

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2021

STUDY PANEL MEETINGS - A BIG THANK YOU

Over the past months, we held meetings with both our Patient and Public Involvement (PPI), non-medical practitioner (NMP) panels and study steering committee (SSC).

Thank you to everyone who participated. Your interest and inputs provided the research team with some really helpful insights which have informed our current and future work, detailed in the updates here.

WELCOME

Welcome to the first SkillMix-ED Newsletter. As the UK continues to deal with the pandemic, we have been pushing ahead with the study. In this newsletter, we will provide an overview of the work to date and next steps. The study is addressing the questions concerned with the implementation of the non-medical practitioner workforce into the urgent and emergency care system skill-mix in England.

WHAT 'S IN A NAME?

We've used the umbrella term 'non-medical practitioner' (NMP) in the study protocol to cover the different types of roles in the emergency department (ED) and urgent treatment centres (UTCs) including: Advanced Clinical Practitioners (ACPs, who come from professional groups registered with the Health Professions Council), advanced nurse practitioners, Physician Associates and emergency practitioners. We have had some very useful feedback from our study panel meetings and study steering group about problems in using this umbrella term. So, we are considering alternatives: for example, clinical decision makers in the ED is one suggestion that has been put forward. This is something we will be discussing further as the study progresses and are always happy to hear views.

REVIEWING THE EVIDENCE

We have been working on the scoping review (i.e., a review of the literature) for evidence regarding the effectiveness, acceptability, levels of supervision and independence of NMPs in EDs/UTCs. Our NMP panel helpfully suggested terms to use in the literature review to acknowledge variation and professional body interests. We have included these in our searches of electronic databases which hold the summaries (abstracts) of such publications. We have screened over 21,000 abstracts and identified 233 articles which we are checking the full text of to ensure it meets our criteria and extracting the information in these papers. The PPI panel were concerned that there was a lack of focus on patient outcomes until later phases of the study, so we have



ensured that we are including literature with patient outcomes and views. We are in the process of drawing this material together to discuss with our panels and to inform the next phase of the study.

INTERVIEWS & POLICY REVIEW

We have been reviewing public policy documents as to the extent to which NMPs in the ED skill-mix have been supported and implemented or otherwise. We are now conducting interviews with national and regional leaders of NHS organisations, NHS commissioners of services and workforce development, patient and public organisations and professional organisations to understand the different perspectives of the presence and contribution of NMPs in the ED team. The PPI panel were concerned that the study took account of variation such as rural and urban areas, so we have ensured we approach potential participants from very different regions. We will take our findings to our panels to help us interpret what we have found and inform phase 2 and 3.



OBSERVING SKILL-MIXED TEAMS IN ACTION

One part of the first phase of the study is to observe NMPs and doctors in training as part of the team in the ED in order to help develop a way of classifying their level of independence and supervision by seniors. We are still currently trying to negotiate NHS research permission for this part of the study. Our NMP panel had considerable apprehension about the observations as being too brief, perhaps only observing atypical times, not being able to observe the breadth of work and concern whether the findings would be credible. We have taken on board these concerns and will check with those observed as to whether the observation time was typical or not and build in more time for observations if necessary. The findings from the observations will be taken back to the panels to help develop the classification tool.

Phase two: analysis of national data on ED outcomes and staffing – we are currently doing the preliminary work in setting up our databases, requesting data and undertaking associated governance work. More information in the next newsletter.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND DISCLAIMER

This study is funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR Health Services and Delivery Research, NIHR131356 – Implementation of the non-medical practitioner workforce into the urgent and emergency care system skill-mix in England: a mixed methods study of configurations and impact.)

The NIHR award page is here
<https://fundingawards.nihr.ac.uk/award/NIHR131356>

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