

Issue 13
June 2008

Network News

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UK DCTN SpR Fellowship Awards 2008

Following on from the success of the 2007 Awards we will be running the SpR Fellowship scheme again this year. Up to two Fellowships of £1500 each will be awarded to Specialist Registrars to work with the UK DCTN as part of a two year Research Fellowship Programme.

In the first year of the award the fellows will join the UK DCTN Steering Committee, spend three days at the UK DCTN co-ordinating centre, attend the BEES 'Getting to Grips with Evidence Based Dermatology Course' and work on developing critical appraisal skills with the Network Chair, Hywel Williams. In the second year the skills learnt will be put into practice by joining a UK DCTN trial development team or Cochrane Systematic Review team.

To find out more, please contact the Network Manager, Carron Layfield, or visit our stand at the BAD meeting 1st-3rd July. Turn to page 2 to find out more about the 2007 UK DCTN SpR Fellows' experiences to date.

BAD Annual Meeting

The UK DCTN will be exhibiting at the BAD/BDNG Annual Meeting from Tues 1st-Thurs 3rd July. If you have any queries about the Network or would just like to come and say hello, please visit us at stand number PSG 23. For details of our AGM please see the Diary of Events on page four.

Funding Update

● **Lentigo Maligna Study**

This phase II study looking at the use of imiquimod in the treatment of lentigo maligna was submitted to the NIHR Research for Patient Benefit scheme for funding in September (250K). We are currently waiting to hear regarding our answers to the referees' comments on the study, but if they are satisfied with our response, then funding of the study will go ahead later this year. The clinical lead for this study is Jerry Marsden, Birmingham.

● **Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB) Study**

This trial (led by Jemima Mellerio, London), looking at the role of trimethoprim in wound healing in EB, was submitted to the British Skin Foundation for funding via the Clinical Trials Award. Unfortunately, the scheme did not go ahead this year and so we were unable to obtain the necessary funds to run this study. We will be re-submitting this project to a different funding body later in the year.

● **Programme Grant: Reducing Uncertainties in Skin Disease**

This £1.8 million NIHR programme grant includes funding for the full STOP GAP RCT, looking at treatments for pyoderma gangrenosum (clinical lead Tony Ormerod, Aberdeen). Again, we are currently waiting to hear regarding our answers to referees' comments on the study, but if they are satisfied with our response then we hope that funding of the study will go ahead later this year.

Update on UK DCTN 2007 SpR Fellowship Award Winners

Following on from their recent three day visit to the UK DCTN co-ordinating centre, the 2007 Fellowship Award winners give a perspective of their experiences so far below.



**John Ingram,
UK DCTN SpR
Fellow. John is
currently on
rotation in Wales**

Not yet twelve months into the UK DCTN SpR Fellowship and it has already provided extensive exposure to critical appraisal and clinical trial design and logistics. I have learned a great deal about the review of randomised controlled trials, a process that has led to the drafting of a research commentary to be submitted for publication. This has been supported by attendance at the BEES Evidence-Based Dermatology Course. Becoming a member of the UK DCTN Steering Committee has provided hands-on experience of clinical trial design. Discussion with Trial Managers during my visit to the UK DCTN Nottingham base has

allowed me to appreciate all the aspects of trial development from initial idea to a fully funded multi-centre trial. I have joined the STOP-GAP trial team preparing for a randomised trial of pyoderma gangrenosum treatment, which has given first-hand experience of the challenges of clinical research. The Fellowship has provided a unique insight into the process of extending the evidence-base in dermatology and has given me many more tools to help apply the evidence in clinical practice. I look forward to year two of the Fellowship!

I was lucky enough to be awarded a UKDCTN SpR Fellowship for a two year period starting in October 2007. Since starting the fellowship, I have been involved in a number of activities which have I have enjoyed immensely.

One of the UK DCTN's future aims is to produce a high-quality trial in patients with vitiligo. An essential step before deciding on a potential trial is to highlight which treatments for vitiligo have already been assessed by good RCTs and which have not. Systematic reviews offer the best summary of the RCTs in the current literature and Cochrane Systematic reviews are acknowledged to be the most thorough of these reviews. I have therefore joined a group of reviewers including clinicians, a statistician, a methodologist and headed up by Maxine Whitton, healthcare consumer and active UK DCTN member, and we have embarked on updating a Cochrane Review on interventions for vitiligo. A number of people warned me that systematic reviews are a big undertaking, and this is certainly true! But it is great to work with all these people and to learn about the process of systematic reviews. The UK DCTN have provided support for me to attend a four day Cochrane Systematic Review Course to develop an understanding of the review process and we are already working on the review protocol. Working on a systematic review requires good critical appraisal skills and John Ingram, the other SpR fellow, and I have been able to develop these

during several thoroughly enjoyable sessions with Prof Hywel Williams. The BEES course provided us both with a good grounding in critical appraisal and it is very satisfying to be able to put these skills into practice.

We had an excellent three day visit to the UK DCTN co-ordinating centre in April. The UK DCTN staff made us very welcome and introduced us to the Network's many trials, both current and future, and we had a very informative session on the NLH Skin Disorders Specialist Library. We also joined dermatology colleagues at their research club at QMC Hospital and had a great night out with the UK DCTN staff.

