



Infectious Disease Research Network

National Consultation Exercise, 2005

Report completed September 2005



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Executive summary

In order to gauge support for a national network, in the first half of 2005, the Infectious Disease Research Network (IDRN) conducted a national consultation exercise. This consultation consisted of three key components: -

1. Questionnaire to all principal investigators currently conducting infectious disease research identified through the National Research Register (<http://www.update-software.com/National/>). We received 184 completed questionnaires, from a wide range of researchers, including medical practitioners, non-clinical laboratory scientists, nurses, and non-clinical epidemiologists, as well as various other professions.
2. Structured interviews with key stakeholders. Please see Appendix A for the full list of stakeholders who were consulted.
3. Written submissions requested from representatives of all the national organisations and professional societies with an interest in infection. Responses were received from the following: -
 - British Association for the Study of the Liver
 - British Paediatric Allergy, Immunology and Infection Group
 - British Paediatric Surveillance Unit
 - British Society for Antimicrobial Chemotherapy
 - British Society for Immunology
 - Clinical Virology Network
 - Central Sterilising Club
 - Royal College of General Practitioners
 - Royal College of Nursing
 - Royal College of Physicians of London
 - Royal College of Surgeons of England.

The complete list of those approached is shown in Appendix B

Summary of responses

The feedback we received from each of the three key components (described in the executive summary) indicated that there would be a great deal of support for the establishment of a national Infectious Disease Research Network.

The results also indicated a need for the IDRN to provide advice on research governance, and ethical, epidemiological and statistical aspects of study design. Most respondents agreed that translation/health services research were important areas that a Network could focus on; another proposal was to provide a facility for a rapid research response with advance preparation for emergencies associated with emerging infections

There was also general agreement that the capacity to establish long-term patient cohorts and the ability to support the co-ordination of multicentre projects would be valuable, as well as the Network being able to support applications for multidisciplinary multi-centre training fellowships.

Another aspect that many respondents mentioned was that, given the multidisciplinary nature of infection, there are many professionals, or interest groups, in a mixed economy. This presents the opportunity of interdisciplinary collaboration, but at the same time increases the importance of not duplicating the work of existing groups, or being another 'splinter group'. The need for a clear relationship with the Health Protection Agency (and other professional groups) was also identified. A multidisciplinary, inclusive approach, rather than a professional identity, was seen as crucial to the proposed Network's success.

Key Themes to Emerge from the National Consultation Exercise

The consultation exercise generated a number of key themes. These are outlined below.

Stimulating the development of new proposals by providing -

- Rapid dissemination of research funding calls.
- Updates on relevant government policy and discussion documents
- A researchers database that can be used to link with colleagues on collaborative work.
- National ID research strategy days in priority areas.
- Financial and administrative support for network members to organise national research strategy days.

Convening protocol development groups in response to: -

- Calls for Research
- Ideas generated in research strategy days

For multicentre studies, providing advice on: -

- Relevant UK legislation
- Epidemiological aspects of study design
- Statistical aspects of study design
- Gaining ethics committee approval

Supporting education and training by providing: -

- Information on conference or training opportunities
- Half or full day training events in relevant subject areas
- Organisation of multidisciplinary multicentre training fellowships for ID researchers of outstanding potential.

Providing the following support for running multicentre projects: -

- Infrastructure to support the establishment of long term patient cohorts and data collection
- Multicentre project co-ordinatory capacity
- Statistical support for analysis of results
- In particular, support could be provided for intervention studies and health services research, rather than basic science.

Raising the profile of infectious disease & some of the relevant specialities: -

- The Network could have a media and/or lobbying role.

- The ability to press for the funding of high quality multi-centre studies was considered to be important.

Priority areas for the Network to focus on: -

- Translational / health services research addressing the management and control of infections that constitute a high burden to NHS resources (rather than focusing on basic science).

Challenges, barriers and disadvantages that a national Network may face: -

- Distances involved in multicentre research
- Need to overcome any group rivalries, fear of hijacking ideas, developing trust between collaborators.
- The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) can be a perceived disincentive to collaborative work.
- Need to avoid creating unrealistic expectations amongst Network users.

Potential for a role for Industry: -

- The role of Industry produced a mixed response from stakeholders.
- Some felt that Industry could, and should, have a key role to play in the development of ID research, via a national Network. Others were more cautious about involving Industry.
- Recent changes to the Industry regulatory environment have made the conducting of large-scale research more favourable.

