

Issue 12
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Network News

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Inside this issue:

Co-ordinating Centre
Funding Renewed

Website Re-launch

Clinical Trials Update

Increasing Our Links With
Primary Care

NIHR Research
Infrastructures

Research Prioritisation
Committee

Dates for the Diary

Co-ordinating Centre Funding Renewed

The Department of Health have agreed to fund a 12 month extension to the grant for the UK DCTN co-ordinating centre. However, in order to receive future funding we will have to align the Network with new NIHR research structures such as the Comprehensive Local Research Networks. Please read more on page 3 about these new infrastructures and to see how you could help support us in our aims to secure resources for the Network infrastructure .



The UK DCTN Steering Committee. This photograph was taken at the most recent Steering Committee meeting, which was held at the end of February at the UK DCTN co-ordinating centre in Nottingham. A big thank you to all those who attended. The next meeting will be our AGM held as part of the annual BAD meeting. All members are welcome to attend, see page 4 for details.

NHS Networks of the Year Award

We are delighted to be able to tell you that the UK DCTN is one of the three Networks to have been Highly Commended in the inaugural 2007 NHS Networks 'Network of the Year' Awards. A full list of winners can be seen on their website which is www.networks.nhs.uk. NHS Networks is a means of promoting and connecting the many networks which exist throughout the NHS.

www.ukdctn.org is Re-launched!

Since the last major website update a couple of years ago the Network has changed considerably, so we felt the time was right to reflect these changes in our website and take on board comments about the site from Network members. Do visit www.ukdctn.org and let us know what you think.



Changes include:

- A new section on clinical research updates
- Easier access to information on our on-going clinical trials
- New trials added: STOP GAP and BLiTeR
- A more dynamic and interactive home page



On-Going Clinical Trials Update



Recruitment for the trials now stands at 71 for PATCH I and 80 for PATCH II. Due to the continued lower than anticipated recruitment rates we are currently in discussion with the funders to look at the best way forward for these trials. We will let you know as soon as any firm decisions have been reached.



The STOP GAP pilot study is now up and running with thirteen centres being involved in a case note review of pyoderma gangrenosum patients over the past three years. The next phase of the study, involving the use of digital images to monitor wound healing will begin shortly. Thank you to all the centres taking part for their efforts in this pilot study.



This HTA funded trial on bullous pemphigoid is now at set up stage. In order to recruit sufficient patients into the trial we will be working with colleagues in Europe to set up centres across Germany and the Netherlands. If you are interested in becoming involved in this study please contact the Senior Trials Manager, Jo Chalmers.

National Knowledge Week on Acne

The National Library for Health (NLH) Skin Disorders Specialist Library held a National Knowledge Week on acne, w/c 3rd March. Aimed at NHS health professionals to highlight sources of information and guidance on acne and its treatment this excellent resource can be accessed via the Library homepage www.library.nhs.uk/skin.

Increasing Our Links With Primary Care

We have been successful in our application to the Trent Research and Development Support Unit (RDSU) for a research capacity development award to increase and strengthen our links with the primary care community.

The aims of this one year project are to increase awareness of the Network amongst the primary care community, to increase membership from this area and to identify priorities for primary care dermatology trials. Part of the project will be a one day, free of charge, training workshop specifically in the field of dermatology clinical trials. Depending on the level of interest in this course from primary care, we may open it up to all our members. If you feel you may be interested, please get in touch.

Due to the funding source for this scheme of work, it will primarily be run as a pilot study within the Trent geographical region. The training course will however be open to any of our primary care members across the UK as most have shown an interest in attending.

If you have any primary care colleagues who may be interested in getting involved in the Network please do encourage them to contact the Network Manager, Carron Layfield.

For further information on your local Research and Development Support Unit (RDSU) please go to www.national-rdsu.org.uk. They are an excellent resource for help and advice on most aspects of health and social care research.

UK DCTN Patient Information Leaflet

To help increase public and patient involvement with the UK DCTN we have produced a patient information leaflet about the Network and its activities. We have had excellent feedback about the leaflet from various patient support groups. It is available on the website, or if you would like some printed copies to distribute to any of your patients who you feel would be interested then please contact the Network Administrator, Maggie McPhee. Thank you to our consumer members who have helped with the design of the leaflet, especially Maxine Whitton whose continued contribution to the Network is greatly valued.

NIHR Research Infrastructure: What Does it Mean for the UK DCTN?

Best Research for Best Health is the governments' R&D strategy to provide a world-class infrastructure for clinical trials in all areas of disease and clinical need within the NHS and will be delivered by the NIHR Clinical Research Network. This is comprised of a national co-ordinating centre, six topic specific research networks (cancer, stroke, dementia, diabetes, mental health and medicines for children), a primary care research network and a comprehensive clinical research network (CCRN) to cover all other areas, including dermatology.

