

Research Centre

AUTHOR | DR CLAIRE COLLINS, DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

The main aim of the programme is to develop research within the College and includes, as a primary function, the promotion of methodologically rigorous research in primary care. The ICGP Research Committee supports the programme through the provision of advice and direction. We aim to contribute to the knowledge base of general practice and to support evidence-based practice.

Other Members of Programme Team

ICGP Research Committee Chair: Dr Owen Carey	Ms Catherine Vahey, Research Assistant
Ms Kelly Janssens, Research Assistant, Part-time to August	Mr Conor Kennedy, Research Assistant from September
Ms Anna de Siún, Research Assistant, Part-time	

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

A dedicated research section was established in the ICGP in 2004 as called for in the ICGP Strategy for Research 2003-2008. The success of the programme is evident in the level of external funding which has been secured, permitting the establishment of the research centre with dedicated research staff and the number of publications and presentations now emanating from the centre.

The functions of the Research Committee are to:

- **Promote** and encourage worthwhile research in general practice.
- **Recommend** to the Council for their approval (and in some cases funding), worthwhile research projects.
- **Undertake** the assessment of applications for ICGP research collaboration.
- **Provide** the scientific input to ICGP projects.
- **Advise** on the dissemination and implementation of findings from ICGP collaborative projects.
- **Seek** to obtain funds for research in general practice.
- **Recommend** to the Foundation Projects Committee, for their recommendation, worthwhile research programmes.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES/TASKS

Project activities during the past 12 months included:

- Feasibility study regarding the establishment of a general practice morbidity and epidemiological database.
- Development of quality indicators for use in general practice in Ireland - under direction of Dr Ailis Ni Riain.
- National telephone survey of Infectious Intestinal Disease in the Republic of Ireland.
- In-depth epidemiological analysis of the HeartWatch database and additional research on this population - with UCD School of Public Health and Population Science.
- Towards a national diabetes register for Ireland: theory, practice and policy – with UCC Department of General Practice.
- Patients' depiction of their general practitioner/family physician across Europe - in collaboration with College National des Generalistes Enseignants (CNGE) France.
- Patients' attitude to preventive services and lifestyle – in collaboration with EUROPREV, WONCA.
- Monitoring Influenza Vaccine Effectiveness in Ireland – with HPSC as part of a European Union study.
- Survey of GP experiences with regard to elder abuse and neglect – with AMNCH.

Additional projects by external researchers, general practice based personnel and ICGP Programme Directors were also facilitated.

The Director of Research represented the ICGP on a number of committees and project advisory groups including funding panels for the Health Research Board, the Irish Heart Foundation and the Mental Health Commission.

The ICGP Research Practice Initiative was established in 2008 with staff in practices assisting with ICGP projects and being supported to conduct their own research through advice and dedicated training.

A number of grant applications were prepared and submitted for further research.

Thirteen projects were funded under the Research and Education Foundation Grant Scheme in 2009.

Two educational bursaries to present research findings at EGPRN and WONCA conferences were provided to Irish GP researchers.

Particular efforts in 2009 were made to disseminate the findings from our research activities.

PROJECT MILESTONES/DELIVERABLES/OUTPUTS

Dissemination/Publication

Staff were involved in the following published papers/presentations:

- Vahey C and Ní Riain A. Developing and Validating Quality Indicators for Irish General Practice National Institute of Health Sciences Research Bulletin 2009; 5(2): 41-2.
- Fitzpatrick P, Lonergan M, Fitzsimon N, Collins C, Boland M, Daly L. Heartwatch: 3.5 year follow up of a secondary prevention programme in primary care in Ireland. *Swiss Med Wkly* 2009; 139 (Suppl 175).
- Jarlath Varley, Norman Delanty, Charles Normand, Imelda Coyne, Louise McQuaid, Claire Collins, Michael Boland, Jane Grimson, Mary Fitzsimons, Epilepsy in Ireland: Towards the primary–tertiary care continuum, *Seizure*, 19, (1), 2010, p47 – 52
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.seizure.2009.11.002>.
- Barry Lambe, Claire Collins. A qualitative study of lifestyle counselling in general practice in Ireland. *Family Practice Advance Access* published on December 11, 2009. *Fam. Pract.* 2010 27: 219-223; doi:10.1093/fampra/cmp086
- Mc Hugh S, O’Keeffe J, Fitzpatrick A, De Siún A, O’Mullane M, Perry I, Bradley C on behalf of the National Diabetes Register Project (NDRP). Diabetes care in Ireland: A survey of general practitioners. *Primary Care Diabetes* doi:10.1016/j.pcd.2009.09.002.
- O’Brien CL, Janssens K, Kennedy C, Collins C. International Classification of Primary Care (ICPC-2) – A Summary. HISI Conference in November 2009-poster presentation.
- O’Donnell M, de Siún A, O’ Mullane M, Dinneen S, Smith D, Bradley C on behalf of the National Diabetes Register Group. Adult Outpatient Diabetes Care: A Survey of Irish Public Hospitals. IES Conference in November 2009-poster presentation.
- Mc Hugh S, Fitzpatrick A, O’Keeffe J, De Siún A, O’Mullane M, Perry I, Bradley C. (National diabetes register project- NDRP) Diabetes care in Ireland, A survey of General Practitioners. AUDGPI Annual Scientific Meeting in February 2009-poster presentation.
- Kennedy C. Is socialism the basis for best healthcare? The Pros and Cons of the Cuban healthcare system. Forum article, April 2009.
- Collins C, Kennedy K. The Benefits of Diagnostic Coding for You and Your Patients: An example related to Influenza Vaccination. Forum Article, December 2009.

