

BAD Newsletter, Autumn 2008

New research funding opportunities

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Clinical research funding in the UK is changing at an incredible pace, with many associated exciting opportunities. If you are considering becoming involved in research, then you have timed it well! It will be important for dermatology to ensure that we capitalise on the recent funding possibilities and the huge clinical experience amongst our members. The BAD Research Strategy is to “Promote all aspects of dermatology research to improve the understanding, diagnosis and management of skin disease.” The recent establishment of the position of Academic Vice-President (Dr Clive Archer) and of the research sub-committee, represent a move towards providing more formal and specific BAD research structures which can assist work towards this strategy. How we support the development of academic dermatology will critically influence our future in terms of scientific progress and the nature and location of clinical provision. It will directly influence how we are viewed by our general medical colleagues and also the degree and nature of support given by the public.

Under new arrangements, the UK government medical research funding will be split largely between the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and the Medical Research Council (MRC) and will total approximately £1.7 billion per annum by 2010. The Office for Strategic Co-ordination of Health Research (OSCHR) has been tasked with developing a model of research from discovery to development and implementation involving both the DH and NHS R&D programme and the MRC and others. These changes have resulted from a number of influential recent reports, which have included the Sir David Cooksey report (*Review of UK Health Research Funding 2006*) and the *Best Research for Best Health, a National Research Strategy* (2005) report, with the latter announcing the specific use of NHS funds for patient-based translational medicine, clinical trials and health research. These and other reports have led to the establishment of the NIHR and constituent

bodies including the UK Clinical Research Network (UKCRN) amongst others (figure 1). For example, the establishment of the Comprehensive Local Clinical Research Networks represents a tremendous opportunity for dermatology research funding and enhanced clinical research activity in England. The regional Chairs are listed on the UKCRN website ([://www.ukcrn.org.uk/index/library/literature/mainColumnParagraphs/06/document/All_Maps.](http://www.ukcrn.org.uk/index/library/literature/mainColumnParagraphs/06/document/All_Maps)) and would be able to provide information on your regional dermatology lead. It is certainly worth looking at the other constituent bodies within the NIHR infrastructure as it is very likely that these will also represent potential sources of research funding ([://www.nihr.ac.uk/infrastructure.](http://www.nihr.ac.uk/infrastructure)). The NIHR has created a number of Comprehensive and Specialist Biomedical Research Centres to drive progress on innovation and translational research in biomedicine. The Centres are typically based on partnerships between NHS and Universities and receive substantial levels of funding to translate fundamental biomedical research into clinical research that benefits patients. The Oxford Comprehensive Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) is a partnership between the Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust and the University of Oxford and will receive £57.5 million over five years from its inception in April 2007. Another Comprehensive Biomedical Research centre that is also supporting dermatology research is based at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust/King's College London. More recently, the Darzi report (*High Quality Care For All*, 2008) commits to foster the development of Academic Health Science Centres (AHSCs) to bring together a small number of health and academic partners to focus on world-class research, teaching and patient care.

Alongside these immense and welcome changes, there have also been significant developments in higher medical training, potentially enhancing the provision of research career opportunities. Such developments include the establishment of the academic F1/F2 posts, academic clinical fellowships, clinical lecturers and senior clinical lecturers following the highly influential “Walport report” (*Medically- and dentally-qualified academic staff; recommendations for training the researchers and educators of the future*, 2005 published by the UKCRC and NHS Modernising Medical Careers). There are several centres in the UK that offer dermatology academic F1/F2 posts, academic clinical fellowships and clinical lecturer positions – see figure 2. The “Tooke report” (*An Independent Review of Modernising Medical Careers*) strongly supports the development of academic medicine career paths and the 2008 final document recognises the

need for flexibility in order to attract and train the academic leaders of the future. Another very welcome and important development has been the recent announcement by both the British Skin Foundation and the British Association of Dermatologists to provide 3 year Clinical Research Training Fellowships. These prestigious awards are likely to be highly competitive and will help support talented individuals towards a career within academic dermatology. Furthermore, the British Society for Investigative Dermatology, the UK Dermatology Clinical Trials Network and the THESIS/BAD/BSID Research meetings offer excellent opportunities to meet and interact with others working within UK dermatology research and hopefully represent sources of inspiration and support.

