HRA key messages May 2022

Health Research Authority

What we do and why it matters

- Our core purpose is to protect and promote the interests of patients and the public in health and social care research

- Our vision is for high-quality health and social care research that improves people's health and wellbeing

- To achieve it we:
  - make sure that research is ethically reviewed and approved
  - promote transparency in research, and
  - coordinate and standardise research regulatory practice

How to use these messages

- Everyone who is part of the HRA should be able to explain what the organisation does and why it's important. This document will help you speak with confidence when asked about the HRA, its impact and our current priorities.

- This isn't a script and we don't expect you to learn it off by heart. Read it, know where to find it and check back regularly. It's updated every four weeks. These messages are a useful starting point for conversations about the HRA, make them your own.

- Slide 7 sets out some of the current issues we're managing. If you get difficult questions about the work of the HRA that you're not sure how to answer, the communications team can help.

- **Don't email this document to anyone outside the organisation, it's to support you.**

How are we doing?

- Our ethics committees in England reviewed almost 300 new studies in the first month of this financial year, just over 90% were given permission to start (1)
- Combined review with the MHRA, the new way that all trials of medicines are approved, is on average twice as quick as two separate systems were (2)
- 83% of applicants to the HRA are very satisfied with the service that they receive from us. When asked about the best bit of the process, the majority say that it was our staff. 89% are very satisfied, and 60% score them ten out of ten (3)

Did you hear that we…?

- Reviewed and approved the COV-Boost study in only eleven days. The study generated the world's first evidence on mixed doses, was key to shaping the UK's booster programme and gave vital evidence for global vaccination efforts. Results from the study published in The Lancet this month show that a fourth dose this autumn could benefit everyone.

- Gave evidence to the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee inquiry on digital data and the right to privacy. Matt Westmore talked about our role to protect people, their tissue or their data when it's used for research.

- Are supporting sponsors and funders making changes to their research to create capacity in the NHS. We're working with DHSC, NHSE/I and NIHR to support 4000 studies which have been asked to take action, with clear guidance on amending or stopping research.

Coming soon

- Our new strategy. We’re launching our commitment to make it easy to do research that people can trust in Manchester next month.

- A public conversation on the future of research ethics review. Working with our partners in the devolved administrations, we want to make ethics review more innovative and efficient, whilst retaining public trust. Starts June 2022

- A new recruitment campaign to increase the diversity of our Research Ethics Committee membership so that our volunteer community always reflects the wider community that it serves.

Talk to us about …

- Public involvement in research. With NIHR we've brought together 13 organisations to make a shared commitment to public involvement and are working with them to help drive system change to ensure people are always involved in the design, delivery and dissemination of research.

- Research transparency. We're working on the next stage of our Make it Public strategy, looking at whether past transparency performance should be taken into account when applying for approvals for new research to start.

- Sustainability. We've launched an ambitious new strategy committing to change at the HRA and setting out our plans to drive change across the research sector to help protect our planet.

Current issues

- We’re investigating concerns raised with us about Spectrum 10K, a research study involving autistic people. The study has been paused by the research team and the REC has reviewed the concerns. We have committed to update complainants in the next two weeks. There is also media interest in this study.

- We’ve paused our research systems programme so that we can review feedback on the work we’ve done so far and build the best systems for the future. This means some users applying for clinical trials involving radiation need to work between two systems. This doesn’t reflect the user experience we want people to have in IRAS, and we have support available including guidance, a webinar and a helpful service desk.

- We’re dealing with concerns raised with us about the PACE trial, an historic study of exercise as therapy for people with ME or chronic fatigue syndrome. The concerns relate to the study itself and previous work we have done to investigate those concerns. The complainants are using social media to raise awareness. For more information on all of the above contact Eve Hart (Head of Communications)

References

(1) 289 studies were approved by a REC in England during April 2022, the first month of the financial year. 261 were given Favourable Opinion (90.3% of the total). 28 were given Unfavourable Opinion.

(2) This performance data is taken from timelines for CTIMPs going through separate and combined review from 2018 to present (to February 2022). Combined review halves the time it takes for studies to get approval and cuts the time from application to recruiting a first patient by 40 days

(3) This data comes from the HRA user feedback survey in April 22. Overall satisfaction with the HRA was 83% (measured by respondents scoring their experience 7 out of 10 or higher) and 89% of respondents scored our staff 7 out of 10 or higher. 59% scored staff 10 out of 10, the highest score of all aspects respondents are asked to comment on.