

Success for Liverpool Open Day

The network recently held a Liverpool Diabetes Research open day, organised by the NIHR North West Local Diabetes Research Network staff at Aintree University Hospital and the Royal Liverpool Hospital.

The day brought research staff, healthcare professionals, people with diabetes and carers together to hear from speakers about diabetes research and the benefits it can bring. They were also able to find out what taking part in clinical research actually means to people.

Speaking at the event, Professor John Wilding, said: "Diabetes costs the NHS £1.3bn a year and if you come to the NHS for your diabetes you want the best treatment. To get the best treatment you need research.

"The most important part of the research team are patients and volunteers as most of our research involve clinical trials to see if new treatments work."

Also at the event, Professor Jiten Vora, of the Royal Liverpool Hospital, said: "In the last 10 to 20 years the choice of treatments for diabetes has vastly increased. People are now using new therapies – that Liverpool has helped to develop – for their diabetes care and we need to continue research to help improve your lifestyle and lifespan."

What the public said:

As well as healthcare professionals people also heard from James Flaherty, who has had type 2 diabetes for 15 years and has been taking part in trials for 10 years.

Mr Flaherty said: "In my opinion it's to my advantage taking part in trials. You get excellent care from the staff, you are involved, you know what's going on and you understand more. Because of the trials, I know much more about my diabetes. I also understand better the alarms my body sends to me."

Les Spencer has had type 1 diabetes for 17 years and was attending the day to see how he can better control his diabetes and was happy to help with research.

He said: "My diabetes varies from day-to-day regardless of the precautions I take. I've come along to find out whether there are any suitable trials into type 1 diabetes as I would be interested in taking part."



Patients and the public at the Liverpool Open Day

Bringing NHS organisations in the region together was important to the success of research, said Sue Teasdale, network manager. "The North West Diabetes Local Research Network is helping to bring people with an interest in diabetes from across the NHS to work together. We need people with diabetes to get involved in our research to make sure what we do is relevant to patients."

Manchester Diabetes Research Open Day

Building on the success of the Liverpool event, the Network will be holding a Manchester Research Day on 25 February 2009 at Lancashire Cricket Ground. The event will be held in conjunction with the Greater Manchester, Lancashire and South Cumbria Medicines for Children Research Network. For more information contact: Sandra Talbot, Network Administrator. Tel: 0161 206 5584 email: sandra.talbot@srft.nhs.uk

DARE prepares to launch

A new research study that is investigating the possible causes of diabetes is to start in the North West next year.

In order to understand what causes diabetes and its complications, such as heart disease, diabetic eye and kidney disease, the genes and non-inherited risk factors that make some people more likely to get diabetes need to be identified.

The DARE (Diabetes Alliance for Research in England) study is looking at the occurrence of diabetes in the general population. The North West DLRN is aiming to recruit everyone in the region who has diabetes to register their clinical information that can then be used by researchers and scientists to investigate new treatments for diabetes.

The study started in the South West of England and is being run by Professor Andrew Hattersley at the Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundations Trust.

Dr Martin Gibson, clinical lead, said: "We know that diabetes often runs in the family. However, the genes that are involved with diabetes are not fully understood. With the DARE project, researchers will be able to study the genetic code in people with diabetes to gain a better understanding of what causes it. While we won't see results overnight, improved knowledge should help us in the treatment and prevention of the disease in the future."

The study is also looking for differences between those people with diabetes and those without so wives, husbands, partners or a family friend who is not blood-related may be asked to take part in the study as well people with the condition.

People taking part in the study will be asked to give a blood sample from which their DNA will be extracted. This DNA will be supplied to scientists who will look for the genetic changes for diabetes in all the samples collected.

Trials, Tribulations and Transplants

The North West Diabetes & Obesity Research Network (DORN) is holding its annual event on Thursday 11 December.

Called 'Trials, Tribulations, and Transplants', the event is being held at The Palace Hotel, Oxford Street, Manchester, and will include:

- The new NIHR clinical research funding streams
- Clinical trials infrastructure support - perhaps you need it?
- The influence of mood on diabetes and eating behaviour
- updates in islet cell biology and transplant.

As usual, you'll also have the chance to network with a wide range of researchers from many disciplines - giving you a great opportunity to put those collaborative proposals together.

Staff Spotlight

Fran Westwell, Diabetes Research Nurse, Royal Liverpool Hospital.

Fran started her nurse training way back in 1987 at University College Hospital and The Middlesex Hospital in London. She qualified in 1991 and then moved north to The Royal Liverpool University Hospital in 1992.

Originally working in Orthopaedics she has always had a keen interest in diabetes and developed this by working with the diabetic foot ulcer service.

In 2000 she moved to the diabetic ward at the Royal and was Ward Sister until moving into research in 2002, working for Prof Vora for five years until joining the Network in June 2007.

Working on both commercial and large global academic studies Fran likes being involved in pioneering new treatments for diabetes. She said: "I enjoy having the time to spend with patients, getting to know them really well, especially when some studies last for 4-5 years. Seeing them benefit from being part of a study is very rewarding.

"I also enjoy liaising with other disciplines such as primary care, pharmaceutical companies and other allied organisations as it makes the job more varied, ensuring no two days are the same."

Outside work Fran enjoys spending time with her family and friends, fell walking, travelling and growing organic weeds and occasionally some veg on her allotment!



New Network Sites

With extra funding from the three North West Comprehensive Local Research Networks (CLRNs), we have been able to expand to more sites in the region:

- The Cumbria & Lancashire CLRNs has provided funding for diabetes research at Royal Blackburn Hospital where Gillian Whalley is working with Dr Shenaz Ramtoola.
- In Manchester, the CLRNs has provided funding for work at a number of sites, including:
- North Manchester General Hospital, with Deborah Hall, diabetes nurse, and Prof Phil Wiles:
- Two new nurses at Manchester Royal Infirmary - Karthirani Balakri and Rincy Jos - who are working with the Network's current PIs at the site: Prof Andrew Boulton, Dr Rayaz Malik, and Prof Kennedy Cruickshank;
- At Tameside General Hospital with Dr Ed Jude, consultant diabetes physician.

We are also working in conjunction with Prof Mark Walker of North East Diabetes LRN and the CLRNs in the North West, Yorkshire, and the North East to see how we can best extend DRN coverage to those areas of Yorkshire that are not currently supported by the DRN.