Support of Practices in the ICGP Research Practices

Practices started to conduct their own research with four practices applying for funding and/or ethical approval. Funding was secured to support eight practices to conduct audits during 2010.

FUTURE PLANS

- To continue to implement the action plan which supports the ICGP Strategy 2008-2013.
- To hold a Research and Audit Conference in 2010.
- To produce a booklet of research conducted in general practice in 2010.
- Continue to develop and support the practices engaged in the ICGP Research Practice Initiative and in particular to conduct the funded audits.
- To continue to seek funding to conduct research into priority areas as identified by the ICGP Executive, the ICGP Research Committee and ICGP members.
- To conduct projects on the 2010 clinical priority area – care of the elderly.
- To complete and disseminate the findings from the GPMED and GPIQ projects.
- To continue to communicate with the wider general practice, medical and academic community through dissemination and publication of research findings.

ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCE

No non-ICGP administrative assistance received. ICGP administrative support was provided by Ms Carol White to August and by Ms Niamh Killeen thereafter.

FUNDING SOURCE

ICGP, HIQA, *safefood* and HRB.

Research Ethics Committee

AUTHOR | PROF COLIN BRADLEY, CHAIR

SUMMARY OF COMMITTEE

The Research Ethics Committee provides guidance to researchers on ethical issues and approves studies (clinical trials and non-clinical trials) submitted on the approved forms. Professor Colin Bradley is Chair of the Committee which consists of 12 members. The Committee met on 22nd April 2009, 17th June 2009, 23rd September 2009, 25th November 2009 and 24th February 2010.

The Committee reviewed one clinical trial and 52 non-clinical trials over the course of these meetings. Most were approved although some are still under consideration subject to meeting certain amendments required by the Committee.

Members of the Committee have also been involved with a national group of research ethics committees who have been working towards the development of an agreed common application form to be used by all research ethics committees for non clinical trial studies. Such a form has now been agreed and is being piloted. The ICGP Research Ethics Committee is participating in the trial.

During the course of this year, we have also had a number of studies come before us that have also been reviewed by other ethics committees. The role of the Research Ethics Committee in regard to studies already approved by another committee is unclear in relation to non-clinical trial studies. The situation for studies that fall within the remit of the Clinical Trials Act is clear in that any nationally recognised committee can be used for the purpose of ethical approval and other committees can not veto a trial so approved other than in respect of their particular site. How this applies in the case of general practice and the ICGP, though, is not entirely clear. We have formed the view that in these cases (i.e. of studies already approved by another ethics committee) our Research Ethics Committee will review the proposals specifically from the perspective of general practice and offer a view as to whether or not we feel it is ethical for our members to participate in such a study.

MEMBERS OF RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Prof Colin Bradley	Dr Thomas Maher	Dr Jean Holohan
Dr Cliona McGovern	Dr Teresa Maguire	Mrs Anne O'Cuinneagain
Dr Cliona McGovern	Dr Teresa Maguire	Mrs Anne O'Cuinneagain
Dr Claire Collins	Dr Philippa Kildea Shine	Dr David Smith

FUTURE PLANS

This year we have seen a reversal of the trend from the previous years of fewer GP trainee projects seeking approval to seeing a large increase in such applications. If all trainee projects were to come to the Committee, which is now a distinct possibility, the Committee would be in danger of being overwhelmed. Further discussions with training schemes may be required to develop a mechanism for handling the potentially large volume of such projects

As the main purpose of the Committee is to provide a service to members advising on ethical aspects of research proposals, we do not have a very proactive role. We plan to continue providing the same service as before adapting, where necessary, to changes in the research environment.