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| Host department: Oxford |
| Project Title: The management of patient risk in disease outbreaks: A retrospective study of the primary care response to the rise in invasive group A streptococcal infections in England and Wales 2022/23 |
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| Proposed supervisory team:  |
| Rebecca Barnes, Associate Professor and NIHR Fellow (Oxford, Primary Supervisor) Catherine Pope, Professor of Medical Sociology (Oxford) Andrew Carson-Stevens, Professor of Patient Safety (Cardiff) |
| Potential for cross consortium networking and educational opportunities: |
| The successful candidate will be based in the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Sciences at the University of Oxford. They will have access to a wide range of educational opportunities that will support relevant areas of study such as quality and safety, health care communication and patient experience. Methodological training appropriate to the investigation of health care delivery challenges will also be made available including combining qualitative and quantitative approaches and the systematic study of interactions between primary care team members and patients or their caregivers. The candidate will also be encouraged to spend time as a visiting researcher in patient safety research groups in other SPCR member and non-member departments.Additional opportunities for enrichment and development will be made possible through links with the European research network for out-of-hours primary health care, UK Health Security Agency, Wales Centre for Primary and Emergency Care Research, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, integrated urgent and emergency care leads in NHS England and NHS Wales, and the Thames Valley and Wessex Paediatric Operational Delivery Network. |
| Project description: |
| Strep A (Group A Streptococcus) is a common type of bacteria that typically causes throat infections and scarlet fever with no fully recognisable early symptomatic stage. While most infections are mild, in rare cases Group A Strep can cause invasive infections which can be fatal. The UK observed a marked increase in scarlet fever and invasive Group A Streptococcal (iGAS) infection in the Winter of 2022/23. High profile reporting of severe outcomes in children, including deaths, contributed to a dramatic increase in demand for urgent primary care as concerned parents contacted NHS 111 and GP in-hours and out-of-hours services, and attended pharmacies, Urgent Treatment Centres and emergency departments. The aims of this project are to retrospectively explore the outbreak and its consequences, and provide an evidence base for what could be done differently in terms of safety and effectiveness. Relevant topics for exploration include media reporting of the outbreak, the primary care response during interactions with parents/caregivers, parent/caregiver experiences of seeking care and safety incident reporting. The project design will be shaped by the successful candidate in discussion with the supervisory team. It is likely to feature qualitative interviews and the collection and analysis of historical patient case records, call-recordings, patient safety incident reporting, UKHRA messaging and media reporting. This project is suitable for primary care clinicians from a range of professional backgrounds. |
| Indicative project costs:  |
| * Salary: Three years of current full-time salary (pro-rata if part-time);
* Training expenses: Circa £30,000 to include course fees, college fees, training costs and conference attendance etc;
* Research costs: Research participant reimbursement (£2,500); Consent procedures and patient case record retrieval costs (£5,000); Travel and subsistence (£2,000); Transcription of call recordings and interview data (£10,000); Interview translation costs (£300); Laptop (£700);
* PPIE (£4,500).
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| Training and development provision by host: |
| *Formal training:*A range of accredited MSc modules are available such as the Mixed Methods in Health Research course, alongside other Oxford training opportunities such as the Investigating Quality and Safety and Intervention Design in Health Services (IQID) Course, and Oxford Qualitative Courses.The University also provides excellent free training in research, ethics, IT and personal development including mandatory training for all research staff, Wellcome-funded and Oxford DPhil students in research integrity and EDI. Our department hosts a vibrant international cohort of clinical and non-clinical DPhil and MSc students. It has a well-established induction programme to ensure they have a positive start in the department and are aware of our processes, resources available to them and our values. We have a rigorous oversight procedures for doctoral students, led by our Graduate Studies team. Departmental oversight includes regular contact with a core experienced supervisory team, quarterly supervisor and student supervision reports, regular opportunities to consider skills training needs, clear milestones for progression, and additional pastoral support from college advisors. Our DPhil working group provides a peer network and a buddy system for new starters, as well as being a forum to exchange feedback and information between the students and departmental committees.The department has a well-attended monthly seminar series that includes sessions for students to chair or present their work. We have termly research student away-days to enable all students to present their work and obtain feedback from more senior staff. We regularly invite DPhil students to join the meals following our Senior Academic Committee meetings to encourage informal contacts and to ensure the senior leadership team are well connected with our next generation of researchers. |
| *Informal training:* The successful candidate will be hosted by the Medical Sociology and Health Experiences Research Group (MS&HERG) (co-directed by Prof. Pope) under the group’s organisation and delivery of primary and urgent care theme and be a member of Dr Barnes’ PRIMA team (currently two DPhil students, a SPCR post-doctoral researcher and an experienced qualitative researcher) who are working on a programme of research on the management of patient risk in urgent primary care. They will have access to regular supervision meetings, monthly MS&HERG meetings where they can present their work and receive feedback, and writing retreats. They will also be encouraged to link with other relevant research groups in the department such as the Infection, Respiratory and Acute Care Group.  |
| *PPIE*: PPIE training, funding and support are available for all Oxford DPhil students supported by our Patient and Public Involvement Manager, Polly Kerr, who also has a background in health communication. The successful candidate will be expected to design a programme of meaningful PPIE, with diverse caregiver representatives who have lived experience of seeking help for a child patient during the outbreak, as a vertical theme throughout their project.  |