

Developing Our Research and Innovation Strategy Staff Questionnaire February 2022

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Introduction

We are currently developing our Research and Innovation Strategy which will outline our priorities and intentions to maximise our potential to improve and deliver best value, seamless care working with our partners over the next five years. Our staff are central for research and innovation within the trust, therefore, we asked staff to complete a questionnaire to understand our current position for carrying out research and innovation activities across the trust, and to identify areas for priority over the next 5 years. Please see “Developing our Research and Innovation Strategy Staff Questionnaire” (Appendix 1).

Aims and Objectives

A staff questionnaire was developed to enable staff to provide feedback in regards to their knowledge and experience of research and innovation practices at Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (WUTH). Staff were asked to consider the importance of research, carrying out research at WUTH, and patient involvement in research. The aim of the questionnaire was to gain a staff perspective in identifying ways in which we can enhance research and innovation within the trust.

Sample

There were a total of 143 respondents and the results were anonymous. The questionnaire was not limited to a particular sample group, and was aimed at the wider staff audience to gain as many responses as possible.

Methodology

Below are the steps taken to gain staff feedback:

1. Our Research Manager and Strategy and Business Planning Manager adapted a staff questionnaire previously developed by Royal Free NHS Foundation Trust.
2. The staff questionnaire was reviewed and approved by the Research Department.
3. The Patient Experience Team then developed an electronic questionnaire using a system called Envoy.
4. The link to the electronic questionnaire was then shared and made available for staff to access through trust communications.
5. Posters advertising the questionnaire and a QR Code were put up around both Arrowe Park and Clatterbridge Hospital sites in staff break rooms areas, offices and other staff areas.
6. The Research Department also walked around various units with iPads to encourage staff to access the questionnaire.
7. The questionnaire remained live for four weeks before closing.
8. Once the questionnaire closed the data was collected and collated. Please see “Staff Questionnaire Results” (Appendix 2)

9. Staff feedback was used to inform our Research and Innovation Strategy.

Results

A total of 143 staff responded to the questionnaire. Staff were able to skip questions, so some questions only received 141 responses. Details of the numbers of responses to each question can be seen in the raw data in Appendix 2.

When asked if they agreed that clinical research is currently a key priority for WUTH, 32% of respondents agreed and a further 16% strongly agreed. 29% of staff reported they were impartial, whilst 16% reported that they disagreed, and 7% strongly disagreed with this statement.

Staff were then asked if they thought that clinical research should be a key priority for WUTH, and the majority of staff were in favour of this, with 47% reporting they strongly agreed, and 43% agreeing. Only 2% of staff disagreed or strongly disagreed that clinical research should be a priority for WUTH, and 8% of respondents were impartial.

59% of staff strongly agreed that clinical research plays an important role in improving staff outcomes and quality of care, and a further 36% agreed. Only 3% of staff reported they were impartial to this, 1% disagreed, and 1% strongly disagreed.

When asked if they agreed that clinical research performance is of reputational importance to WUTH, 48% of staff agreed, and a further 33% strongly agreed. 1% of staff disagreed, and 1% strongly disagreed, the remaining 17% were impartial.

Staff were asked if they agreed that WUTH has the infrastructure to provide an environment conducive to carrying out research. 29% agreed and 9% strongly agreed; 20% of staff disagreed and a further 6% strongly disagreed. 36% of staff reported they were impartial to this question.

25% of staff reported they disagreed that they felt well supported to conduct clinical research at WUTH, and a further 8% strongly disagreed. 47% of staff were impartial to this; whilst 3% strongly agreed, and 17% agreed.

52% of staff agreed, and a further 18% strongly agreed that conducting or contributing to clinical research has or would improve their experience of being an employee at WUTH. 22% of respondents were impartial to this, and only 8% of staff disagreed that this would improve their experience of being an employee at WUTH.

When considering whether patients should be involved in planning research, the majority of staff were in favour. 28% of respondents strongly agreed and 53% agreed with this. 16% of staff were impartial, and 3% disagreed that patients should be involved in planning research at WUTH.

Staff were asked if they agreed if it would be good for patients to have the opportunity to consent to be contacted in advance about future clinical research studies that they may be able to participate in. 37% of respondents strongly agreed,

and 57% agreed that this would be good. 5% of staff were impartial, and only 1% disagreed.

When asked about equal access to research, staff responses were again mostly in agreement that all patients at our hospitals should have the same access to clinical research opportunities, 52% strongly agreed, and a further 38% agreed. Only 2% of respondents disagreed, 2% strongly disagreed, and 6% reported they were impartial to this.

Staff were lastly asked if they agreed that all patients at our hospitals should have the same access to clinical research opportunities. 40% of staff strongly agreed, and a further 46% agreed; 13% of staff were impartial and 1% disagreed.

