

Heart Research UK Research Strategy

2017– 2020

Medical research

Issue 1: There have been huge improvements in the prevention and treatment of cardiovascular disease (CVD) over the last decade and deaths from CVD and coronary heart disease have significantly fallen. However, cardiovascular disease is still a problem and there is much progress to be made. Coronary heart disease (CHD) is still the UK's single biggest killer with almost 70,000 deaths every year (of which more than 22,000 were premature deaths - before the age of 75). This compares with almost 36,000 deaths due to lung cancer, the most common cause of cancer death, and nearly 40,000 deaths from stroke.

Also, with an ageing population and the current levels of obesity and diabetes, further research is needed or recent advances will not be sustained.

It is estimated that:

- 7 million people are living with CVD in the UK
- 2.3 million people are living with coronary heart disease in the UK Around 2 million people are affected by angina in the UK
- Around 900,000 people are living with heart failure in the UK
- 1 in 180 babies is diagnosed with a heart defect at birth in the UK 100,000 deaths every year in the UK are due to sudden cardiac death
- The healthcare costs of cardiovascular disease in the UK were £11.3 billion for 2014

Aim: Our aim is to fund high-quality medical research projects at hospitals and universities in the UK into the prevention, treatment and cure of heart disease and related conditions. We prioritise research which aims to benefit

patients as soon as possible whilst maintaining our reputation within the research community. We intend to maintain our niche within the wider research environment at the same time as being adaptable to changing circumstances.

To achieve this we will:

- Invest £1.25million in medical research in 2017 (NET Grants £500,000, TRP Grants £600,000 and Northern Ireland Grant £150,000)
- Use a 'gold-standard' peer review process to ensure accountability, impartiality, balance and independence
- Use reviewers of international repute in the review process and continue to build our database of reviewers
- Have high-quality Medical Review Panels consisting of leading experts from a range of disciplines to reflect the research strategy. Review the membership of the panels on an annual basis to give a fair balance of experience, scientific disciplines, institutions, age, gender, ethnicity and geographical locations
- Continue with the current HRUK grants programme of Novel and Emerging Technologies (NET) and Translational Research Project (TRP) grants. The programme is unique, helps to differentiate HRUK from other charities, fills funding gaps, and is popular with researchers. [In 2016, the HRUK Medical Liaison Committee recommended that this programme continue]
- Identify gaps where research funding opportunities may be lacking by monitoring the research strategies of other heart charities and consulting with our Medical Review Panels and wider network of research contacts

- Provide funding that fits best with the current circumstances by awarding more/fewer grants according to changes in fundraising income or by introducing ad hoc ‘themed’ grant rounds if there is a particular need
- Improve engagement with grantholders to establish good relationships, by visiting at least once during the course of the grant
- Better utilise the expertise of grantholders and panel members and ask them to act as spokespeople, writing/checking articles etc
- Identifying and focus on projects with the greatest potential for public or media interest, and/or impact. We will make use of these research stories through the HRUK website, Pulse and press releases, with greater focus on reaching more people using social media
- Improve collaboration with university press offices to make our communication strategy more effective
- Improve engagement with patients and supporters. Establish and utilise more ‘case studies’ to enhance communication of ‘research stories’
- Retrospectively analyse our research. Contact past grantholders, focusing on the ‘Research Highlights’, and communicate progress to supporters, donors and the wider general public
- Aim to raise the profile of HRUK through better communication of the research funded by HRUK to supporters, donors and the wider general public, focusing particularly on the outcomes and potential benefits of the research
- Support fundraising activities to increase voluntary income by:
 - Providing suitable information about grants awarded, progress and outcome, and statistics on heart disease
 - Supporting applications to trusts and foundations by identifying suitable research grants, and providing information including financial details
 - Ensuring progress reports are forwarded to donors to enhance relationship building
 - Ensuring that all written materials are accurate and honest to protect the reputation of HRUK

Education

Issue: There are gaps in the education and training of clinicians and other allied health professionals

Aim: Our aim is to fill gaps in the education and training of clinicians and other allied health professionals through HRUK Masterclasses. These provide an opportunity for clinicians to learn from the experts in their specialist fields in order to hone their skills and improve their knowledge so that more heart patients from across the UK can benefit.

To achieve this we will:

- Utilise the Heart Academy for every education at all levels
- Identify gaps in the education and training of clinicians by consulting with our expert Medical Review Panels and wider network of research contacts
- Organise at least two masterclasses annually which provide unique, hands-on training to clinicians, and are accredited by the relevant professional body
- Request feedback from masterclass delegates to help with planning of future masterclasses and to assess potential impact
- Make use of the HRUK Masterclasses for publicity as they have immediate patient benefit, are relatively easy to explain to supporters and have measurable impact

Issue: There are gaps in education for patients

Aim: Our aim is to support patients to better understand and live well with their condition. E.g. Exercise prescription for congenital heart disease.

To achieve this we will:

- Research and identify unmet needs for specific patients groups
- Recruit specialist advisors
- Assess the feasibility of how HRUK can help
- Develop appropriate tools and information
- Roll out nationally with clinicians and patients