Attending the UK DCTN Steering Group meetings has offered a fascinating insight into how a research idea evolves into a full-blown trial. I have enjoyed contributing to discussions on the trials and vignettes and can see how complicated a process this can be. I may be a little less harsh in my critical appraisal of RCTs now that I know how much effort it takes to plan them, let alone carry them out! Thank you to the UK DCTN for making all these experiences possible. I am looking forward to the remaining period of the Fellowship and being involved in the Network's activities in the future. The Fellowship offers an excellent opportunity to get involved in clinical dermatology research and I would thoroughly recommend it to other dermatology trainees.



**Jonathan
Batchelor, UK
DCTN SpR Fellow.
John is currently
based at
Addenbrookes in
Cambridge**

Meet a member: Fiona Cowdell, UK DCTN Nursing Prize Award Winner



I am delighted to have been successful in my application for the UK Dermatology Clinical Trials Network (UK DCTN) Nursing Prize.

I have spent most of my career to date in clinical practice and education in the fields of medicine and dermatology. I joined Bournemouth University as a Research Fellow earlier this year at the School of Health and Social Care and have recently submitted my PhD thesis.

The UK DCTN award relates to a research project that is being led by Professor Steven Ersser, Professor of Nursing Development and Skin Care Research, and which I am managing on a day to day basis. The aim is to explore self-management practices in adult patients with mild to moderate psoriasis and to develop and pilot test the feasibility of an educational nursing intervention to improve such practices. In this study I will be integrating my expertise in research, practice development, clinical practice and education.

This award will support me in attending the BDNG Annual Meeting and spending two days at the UK DCTN co-ordinating centre in order to gain experience in the management and conduct of clinical trials. I have also been invited to join the UK DCTN Steering Group. These activities will give me excellent opportunities to develop in the arena of dermatological research and will strengthen the profile of nursing research within the Centre for Wellbeing and Quality of Life at Bournemouth University.

National Knowledge Week on Skin Cancer

The National Library for Health (NLH) Skin Disorders Specialist Library held a National Knowledge Week on skin cancer, w/c 5th May. Aimed at NHS health professionals to highlight sources of information and guidance on skin cancer and its treatment this excellent resource can still be accessed via the Library homepage www.library.nhs.uk/skin.

Comprehensive Local Research Network (CLRN) Update: Raising the Profile of Dermatology Research

You may remember from the last newsletter (March, Issue 12) the review of the new NIHR infrastructure for Clinical Research and the impact that this will have on the UK DCTN. The Comprehensive Clinical Research Network (CCRN) is now becoming established and, as mentioned previously, has been split into 25 Local Research Networks (CLRNs) covering England. Each CLRN has been asked to identify priority areas of research locally (from 26 different topics covering areas such as gastroenterology, cardiovascular disease and rheumatology), and we are pleased to be able to report that dermatology has been recognised as a priority area by over 50% of the regions. This is a great move forward for skin research as in 2006 only 2% of the total NHS research budget was allocated to dermatology.

Representatives from each area where dermatology has been identified as a priority will form a Skin Speciality Group, which will meet twice a year to make recommendations on studies for inclusion in the NIHR portfolio. This will cover not only clinical trials but translational research also. A Chair of this group will be appointed later in the year.

We are having excellent feedback from some members re support from their local CLRNs for Network-led studies (which are all registered on the NIHR portfolio), demonstrating that it is worth making the effort to get involved. For example, the N&E Yorks CLRN has been offered support in the form of funding protected research recruitment time, and in Cheshire and Merseyside nursing time has been offered, both to help initially with recruitment into the PATCH studies.

Thank you to all those members who have contacted their CLRN to raise the profile of dermatology research and support our studies to ensure they will be delivered. If you would more information on this area please contact the Network Manager, Carron Layfield.

New Vignettes Submitted to the Network

The following vignettes have been recently submitted to the Network for further development and will be presented at the AGM during the BAD meeting.

A study on erosive lichen planus (*Ruth Murphy*)

This proposed study will investigate whether clobetasol propionate ointment or tacrolimus ointment is the most effective frontline therapy for erosive lichen planus affecting the vulva.

Skin cancer prevention (*Charlotte Proby*)

This vignette explores whether the field-directed treatment of severely sun-damaged skin with a topical chemoprevention cream will prevent the subsequent development of keratinocyte skin cancer.

If either of the above are of particular interest and you would like to take part in their discussion then join us in **Room 14 of the Liverpool Arena and Conference Centre at 5pm on Wed 2nd July**. Please contact the Network Administrator, Maggie McPhee, if you would like to attend or for further details.

Annual Evidence Update 2008: Blistering Skin Disorders

Presentations from the Annual Evidence Based Update Meeting on Blistering Skin Disorders which was held at Holywell Park, Loughborough on 5th June can now be found on the UK DCTN website, www.ukdctn.org. This includes contributions from European experts in the field, such as Marcel Jonkman and Pascal Joly.

Dates for your Diary

Weds 2nd July	UK DCTN Steering Group Meeting and AGM	5pm	BAD Annual Meeting Room 14, Liverpool Arena and Conference Centre, Liverpool
Thurs 3rd July	UK DCTN Executive Group Meeting	8am	BAD Annual Meeting Room 14, Liverpool Arena and Conference Centre, Liverpool
Tues 14th October	UK DCTN Steering Group Meeting UK DCTN Executive Group Meeting	12.30pm 3pm	BAD House, London BAD House, London

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