

# A W A R D N E W S

Spring Edition  
2007

All Wales Alliance for Research and Development in Health and Social Care  
Cynghair Cymru Gyfan ar Gyfer Ymchwil a Datblygiad mewn Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithaso

**AWARD** plays a leading role in developing and supporting research in Wales. The recently launched **Clinical Research Collaboration Cymru (CRC Cymru)** is the umbrella organisation coordinating Welsh networks and initiatives which undertake and support research. **AWARD**, now part of the **CRC Cymru**, was the first part of the research infrastructure in Wales to be funded and operational.



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**AWARD** operates within **CRC Cymru**, providing methodological expertise to support high quality research across Wales. **CRC Cymru** is the framework for research and development in health and social care in Wales.

In this 'Research Infrastructure' edition of the **AWARD** newsletter, we describe the research networks and services which collaborate across **CRC Cymru** and how this infrastructure seeks to benefit health and social care here.

Professor Helen Snooks, Regional Director of **AWARD**, sees opportunities for raising the profile and quality of research in Wales by playing a part in the wider research infrastructure.

'Investing in infrastructure in order to increase the volume and quality of research in Wales is the only way to compete in the UK and international arenas. **AWARD** has a wide range of specific and generic skills and works across the **CRC Cymru** network to support the development of research.'

As part of the wider picture, within **CRC Cymru** and the UK Clinical Research Collaboration, **AWARD** plays a key role.'

### What is the added value of **AWARD**?

**AWARD** uses its research expertise to raise the profile of research and development in health and social care within Wales. This is achieved by attracting funds into the country to undertake research and disseminate findings.

**AWARD** helps to develop, support and undertake collaborative studies across themes and methodological approaches to build our research capacity and research profile in Wales.

**AWARD** also works directly with the Welsh Assembly Government on core commissioned projects which feed into policy development.

For example, **AWARD** was commissioned to evaluate the Book Prescription Wales bibliotherapy scheme. Additional funding was secured to undertake a systematic review of the effectiveness of bibliotherapy to provide further evidence to inform decisions about extending the scheme. A proposal to undertake a trial to investigate clinical and cost effectiveness of books to treat mild anxiety and depression is now under development.



University of Wales Bangor  
Cardiff University  
Swansea University



**CRC CYMRU**  
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clinical research collaboration cymru



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

# Here, we profile three **AWARD** projects which have links illustrate how they work together to strengthen opportur

## Working in partnership to develop and undertake research



A major trial to evaluate the use of folic acid in the treatment of depression is being undertaken by a partnership involving universities, NHS Trusts, parts of **CRC Cymru** such as North Wales Organisation for Randomised Trials in Health (NORTH) and **AWARD**.

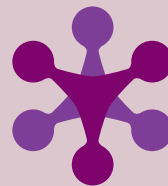
FoLATED is a multi-centre double-blind placebo-controlled randomised trial to evaluate the effects of folic acid on new and continuing antidepressant treatment over 12 weeks. FoLATED stands for Folate Augmentation of Treatment- Evaluation for Depression: randomised controlled trial and is funded by the highly competitive NHS Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Programme (Department of Health).

A consortium of clinical and methodological specialists, including **AWARD** members, developed the trial, which is a collaboration between the University of Wales Bangor (UWB), Swansea University, Cardiff University, Liverpool University, and the North East Wales, North West Wales and Swansea NHS Trusts. The co-ordinating centre is based at the North Wales Section of Psychological Medicine in Wrexham. It is supported by the NORTH which is one of the **CRC Cymru** support services, together with the Centre for Economics & Policy in Health within the Institute of Medical & Social Care Research, UWB.

The FoLATED trial began in October 2006, and will take 33 months to complete. Seven hundred and thirty patients will be recruited from primary and secondary care in three centres, North East Wales, North West Wales and Greater Swansea.

