



ANNOUNCEMENT

Department of Health's National Healthcare-associated Infection Research Network

The national priorities for healthcare-associated infection (HCAI) research were set out in the Department of Health Chief Medical Officer's report *Winning Ways*.¹ Within this document, the need was identified for a national network for HCAI research. In early 2006, the responsibility for managing this initiative was contracted to the Richard Wells Research Centre at Thames Valley University London, and the Department of Health's National HCAI Research Network is now established.

The Network is directed by Professor Robert Pratt and supported by a group of senior research staff within the Richard Wells Research Centre. The day-to-day management of the Network is being undertaken by its Principal Research Officer, Alison Tingle, who came into post in May 2006. Professor David Edwards, the current manager of the Department of Health's Antimicrobial Resistance Research Programme, will join the Network as their scientific advisor.

The key aims of the HCAI Research Network are to contribute to the strategic development of the national research agenda in this field, and to support and manage HCAI-related research funded by the Department of Health.

Major projects recently funded through the Department's Policy Research Programme's call for research into the cost-effectiveness of interventions for the control of HCAI will be managed and supported by the Network from early autumn. These include a diverse range of studies such as those focusing on the role of managing the

hospital environment, environmental decontamination, meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) carriage in care home settings and modelling MRSA intervention policies. They vary from 18 months to two years in duration and each will report their interim findings and final results at Network conferences.

In addition, the Network is currently developing plans to:

- coordinate with other research funders to explore how best to bring relevant research into the managed Network;
- enhance research capacity and capability in this area (by providing relevant interdisciplinary research training and opportunities for methodological support and advice to HCAI researchers); and
- provide support to research groups for research governance and ethical approval processes.

An Advisory Board for the HCAI Network, chaired by Professor Charles Easmon, Deputy Chairman of the Health Protection Agency Board, is being established and its primary function will be to advise on national priorities for HCAI research.

These are early days for the Network, which aims to act as a forum for encouraging high-quality HCAI research to provide the best-available evidence for practice, and which effectively responds to the challenge of reducing HCAI throughout the National Health Service. A Network website

will be set up, which will provide more detailed information.

Reference

1. Chief Medical Officer. *Winning ways*. London: Department of Health; 2003.

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