Overall there have been some recent dramatic developments in UK medical research careers and funding, and it will be crucial to ensure that we optimise such opportunities for the benefit of dermatology and ultimately our patients. I have tried to highlight some of the key events and structures that have resulted from these changes, but please feel free to contact me if I can help with providing more information or other support. I have also listed some of the relevant websites below:

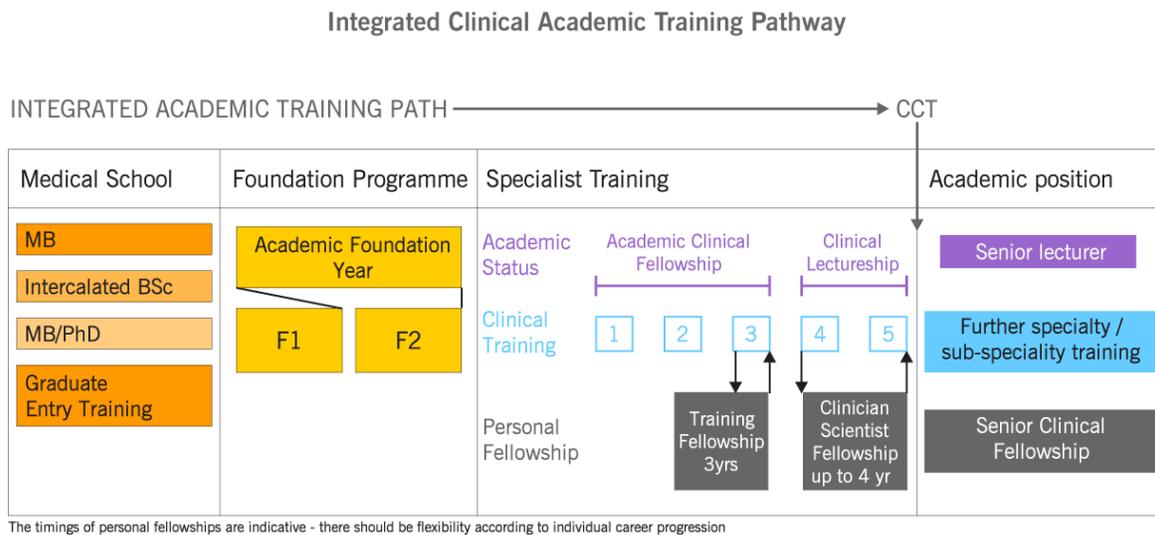
- British Skin Foundation [://www.britishskinfoundation.org.uk/](http://www.britishskinfoundation.org.uk/)
- UKDCTN – UK Dermatology Clinical Trials Network
[://www.ukdctn.org/home/](http://www.ukdctn.org/home/)
- British Society for Investigative Dermatology [://www.bsid.org](http://www.bsid.org).
- NIHR – National Institute for Health Research
[://www.nihr.ac.uk/infrastructure](http://www.nihr.ac.uk/infrastructure).
- OSCHR – Office for Strategic Coordination of Health Research
http://www.nihr.ac.uk/about_oschr.aspx
- UKCRN – UK Clinical Research Network
[://www.ukcrn.org.uk/index](http://www.ukcrn.org.uk/index). This site includes some free online courses.
- MRC – Medical Research Council [://www.mrc.ac.uk/index](http://www.mrc.ac.uk/index).

- Wellcome Trust [://www.wellcome.ac.uk/](http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/)
- CLRN - Comprehensive Local Research Networks [://www.ukcrn.org.uk/index/networks/comprehensive/clrns.](http://www.ukcrn.org.uk/index/networks/comprehensive/clrns)
- Dept of Health R&D site [://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Researchanddevelopment/index.](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Researchanddevelopment/index)



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Figure 1 NIHR activities shown with light blue background. Source NIHR.



Source: UK Clinical Research Collaboration

Figure 2 Academic Training Pathway