The Mental Health Research Network Cymru, one of the **CRC Cymru** thematic research networks, has adopted the trial and will facilitate recruitment via support from the **CRC Cymru** Research Professional Network. Recruitment will begin in March 2007 and NORTH will undertake remote randomisation.

The study has been approved by the Multi-centre Research Ethics Committee (MREC) for Wales, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), and participating Trusts' Research Governance panels.



## **CRC CYMRU**

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clinical research collaboration cymru

There are three arms to the **CRC Cymru** infrastructure.

- 1 Core coordination** includes a patient involvement network (Cynnwys Pobl/Involving People), a research support network (Research Professional Network) and training activities.
- 2 The thematic research networks** are collaborations of academic and service professionals to address areas of importance in health and social care research. There are ten thematic research networks.
- 3 Infrastructure support services** provide specialist support and services across the research themes. **AWARD** is one of the collaborators who provide research support and advice.

## Working together across the **CRC Cymru** infrastructure

A three year study in emergency care secured through **AWARD** demonstrates how different parts of the **CRC Cymru** infrastructure can work together.



The SAFE Trial is a high profile study to improve emergency care for older people who fall, funded by the Department of Health Policy Research Programme's Chronic Disease Management and IT funding stream. SAFE stands for Support and Assessment for Fall Emergencies. In the study, paramedics will be trained to use a hand-held computer with software which will support them to assess patients and make decisions about appropriate care pathways for older people who fall. Links will be developed between the ambulance service and local falls services and paramedics will be able to refer older people directly to a community-based falls service rather than taking them to hospital, when appropriate.

# with different parts of the CRC Cymru Infrastructure to unities for research.



The SAFE Trial will be undertaken in collaboration with the TRUST network (Thematic Research network for emergency and UnScheduled Treatment), one of the ten CRC Cymru Networks. TRUST will help with identification of research sites and provide advice on research recruitment.

Funding was won through AWARD in Mid and West Wales. The trial is led by AWARD Regional Director Professor Helen Snooks, an Emergency Care research specialist in Swansea University. It is a collaboration between Swansea, Bangor, Sheffield and Warwick Universities and will involve the participation of ambulance services across England and Wales.

When a recent CRC Cymru funding call arose for thematic research networks, Professor Snooks took the opportunity to bid for monies from the CRC Cymru Co-ordinating Centre. The successful bid will fund a Research Professional on the SAFE Trial. Their role will be to assist in the work to recruit patients and support them to be involved in design and implementation of the trial.

The example of the SAFE Trial illustrates the benefits for research projects working closely with relevant parts of the CRC Cymru infrastructure - in this case, AWARD, TRUST and the Research Professional Network, says Professor Snooks.

"The CRC Cymru helped to win funding for this prestigious trial and improve its chances of success through enhancing aspects of the trial"

## How AWARD helped to bring a team together

Exercise has been called "**the best buy in public health**". Moderate, regular exercise such as walking or cycling for half an hour benefits physical and mental health, including lower blood pressure and an improved sense of well-being. The Assembly target is to increase the proportion of adults in Wales who exercise regularly by 1% per year for the next 20 years.

Over the past decade or so, schemes to refer people to their local leisure centre for exercise to improve their health have become common. In Wales, as elsewhere, they have developed arbitrarily, with little evaluation or sharing of notable practice. Assembly health improvement policy makers recognised the potential for exercise referral programmes to contribute to increasing activity among sedentary people already in touch with services and commissioned work under the AWARD contract.

AWARD was asked to undertake an audit of existing exercise referral schemes across Wales as a precursor to a national scheme. This work was undertaken by a team from the North Wales Clinical School at Wrexham, with AWARD management from Dr Michael Shepherd, the South East AWARD Director in Cardiff. Dr Nefyn Williams from Wrexham led the development of a survey of schemes and his team were additionally funded by the Assembly to undertake a systematic literature review.