National representation: -

- Invite representation to form a steering group. The group should include a wide variety of specialities and also be geographically representative.
- Focus of the steering group has to be on facilitating research
- A panel of experts on particular topics could be appointed, who would become involved as required, depending upon their expertise.



APPENDICES

Appendix A – List of key stakeholders interviewed

Appendix B – List of organisations and professional societies with an interest in infection

Appendix A – List of key stakeholders interviewed

Location	Stakeholder	Profile
Birmingham	Dr Douglas Fleming	Director at RCGP Birmingham Research Unit
Birmingham	Dr John Innes	Chest physician, Birmingham
Birmingham	Ms Tracy Roberts	Health Economist, Birmingham University
Brighton	Professor Jon Cohen	Professor of Infectious Disease and Dean, Brighton & Sussex Medical School
Bristol	Professor Rob Heyderman	Professor of Infectious Diseases and International Health, in the Department of Pathology & Microbiology at the University of Bristol
Cardiff	Professor Stephen Palmer	Head of Dept of Epidemiology, Statistics and Public Health, Cardiff Medical School
Leeds	Professor Peter Selby	Director, Clinical Research Network
Liverpool	Dr Nick Beeching	President, British Infection Society
London	Dr Mary Piper	Senior Public Health Advisor for Prison Health, at the Department of Health
London	Dr Mike Sharland	Paediatric Consultant, St Georges NHS Trust
London	Mr Nick Partridge	Chief Executive of the Terrence Higgins Trust
London	Dr Richard Tiner	Medical Director, The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry
London	Professor Angus Nicoll	Head of the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre
London	Lord Soulsby of Swaffham-Prior	Chair of the 'Fighting Infection' paper produced by the House of Lords
London	Professor Julis Weinberg	Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research at City University
London	Professor Mala Rao	Joint Head of Public Health Development and Workforce Development, Department of Health
London	Professor Marc Walport	Director of the Wellcome Trust

London	Dr Mary O'Mahony	Director, Health Protection Agency, Local & Regional Services Division
Manchester	Professor Sarah O'Brien	Professor of Health Science & Epidemiology at Manchester University
Nottingham	Professor Roger Finch	Professor of Infectious Diseases at the Nottingham City Hospital and also Professor of Microbiology at Nottingham University
Nottingham	Professor Will Irving	Professor of Virology in Division of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases at Nottingham Medical School
Oxford	Dr Derrick Crook	Infectious disease consultant, with a specific interest in (amongst other subjects) group B streptococcus, and the origins of antibiotic resistance
Oxford	Professor Harold Jaffe	Professor of Public Health at the University of Oxford
Oxford	Professor Tim Peto	Infectious disease consultant, with a specific interest in (amongst other subjects) tropical medicine and AIDS
Plymouth	Dr David Dance	HPA Regional Microbiologist for the South West and a consultant microbiologist at Derriford Hospital
Sheffield	Professor Robert Read	Professor, Infection and Immunity, at Sheffield University
Thames Valley	Professor Robert Pratt	Professor of Nursing and Director of the Richard Wells Research Centre in the Faculty of Health and Human Sciences at Thames Valley University

Appendix B – List of organisations and professional societies with an interest in infection

Association of Medical Microbiologists
British Association for Sexual Health and HIV
British Association for the Study of the Liver
British HIV Association
British Infection Society
British Liver nurses forum
British Paediatric Allergy Immunity and Infection Group
British Paediatric Surveillance Unit
British Society for Antimicrobial Chemotherapy
British Society for Immunology
British Society of Gastroenterology
British Thoracic Society
Central Sterilising Club
Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
Clinical Virology Network
Faculty of Public Health
Federation of Infection Societies
Health Protection Agency (Centre for Infection and Local and Regional Services)
Hepatitis Nurse Specialist Forum
Hospital Infection Society
Infection Control Nurses Association
National HIV Nurses' Association
Public Health Medicine Environmental Group
Royal College of General Practitioners (+RCGP Weekly Returns Service)
Royal College of Midwives
Royal College of Nursing
Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
Royal College of Pathologists
Royal College of Physicians
Royal College of Surgeons
Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
Society for General Microbiology