his co-workers have just completed a study with colleagues in the Netherlands where they have identified a protein in the lungs of patients with bronchiectasis that can trigger the type of immune responses observed in rheumatoid arthritis. This protein is in much lower levels in the Exeter control samples they examined. For more background on this finding, please go to <http://exeter.crf.nihr.ac.uk/node/232> or ask us for more information.

Menopause timing– is it all in your genes?

Women today increasingly delay starting a family to concentrate on careers and lifestyle. The downside of this trend is that more women are finding it difficult to conceive naturally, because fertility decreases about 10 years before menopause. A large international study, led by Dr Anna Murray from the University of Exeter, has recently discovered over 40 genetic regions that are involved in determining when women go through menopause. The research has shed new light on the biological processes involved in reproductive ageing and may lead to novel treatments for infertility in the future.



Dr Murray is currently trying to find out whether testing these genes in young women could predict when they will go through menopause, which could influence their reproductive choices. Currently, the best known predictor of when a woman will go through menopause is to ask her mother. Dr Murray is trying to find out how many women know about their mother's menopause age and whether a test to predict menopause would be of interest to them.

If you would like to take part in the research, please complete this short anonymous survey <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/S8RPL2H>. Your responses will not be linked to any data already held on you in the CRF.

For more information, please contact Dr Anna Murray (a.murray@exeter.ac.uk).

Putting Exeter CRF on the PPI map

This year saw the CRF's most successful presence to date at the NIHR UKCRF Annual Conference which was held in London in July. We were chosen to display 4 posters, and our Senior Research Nurse Anna Steele's poster won the CRF Directors' Panel poster prize. Dr Gill Baker's case study on Exeter 10,000 was chosen as one of the top 3 submitted case studies in the country, and was presented at the Directors and Managers session.



Our Peninsula Research Bank (PRB) lay member Martin Jenner and Dr Gillian Baker (CRF Manager, and Participant and Public Involvement, PPI, Lead) were also chosen to present a plenary session on our PPI strategy with Prof Dame Sally Davies (Chief Medical Officer with the Department of Health). This was an indication of the effectiveness of our PPI activities and the high level of public participation, involvement and engagement in our research. It also gave Martin the opportunity to feedback about his experience with us, reflecting on whether what we, as the NIHR infrastructure, see is indeed what the patient sees, and to make suggestions about how patient involvement can be more effectively embedded in experimental medicine research. Indeed, NIHR

Exeter CRF utilises an "Engage-Involve-Participate-Involve-Engage" model to bring patients and the public into a relationship of co-creation that creates a feeling of public ownership of research. Testament to this is that the majority of research participants join our studies as a result of a recommendation from a friend, and our steering committee of lay members is continually increasing.

In June, Gillian and Martin also had an article published in the first issue of a new PPI journal, which shows that our PPI model is being used as an example of good practice to other CRFs around the country and external organisations (Jenner MK, Gilchrist M & Baker, GC (2015). *Practical considerations in improving research through public involvement. Research Involvement and Engagement. 1:3*). In the first 3 months of publication, the article was accessed over 2000 times.

Diabetes Research - We are always looking for:

- ♦ patients who have recently been diagnosed with diabetes
- ♦ patients who are about to start a new diabetes treatment

Please call us on 01392 408181 to volunteer



Do you have internet access?

Do you drink alcohol at least once a week?

Would you like to take part in a study to see if an online computer game could reduce alcohol consumption?

Please go to this link for more information:

<http://www.exeter.crf.nihr.ac.uk/node/229>

Online Psychology studies
that you could take part in



Do you have a smart phone?

Do you want to lose weight?

Would you like to take part in a study to see if a phone app could help you lose weight?

Please go to this link for more information:

<http://www.exeter.crf.nihr.ac.uk/node/230>