The CCRN is a major component of the overall clinical research network and will provide the infrastructure for clinical research in the NHS in England through the allocation and management of NHS service support costs. The CCRN has been split into 25 Comprehensive Local Research Networks (CLRNs) within the boundaries of Strategic Health Authorities (SHA). Each CLRN has a host NHS organisation and is led by a Clinical Director supported by a Senior Manager. Each CLRN also has an Executive Group which works closely with the Clinical Director and Senior Manager and is responsible for developing operational plans and policies and ensuring the effective representation of all NHS sectors within that CLRN. The devolved nations are developing similar clinical research strategies.

The Clinical Research Network have just announced that they will be developing Speciality Groups within the CLRNs. There are 26 in total, with skin being one of them. Each CLRN will identify and nominate a Clinical Lead for that group, if interest in that area can be

identified locally. The Clinical Leads from each of these local groups will then constitute the National Speciality Group for that topic. Each Speciality Group will therefore vary in size depending on the number of CLRNs with an interest in that topic.

So, what does this mean for the UK DCTN? Firstly, the funding stream for the infrastructure of organisations such as ours has disappeared and we need to investigate how we fit in with the CLRN and other areas such as Clinical Trial Units (CTUs). This will enable us to identify where we can best obtain future funding so that we can continue the excellent work of the Network. Secondly, we need to ensure that the Executive Groups within each CLRN are aware of the UK DCTN and what we do, as we are unlikely to receive any funding if they are unaware of our activities. We have a drafted letter available ready to send to the Clinical Directors of all 25 CLRNs across England, and a very big thank you to those members who have already contacted their relevant CLRN. If you would like to send one of these letters then please do get in touch with the Network administrator Maggie McPhee for further details. If you, or any of your colleagues are involved in a CLRN Executive group please do let us know so that we can ensure we can provide you with any supporting information you may need. Again, a very big thank you to those members who have contacted us regarding this. We will of course keep you updated of any progress in this area, particularly with regard to the newly announced Speciality Groups.

Please do remember that this is YOUR Network and at this crucial time for clinical research in the NHS it's future is dependent on YOUR support.

Free On-line Textbook of Dermatology

If you need a good basic reference resource, then its worth having a look at the following link;

www.derm-hokudai.jp/shimizu-dermatology/

This is a free on-line dermatology textbook and although the clinical images have been removed, it is good for basic dermatology information.

Research Prioritisation Panel

At a recent UK DCTN Executive Committee meeting, it was realised that in order to maintain a degree of focus and momentum for our work and to develop a nationally agreed research strategy it would help the Network enormously to have a Research Prioritisation Panel.

The roles of the panel will cover areas such as :

- Identifying research gaps and priorities in dermatology from evidence sources such as Cochrane Systematic Reviews and from current clinical and policy debates.
- Using this information to recommend HTA vignettes to be written and developed.
- Appraising and then prioritising vignettes received by the UK DCTN before further development through the Steering Committee and co-ordinating centre.
- Making recommendations about which UK DCTN vignettes should be submitted to the HTA

Thank you to all who expressed an interest in joining the panel and we're delighted to announce that the independent chair of the panel will be Dr Ibrahim Nasr, a long standing member of the Steering Committee and member of our Executive Committee. We are lucky to have panel members with specialist interests in areas including paediatrics, skin cancer, laser therapy, vulval disease, acne and biostatistics. We are also pleased to have consumer representation on the panel.

If you missed the original call of interest and would like to become involved in the panel then please contact the Network Manager, Carron Layfield.

We are currently investigating how the panel will operate eg the formation of clinical studies groups and will keep you updated of its activities.

UK DCTN Contact Details

Network Manager:	Dr Carron Layfield	carron.layfield@nottingham.ac.uk	0115 8468625
Senior Trials Manager:	Dr Joanne Chalmers	joanne.chalmers@nottingham.ac.uk	0115 8468622
Network Administrator:	Maggie McPhee	margaret.mcphee@nottingham.ac.uk	0115 8468621
PATCH Trial Manager:	Dr Katharine Foster	kath.foster@nottingham.ac.uk	0115 8468626

Dates for your Diary

Thurs 5th June	Annual Evidence Based Update Meeting Blistering Skin Disorders		Holywell Park, Loughborough
Weds 2nd July	UK DCTN Steering Group Meeting and AGM	5pm	BAD Annual Meeting Liverpool
Thurs 3rd July	UK DCTN Executive Group Meeting	8am	BAD Annual Meeting Liverpool
Tues 14th October	UK DCTN Steering Group Meeting	12.30pm	BAD House, London