When the Assembly began the process of tendering for an evaluation of the proposed national scheme, AWARD's Michael Shepherd coordinated involvement in development of a bid. He contacted Prof Laurence Moore and Simon Murphy, colleagues at the Cardiff Institute of Society, Health & Ethics (CISHE) who lead the Public Health Improvement Research Network (PHIRN). Professor Moore was keen that CISHE lead an evaluation bid and Michael ensured that Dr Williams and his team in North Wales were in touch with these developments as a partner. The bid, when submitted, featured both the CISHE/PHIRN group and the North Wales Clinical School team, with additional expertise coming from Bristol and Bangor. The bid was successful in gaining funding and the evaluation team has begun its work in advance of the start of the national scheme.

This example illustrates the potential of the infrastructure to bring together researchers across the country. AWARD, in a supporting role, was instrumental in ensuring that the team was able to draw on the expertise of experienced researchers in this area in Wales and England

# BIG LOTTERY AWARD for AWARD

**AWARD** is a member of the successful team which has won the contract to support research grant applicants to the Big Lottery Fund.

Charities and voluntary sector organisations will be able to apply for grants for up to five years from the Big Lottery £25 million Research Programme. The programme will open in Spring 2007 to fund high quality medical and social research projects across the United Kingdom.

**AWARD** is working with Third Sector First, a collaboration of specialists in research and social policy, to provide advice and support to organisations in Wales who make research grant applications. [www.3sf.co.uk](http://www.3sf.co.uk)

The Big Lottery Fund is the largest of the National Lottery good cause distributors and funds health, education, environment and charitable causes. [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)

## Further AWARD research successes

Dr Michael Shepherd has recently been awarded a new research grant, 'Identification of determinants of health indicators for cancer, child health and older people's health'. The sum of £90,000 is from the Welsh Assembly Government and will run from July 2006 - June 2007. This study is a systematic review of the literature on social determinants of health with specific reference to three population groups: children, older people and people diagnosed with cancer. It is a collaboration between the Support Unit for Research Evidence and South East Wales **AWARD**/Cardiff Institute of Society, Health & Ethics (CISHE).

Dr Alison Porter of the Mid and West Wales **AWARD** team spoke at the Society for Social Medicine 50th Annual Scientific Meeting at Leeds University in September, on 'Should I stay or should I go? Deciding whether to go to hospital after a 999 call'.

Professor Gareth Williams and Samia Addis of SE **AWARD**, with Emily Harrop and Dr Eva Elliott, completed a systematic review of literature on Resilience, Coping and Salutogenic Approaches to Maintaining and Generating Health. The review is one of five commissioned by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) through its programme on behaviour change and public health.



## AWARD Conference

**AWARD** in North Wales hosts a conference called '**Working together to deliver evidence-based care**' in Bangor on Friday 30th March 2007. The event aims to promote research and development in health and social care across Wales and to provide a forum for debate about how best to generate robust evidence that will influence future policy and practice. Early registration is encouraged. See [www.awardconference.bangor.ac.uk](http://www.awardconference.bangor.ac.uk) for more details.

## HOW YOU CAN CONTACT AWARD

**AWARD** is the All Wales Alliance for Research and Development in Health and Social Care. The network spans three universities - Bangor, Cardiff and Swansea - and is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government through the Wales Office of Research and Development for Health and Social Care (WORD). **AWARD** aims to raise the profile of research and development to make a difference to practice and contribute to policy development.

We are always interested in hearing from people who want to develop new collaborative research projects. You can contact us in three ways:

Website: [www.awardresearch.org.uk](http://www.awardresearch.org.uk)

Telephone: 0845 601 8545

Post: FREEPOST **AWARD**, WALES

We hope you find this newsletter interesting. We would welcome comments and suggestions for items in further issues. Please pass on this newsletter to colleagues you think may be interested. For additional copies or to be added to the mailing list, please contact **Sherry Jenkins** (tel 01792 602346 or email [s.a.jenkins@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:s.a.jenkins@swansea.ac.uk)). If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please ask us to amend our mailing list and remove your name.