

Nottingham SPCR internship projects 2025

Name & email supervisor(s): Dr Blanca De Dios Perez Blanca.dediosperez@nottingham.ac.uk Prof. Kate Radford kate.radford@nottingham.ac.uk
Length and dates of internship: Four weeks; Between September and October 2025
Host department: Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences, University of Nottingham
How will the internship be conducted: <input type="checkbox"/> In person at the university <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual/ from home <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both are possible, depending on preference of student
Title internship project: Optimising access to vocational rehabilitation through multiple sclerosis charities: A feasibility randomised controlled trial
Summary of the internship project: <i>(max 250 words, can include hyperlinks to further information)</i> People are diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) in the prime of their working years. However, they often leave the workforce prematurely due to MS symptoms and difficulties managing workplace relationships and performance. Vocational rehabilitation interventions have the potential to improve work outcomes for people with MS, but the evidence is inconclusive to date. This project involves a multicentre, feasibility, parallel-group randomised controlled trial (RCT) comparing a MS vocational rehabilitation (MSVR) intervention plus usual care (n=30) with usual care alone (n=30). This study includes an embedded mixed methods process evaluation. People with MS, aged 18-65 years, in paid employment will be recruited from MS charities. Participants with MS will be able to include their employers in the intervention to receive information about MS and employment. MSVR involves an initial interview and up to 10 hours of employment support for people with MS and up to four hours of support for employers, over six months. Employees from MS charities will be recruited and trained to deliver the MSVR intervention. This internship will provide an opportunity to be involved in activities related to the feasibility trial such as screening and recruitment of participants, support with training MS charity staff during the trial, data collection (e.g., administering questionnaires, data analysis, fidelity assessment), and meetings with patient and public involvement partners.
Learning objectives: The person undertaking the internship will develop a wide range of research skills by supporting several aspects of the feasibility trial such as supporting recruitment, data collection, and analysis.

The intern will gain practical experience of trial management procedures, following research protocols, and learn about ethical considerations arising from the study. The intern will receive training and supervision prior to completing any research activity.

Another key learning objective refers to the opportunity to engage with different stakeholders. The intern will develop skills in collaborating with workers from MS charities, people with MS, healthcare professionals, and other relevant stakeholders involved in trial delivery. They will also gain insight into patient and public involvement (PPI) activities.

The intern will also learn about multiple sclerosis (MS), which is the most common long-term neurological condition affecting young adults in the UK, the challenges that people with MS experience to remain or return to work, and how vocational rehabilitation can enable people with complex health conditions at work.

These skills are relevant for primary care research. The intern will have the opportunity to meet staff and students with different clinical and academic expertise to gain insight into the inspirational career pathways of the staff at the Centre for Rehabilitation and Ageing Research at the University of Nottingham.

Any further information:

The lead applicant and primary supervisor is an Early Career Researcher who was awarded a Multiple Sclerosis Society Early Career Fellowship in December 2023. She will provide day-to-day supervision of the intern.

Prof. Radford, the secondary supervisor, will also engage with the intern to provide them with a broader experience of rehabilitation research, primary care research, and how to pursue a clinical academic career.