

Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Trust

Review of UK Health Research (Cooksey Review)

Responses to consultation questions

- 1. Strengths and weaknesses of the MRC and NHS R&D Programmes** the main strengths of the MRC programme is its rigorous selection criteria and the very high quality of the research which it funds, for which it is rightly internationally acclaimed. The main strengths of the NR NHS programme is its link to NHS priorities and needs. Weaknesses of the NHS programme have concerned the relatively poor quality and poor completion rate of some of the research funded. Both programmes have probably led to too little implementation of research findings. The problems concerning scale and quality of NHS funded research are being addressed by the new health research strategy. There is still a need to do more to support translational research and research implementation.
- 2. Key scientific and organisational challenges facing health research.** The first challenge is to maintain and develop research capacity in the NHS while supporting larger scale and higher quality research. The risk is that health research becomes concentrated in a small number of centres, resulting in reduced capacity, demoralisation, and adverse affects on patient care elsewhere. The second main challenge is to improve translational research and research implementation. These challenges should be major concerns for the government because of the risks of adverse affects on healthcare and the health of the population if they are not successfully met.
- 3. Government priorities for health research.** The answer to this question should be based on a review of the impact of the current research programmes, and an assessment of the current health problems and concerns that could be improved through research findings.
- 4. The balance between biomedical research and research to improve services.** This balance should vary according to health needs and the state of research knowledge in broad topic areas. Bringing MRC and NHS research funding together should allow better connected decision making. The basis for these decisions should be an assessment of the current and developing health problems and issues that are likely to benefit from new research knowledge.
- 5. The impact of publicly funded health research.** Research has clearly had most impact on the development of individual treatments rather than wider policy or organisational factors. The establishment of the NHS SDO programme, and the growing interest in implementation and translational research are probably changing this, but it needs continuing emphasis.
- 6. Links between basic, translational and applied researchers.** Perhaps a distinct funding stream should be established on translational research, with related organisational arrangements. The NHS SDO programme provides a

possible model, with an annual conference and publications linked to a research funding stream.

7. **Encouraging translation, entrepreneurship and innovation in health research.** The response to question 6 above could help with this.
8. **Infrastructure for basic, translational and applied research.** Research funding bodies should give more attention to dissemination and implementation, in the same way that NICE has recently given more emphasis to supporting implementation of its guidance. This could include clearer expectations and monitoring of dissemination and implementation, publications providing guidance and perhaps an annual conference aimed at maximising the health impact of new research findings.
9. **Learning from other countries.** No comments on this.
10. **How far to bring together MRC and NHS R&D funding.** Each funding stream should continue to have a separate distinct focus. However, there should be better connected joint strategic planning regarding priorities and the questions of balance referred to above.
11. **Connecting for health.** The new NHS IT system has had little or no impact so far, at least on mental health research. It should of course improve efficiency and reduce bureaucracy.
12. **Links between devolved NHS R&D and the research councils.** These functions should work increasingly through developing regional structures which would have the added benefit of improving the links between health, health research and other sectors including education, social care, industry and so on.

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