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Cumbrian GPs and patients helping push the boundaries of medical science

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Cumbrian GPs and patients helping push the boundaries of medical science

Posted on Monday 3rd June 2013

NHS Cumbria CCG is topping the league table for recruiting people for medical research in the North West, which will help improve treatment for patients in the future.

Patients at participating practices in the county have been taking part in a bowel cancer screening project, a diabetes study and an interactive website trial to look at reducing the spread of respiratory viruses within households. These are primary care research portfolio studies supported by Cumbria and Lancashire Clinical Research Network (CLRN).

Dr Sarah Woodford, NHS Cumbria CCG Adult Safeguarding Lead, is also GP Research Champion, working with fellow Cumbrian GP Dr Nicola Kennish from Seascale Health Centre, liaising with medical practices across Cumbria to take part in more portfolio research from a national database of approved projects.

Dr Woodford explained: "At my own practice at Station House in Kendal, we will be taking part in the ORBIT study with Windermere Practice and the University of Central London looking at patients preferences for different methods of bowel cancer screening.

"As well as enabling our population to take part in a national study, being part of such research also means the projects take into account rural and semi-rural populations.

"Traditionally Cumbrian GP practices have not been involved in many research projects, as we have small practices and are situated far away from the main research centres. However our involvement with CLRN means we can feed our data into national projects.

"Clinical research is, and has always been, at the very heart of the NHS. Cumbrian GP practices find it challenging to be involved in research projects, as we have small practices and are situated far away from the main research centres.

"However our involvement with Cumbria and Lancashire Comprehensive Local Research Network means we can select to be a site as part of national multi-centre projects and have support from the research staff to help practices start up research studies.

"We are really pleased that in 2012/13 we have recruited over 850 patients to research studies which is a huge improvement from the small numbers we were recruiting in previous years. Only by carrying out research into "what works" can we continually improve treatment for patients, and understand how to focus NHS resources where they will be most effective."

In 2006, the Department of Health set up the National Institute for Health Research to create a world-class health system within the NHS, and the Clinical Research Network is part of this wider organisation.

Portfolio research is a collection of high-quality clinical studies that benefit from the infrastructure provided by the



Dr Sarah Woodford and Dr Nicola Kennish

Clinical Research Network. Many of these studies are Randomized Controlled Trials - considered by many in the medical profession to be the most robust form of clinical trial - although we also support other types of well-designed research.

Cumbria exceeded the number of patients they recruited to take part in research last year. The goal of 550 was set, however between April 2012 and March 2013 849 people took part in CLRN research - 154.35% recruitment, the highest in the region.

Dr Woodford added: "Many of those who took part in research last year were involved in another bowel cancer study run by Brunswick House Practice in Carlisle.

"The latest project which is open all GP practices in Cumbria is the DARE study into complications in diabetes. The research being carried out by Professor Mark Walker from Newcastle University.

"Participating GPs will be asked to invite diabetes patients into the surgery to give a blood test for a data base for future research on why some diabetes patients develop complications. Support costs are provided for the practices taking part."

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