Staff were asked to leave any other comments at the end of the questionnaire, 24 staff left responses, summarised as follows:

- Too much focus is given to re-audits rather than evaluating or testing new ways of working
- Trust support for funding and time to complete research is lacking
- We have lots of enthusiasm – we should use this to lead nationally and internationally
- Research is important – COVID Vaccines for example
- Staffing issues can prevent research activity
- No time allocated for research development – even audit time is misused for meetings and training at the moment due to clinical pressures
- Non-clinical so I feel like I can't contribute/ my contributions are limited
- Link in with library services as part of the strategy to ensure clinical research outputs are available to all staff across the trust
- Culture needs to change
- There are less opportunities for nurses compared to doctors
- Provide support to nurses and other disciplines to get involved and learn the process
- Need to raise awareness of opportunities available for staff to carry out research as they don't have the capacity with clinical pressures
- Email updates on research activity
- Trust commitment to integrate research time into job plans
- Advanced practitioners having time in job plans to carry our research
- Managers should promote research in their departments
- Prioritise therapies in research activity
- Need access to information on research activity within the trust
- Don't know where the research department is
- Communication, branding and marketing for research at WUTH is poor – allocate this as a role to someone
- Budget needs to be increased for research
- Research is an additional task
- Departments taking part in research should see funding returned to the department, not a generic pot
- The strategy should promote innovation, not just research, e.g. clinical simulations, robot surgery etc.
- Incentives can support patient involvement in research

Limitations

A limitation acknowledged is that due to a small sample size, the results may not be widely generalisable, or representative of the wider workforce, therefore, continued staff engagement is recommended. Secondly, the feedback gained from this questionnaire is mostly quantitative, in order to gain a deeper understanding in to staff experiences, more qualitative feedback would be beneficial.

Discussion

The importance of research

Staff were generally in agreement that Clinical research is currently a key priority for WUTH, however responses were somewhat mixed and 29% reported they were impartial to this concept. This may be due to staff being unsure or not knowing, and the options for responses did not offer this to be portrayed. On the other hand, when asked if clinical research *should* be a key priority for WUTH, almost all staff (90%) selected strongly agree or agree, only 2% of staff were in disagreement (a total of three staff), and 8% were impartial.

Similarly, 95% of staff were in agreement that clinical research plays an important role in improving patient outcomes and quality of care, and 81% of staff agreed that clinical research performance is of reputational importance to WUTH.

Carrying out research

When asked about the infrastructure at WUTH to carry out high quality research, responses were mixed, 38% agreed that the infrastructure was conducive, 36% were impartial, and 26% disagreed. Interestingly, space to carry out research did not feature in the free text comments of the questionnaire, although one comment related to not being aware of where the research department is.

Again, responses were mixed when asked if staff felt supported to conduct research at WUTH, with the majority of responses indicating staff were impartial, with more patients in disagreement than those who agreed. However, many of the free text responses related to this question, with themes arising such as research being an additional task to their role, non-clinical staff feeling that it didn't relate to them, not having enough time or funding to be involved in research, and a lack of awareness of research activities and opportunities for staff across the trust.

The majority of staff did agree that conducting and contributing to clinical research has or would improve their experience of being an employee at WUTH, with only 8% disagreeing and 22% reporting they were impartial. Staff highlighted the enthusiasm within the trust within the free text comments, and the interest generated for research by the Coronavirus pandemic, as well as support for the development of the strategy.

The majority of free text responses were in relation to barriers to participating in research, such as lack of time, lack of awareness, appropriateness of their roles, and clinical pressures. Free text responses also offered enablers such as promoting

research awareness through trust communications, external communications, library services, and a culture supported by management and the trust board to promote research and make time available in job plans for research to be carried out as part of their roles.

Patient involvement in research

The majority of staff were in agreement that patients should be involved in planning research at WUTH, with 81% reporting that they either agreed or strongly agreed. Just 3% of staff disagreed, and the remaining 16% were impartial.

94% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that it would be good for patients to have the opportunity to consent to be contacted in advance about future clinical research studies that they may be able to participate in. 1 staff member disagreed with this, and 7% were impartial. No free text responses related to this question.

Lastly, the majority of staff (86%) were in agreement that all patients at our hospitals should have the same access to clinical research opportunities, with only 1% disagreeing and 13% reporting they were impartial to this. One free text response suggested that small incentives such as stationery may support patient participation in research.

Conclusion

Despite a relatively small sample size, there are some strong responses from the results of this questionnaire, such as clear support for research and its benefits, staff feeling that research is an additional task to their main role, and feeling time pressures and lack of awareness to conducting research activities. A number of suggestions were made for overcoming barriers, and further engagement would support a greater understanding of priorities for research and innovation for the workforce across the trust for the next 5 years.

Recommendations

- Due to the small sample size, further staff engagement should be carried out.
- The results of this questionnaire are mostly quantitative. Some interesting concepts came from the qualitative feedback in the free text response, and continued engagement with different staff groups across the delivery phase of the strategy would be beneficial.
- It can be taken from this questionnaire that focus should be given to increasing staff awareness of research and innovation activity at WUTH.
- Support for different staff groups to encourage engagement across the workforce is needed to break down cultural barriers regarding research and innovation opportunities for different roles
- Consideration should be given to supporting staff to feel that they can carry out research as part of their every-day role, rather than an additional task.

Appendix 1

Developing our Research and Innovation Strategy Staff Questionnaire



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Appendix 2

Research and Innovation Strategy Staff Questionnaire Results



Staff Questionnaire
Results.docx