

UK Spinal Cord Injury Research Network

I was very pleased to join the UK Spinal Cord Injury Research Network (UKSCIRN) in September as a Programme Manager. My role is central to our Network's recognition that obtaining funding for major research into spinal cord injury requires coordination. Therefore, in order for research to flourish UKSCIRN offer support to all SCI centres in order to assist funding applications. In short, my role is to facilitate collaborative research and multi-centre applications for funding.

My interest in research began in the 1990s at Brunel University where following my PhD in 2004, I was employed as a Work Placement Tutor and Psychology Lecturer. Here I provided guidance to students who were on research placements in a variety of settings ranging from HMPS to the Institute of Psychiatry. I also returned to industry and obtained valuable project management training and experience which will enable me to manage the coordination of centres during the bidding process. In order to help researchers from SCI centres across the U.K work together I am particularly proactive in getting to know the research community.

So how can I help you? If you have an idea and you are interested in collaborative research you can ask UKSCIRN to support your application for funding. This support will strengthen your application, especially for competitive funding with associated eligibility for entry onto the National Portfolio and sought after infrastructure costs.

What kind of support can UKSCIRN give you? I can coordinate a worthwhile peer review of your proposal and in so doing obtain valuable input from our Scientific Committee. If we then decide to support your proposal you will obtain enhanced evidence of collaboration on your application and I will help to facilitate and coordinate the research process.

What should you do? If you have an idea for research into SCI which you feel could be a collaborative project you should email me a very brief outline about your proposal for me to pass to our Chair. If UKSCIRN feel the research may be suitable for a collaborative application for funding we will ask you to forward a more detailed proposal/protocol. This is then distributed to our Scientific Committee for peer review.

There are other ways you can be involved too. In September I wrote to all SCI centres introducing myself. I wrote to members of UKSCIRN in addition to other research contacts. This letter included an outline of our intent to facilitate and support a bid for the NIHR Programme Grant for Applied Research which has a deadline for submission on 16th March 2009. As a result UKSCIRN are now supporting an application for this grant on behalf of several SCI centres for research in relation to a primary area of concern for SCI patients. As UKSCIRN place emphasis on the value of consulting interested parties from all SCI Centres I would like to invite you to contact me by telephone or email (see below) as soon as possible for further information about the nature of this project and to find out how you can contribute to our consultation process.

The NIHR also have other funding programmes which may be of interest to you such as the Research for Patient Benefit (RfPB) Programme and others depending on the nature and scope of your project. Researchers from spinal centres across the UK and Dublin have been informing me about their research interests and in turn I am able to put researchers with similar interests in touch with each other, provide information about funding opportunities and provide some guidance about procedures. For instance, you may wish to know whether your funding will cover infrastructure or university fees. Or you may need to enquire about the new R&D procedures for IRAS. You may also like the opportunity to present your proposed research or disseminate the findings for completed projects.

I am delighted that I am already seeing the benefits of our Network and information about research activities and potential applications are steadily being gathered. I hope you will agree that the inclusion of UKSCIRN is the best way to facilitate the growth of competitively funded and collaborative research in this area.

Please drop me a line by email to let me know what the status of your current activity is, or if you are not involved in research at the moment but would like to be, please let me know what area of research would interest you.

Sally Henry
Programme Manager UKSCIRN
01296 315832 (direct)
sally.henry@buckshosp.nhs.uk