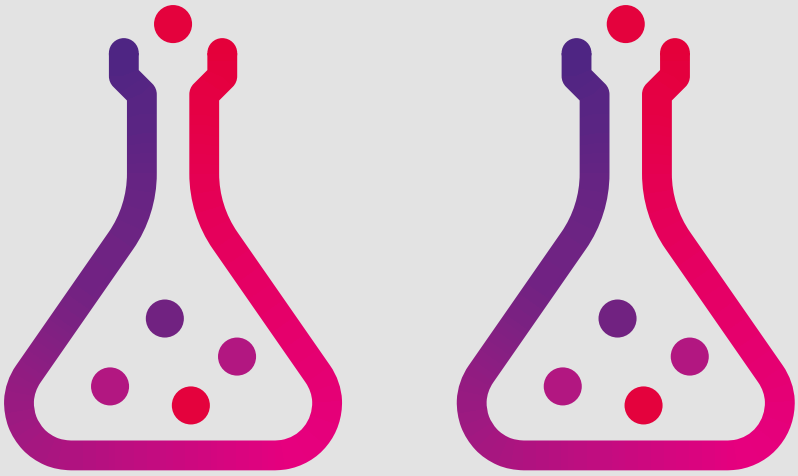
Investing in Pioneering Research

We're spending more on high quality medical research to benefit patients as soon as possible



What the problem is:

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 one of the UK's biggest killers with around 63,000 deaths every year (of which almost 22,000 are premature deaths - before the age of 75). This compares with around 34,000 deaths due to lung cancer, the most common cause of cancer death, and 36,000 deaths from stroke.

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

It is estimated that: -

- 7.6 million people are living with CVD in the UK
- 2.3 million people are living with coronary heart disease in the UK
- 1.5 million people have been diagnosed with atrial fibrillation in the UK
- More than 900,000 people are living with heart failure in the UK
- 1 in every 150 babies in the UK is born with a heart defect
- There are more than 100,000 hospital admissions due to heart attacks every year in the UK
- The healthcare costs of cardiovascular disease in the UK are £9 billion every year

How we are taking it on:

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 heart patients as soon as possible whilst maintaining our excellent 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.

How we'll do this:

Funding research. We will:

- Invest £1,672,500 in medical research in 2021 (including Covid-19 Research Grant £250,000, NET Grants £500,000, TRP Grants £600,000, Scotland Grant £200,000 and PhD studentship £122,500).
- Continue with our current grants programme of unique Novel and Emerging Technologies Grants (NET), and Translational Research Project (TRP) grants. NET Grants are for research projects which focus on the development of new and innovative technologies to diagnose, treat and prevent heart disease and related conditions. TRP Grants aim to bridge the gap between scientific research and patient care, bringing about clinical benefits in the most efficient way. For more information see heartresearch.org.uk/medical-research-grant-apply/
- Introduce a new, dedicated PhD Studentship scheme. This will give an exceptional student the opportunity to gain the knowledge, skills and expertise needed for a career as a research scientist. Applications from clinical or non-clinical applicants will be considered.

- Encourage and support medical research at institutions across the UK by offering regional grants when possible
- Identify gaps where research funding opportunities may be lacking by monitoring the research strategies of other heart charities and consulting 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
- Engage with our grant-holders to establish good relationships, by visiting at least once during the course of the grant

Peer review. We will:

- Continue to 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

Communicating our research. We will:

- Utilise the expertise of grant-holders and panel members better by asking them to act as spokespeople as well as write and check articles
- Identify and focus on projects with the greatest potential for public or media interest, and/or impact.
- Make use of these research stories through the website, Pulse and press releases, with greater focus on reaching more people using social media
- Collaborate with university press offices to make our communication strategy more effective
- Engage with patients and supporters to establish and utilise more case studies to communicate the effects/impact of our research more effectively
- Retrospectively analyse our research by contacting past grant-holders, focusing on any research highlights and what happened next, and communicate further developments and progress to supporters, donors and the wider general public
- Monitor ways of assessing and reporting impact of our research • Ensure that all written materials are accurate to protect the reputation of Heart Research UK

How we'll know we're successful. We will:

- Receive sufficient numbers of good-quality grant applications which merit funding as judged by rigorous peer-review in order to spend the allocated annual research budget.
- Maintain the level of interest from the research community experienced during the last five years for all grant schemes.
- Continue to attract new Medical Review Panels members who are recognised as leading experts in their fields.
- Ensure that applications received are reviewed by an appropriate number of external reviewers.