

Cross Party Group on Medical Research
First meeting of 2019

13 March 2019
12 - 1.30pm
Conference Room A, Ty Hywel

Minutes

In attendance

Dr Dai Lloyd AM, Chairing

Presenting:

Ian Rees Jones, Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research
Michaela James, Swansea University

Emma Henwood, BHF Cymru
Adam Fletcher, BHF Cymru
Alice Taylor, WISERD
Dr Kate Shires, Biobank Manager, Cardiff University
Katie Chapelle, Head of Communications and Influencing, Stroke Association
Huw Owen, Alzheimer's Society Cymru
Lynne Davies, CRUK
Mark Briggs, Welsh Blood Service
Gethin Jones, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
Rhian Thomas-Turner, Noah's Ark, Children's Hospital UHW
Lowri Jackson, Royal College of Physicians
Dr Rachel Adams, Cardiff Met University
Nigel Rees, Welsh Ambulance Service Trust
Dr Richard Greville, ABPI
Alexander Smith, Postgraduate Fellowship at Stroke Association
Dr Catrin Middleton, Head of Programme - Genomics for Precision Medicine Strategy

Apologies

Christopher Fegan
Cari-Anne Quinn, Life Sciences Hub
Professor Alan Williams, Swansea University
Dr Chris George, Swansea University
Joanne Ferris, ABPI
Lee Campbell, Cancer Research Wales
Martin Fidler-Jones, Tenovus Cancer Care
Ed Bridges, Cardiff University
Andy Glyde, CRUK
Kielan Arblaster, The Brain Tumour Charity

1. Chair's welcome and introduction

Dr Dai Lloyd AM opened the meeting and Emma Henwood explained that there were IT issues in the meeting room and therefore the presentations would be shared afterwards.

2. IDEAL study

Ian Rees Jones (IRJ) outlined how the study had started out at Bangor University, but was now led from Exeter University. It is part funded by Alzheimer's Society. The project is a qualitative one which looks at both people affected by dementia as well as their carers.

Dr Rees Jones stated that Wales potentially has lower diagnosis than the other UK countries in the study which could be down to demography or rurality of Wales.

They are measuring what it means to live well with the condition, using questionnaires and perceptions of living well. They are looking at psychological and physical health. The Cardiff group have worked in a co-productive method and have two points of qualitative interviews over two time points. Moments of transition are also measured by WISERD such as moving to care homes etc.

Questions

- Dr Rachel Adams asked rurality and what effect this has had.
IRJ talked about the environmental factors and proximity to green spaces and ability to access them.
- Katie Chapelle asked how people in the BME community have been recruited to the study.
IRJ said that they had had to think outside the box and try anything and everything to engage with different communities.
- Dr Dai Lloyd asked if there were any interim results and also about the Welsh language and whether there had been any protective factors in those who were bilingual.
IRJ said there had been initial findings but nothing published yet.
- Dr Catrin Middleton asked about the levels and access to services available which could help service planners make decisions about provision of services.
IRL talked about interim reports being used to help shape policy priorities and raise awareness of the problems associated with living with the condition.

3. The Active Project

Michaela James (MJ) outlined the active project which involved 90 teenagers in seven deprived areas of Swansea and was co-produced with the participants.

The project provided Year 9 students with £20 a month vouchers for them to spend on any activity with the aim of increasing physical activity and understanding why physical activity decreases at this age.

The study found that the participants knew they should be active but were frustrated by organised sport and lessons and what was available outside of school. In the schools where the vouchers were introduced the physical decline was reduced compared to control schools.

The team looked into things like blood pressure where 16% of school kids were already showing as having high blood pressure, which was reduced by the project. They also found that a more deprived school and not home had a bigger impact.

Questions

- Gethin Jones asked if they looked at BMI.

MJ replied that they hadn't in this study as they were looking at heart health, but that the next stage of the project will aim to develop the areas they look at.

- Mark Briggs asked if previous studies resonated with their findings ie. Are teens the same as previous generations in disliking PE?

MJ said that the same sorts of issues had been thrown up by their study and there was a culture change needed around Physical Education and it isn't just about elite sport.

- RA asked about Health exercise and nutrition in PGCE courses.
MJ agreed saying that the more that can be embedded, the better.
- DL spoke about the physical fitness report being talked about in the Health and Social Care Committee at the moment and that this group should send the video evidence from the participants to the committee.

4. Update from the sub-group on the medical research workforce

Lowri Jackson updated on an action from the previous meeting around the medical workforce and protected research time. She outlined key themes which had been identified which were:

- **Skills gap** - There is a growing UK-wide and Wales-wide skills gap in STEM subjects, including medical research - why?
- **National leadership** - Where does the research workforce sit? Is it with health, education or the economy?
- **Research funding** - Activity-based funding will be replaced by a values-based system; some parts of the sector cannot generate enough income to be sustainable
- **Protected time** - Clinicians often fit in research commitments around the rest of their job; time awards discriminate in favour of established researchers
- **Early outreach** - How can we inspire school-age children to consider medical research as a career option? How can we get them thinking outside the box?
- **Changing practice** - A lot of research is led by universities; how do we cross that into actual clinical practice for the frontline workforce?

LJ also spoke about the potential for shaping priorities ahead of the 2021 Welsh elections.

5. Discussion

EH outlined the possibility of what this Cross Party Group could be used to do, to help contribute to the issues around medical research and add to the findings of the Reid Review.

- DL said that the first thing this group could do is write to the government to ask what had been done so far to progress the recommendations of the Reid Review. **ACTION**
- IRJ outlined how a continuous issue exists in medical research as projects are time-limited funding and researchers are constantly looking for their next job.
- MB spoke about the R&D career path being seen as a dead end career.
- CM asked about the terms of reference of this group as this was the first time she had attended. EH said she would circulate them again. **ACTION**
- CM also spoke about there not being time for nurses to take part in research.
- Rhian Thomas-Turner said that the role of children's nurses needs to be looked at

- Nigel Rees outlined the research and innovation agenda and how there were 2-3 people leading but more could be done
- Huw Owen mentioned the difficulties of researchers not being able to take their research out to other cohorts.

DL closed the discussion by reflecting that the first thing that could be done was write to the Minister and receive a reply on the recommendations of the Reid Review and then look at the next steps.

EH said the next two meetings had been booked for Wednesday 8 May and Wednesday 10 July both at 12-1.30pm and both in Conference Room A.