

A W A R D N E W S

SPRING 2006

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

Welcome to the first newsletter of **AWARD**, a multi-disciplinary network of academics working to improve health and social care provision through high-quality research.

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 in health and social care within Wales. It will attract new research funds into the country to undertake research and disseminate findings. These will provide evidence and learning, contribute to policy development and influence practice by pooling existing and new high quality research activity.



AWARD members have wide and recognised expertise in health and social care research including quantitative and qualitative research, randomised controlled trials, evaluation, health economics and literature reviews. Some have backgrounds in social care, clinical and community-based work, giving the team an expertise rooted in hands-on provision.

AWARD works within and across the statutory, voluntary and academic sectors: with practitioners, managers and policy makers in the NHS and local government; with user and care groups experiencing health and social care services; with colleagues at Welsh, UK and international universities; and with the Welsh Assembly Government.

AWARD can provide practical and academic support to enable individuals and organisations to extend their specialist knowledge and expertise into research, explains **AWARD** Regional Director Dr Helen Snooks.

"We are offering the opportunity to collaborate, to identify and bid for funding and work jointly on research studies. We will rely on partners' professional knowledge and we can bring our skills to ensure high quality research is undertaken."

"Research funding is an especially competitive arena. By working with experts in practice, policy making and research, we hope **AWARD** can increase the quality and opportunities for research in Wales."

How **AWARD** works

To achieve its aims of undertaking and promoting high quality research, **AWARD** works in five main ways:

- Developing and undertaking collaborative studies, where academics and partners bring ideas and research skills together to develop projects which will produce high quality findings, with lessons for elsewhere
- Providing methodological expertise to develop high quality, fundable research proposals
- Providing targeted post-graduate level training
- Working directly with the Welsh Assembly Government, by carrying out research to inform policy development
- Carrying out commissioned research for a fee

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University of Wales Bangor
Cardiff University
Swansea University

Developing and undertaking collaborative research studies

In this section we profile just a few of the range of research projects **AWARD** is involved with and the partner groups **AWARD** works with: communities, service users, practitioners and managers.

Impact of integrating mental health services

This study has received a £120,000 grant to evaluate changes in service delivery and culture resulting from the integration of adult mental health services in Conwy and Denbighshire.

The research proposal was developed by **AWARD** following a request from the Conwy and Denbigh Adult Mental Health and Social Care Partnership. The five organisations agreed to work in partnership with the voluntary sector, users and carers in a project initiated by the National Assembly for Wales to encourage closer joint working between health care and local government. They required evidence of success of the change and information to inform future developments.

AWARD's role was to develop the initial request from a local evaluation project into a research study using a rigorous methodology to provide generalisable research findings and build on the evidence base in this field. **AWARD** coordinated a successful application to the Knowledge Transfer Partnership and a research associate has been employed for three years to evaluate the project.

Project contact: Gregg Slegg
(G.Slegg@bangor.ac.uk)



Changing patients' behaviour

This study has received a £400,000 Department of Health grant to evaluate an intervention aimed at changing patients' health related behaviour. The study is led by **AWARD** member Professor Chris Butler.

General Practice holds considerable potential for primary prevention through modifying patient's multiple risk behaviours, but feasible, effective and acceptable interventions are poorly developed and uptake by practitioners is low.

Through a process of theoretical development, modelling and exploratory trials spanning 15 years, the Department of General Practice in Cardiff has developed an internationally known intervention called Behaviour Change Counselling (BCC) based on Motivational Interviewing.

In this study, GP practices will be split into intervention and control groups. Half of practices will receive BCC training. Patients will be assessed for the four health behaviours. The primary outcome will be the proportion of patients making positive changes in one or more of four behaviours (smoking, risky drinking, unhealthy eating and lack of exercise) at three months. Results will be compared for those patients who saw clinicians trained in BCC with patients who saw clinicians not trained in BCC.

Project contact: Chris Butler
(Butlercc@cardiff.ac.uk)



Informing ambulance service practice

Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust (WAST) has taken on the results of research undertaken by **AWARD** members. Two studies, one undertaken through **AWARD** and the other funded by **WORD**, concerned the profile of older fallers and how to achieve changes in practice relating to non-conveyance and clinical documentation. As a result of the research, WAST has reviewed policy concerning non-conveyance.

Project contact: Alison Porter
(a.m.porter@swansea.ac.uk)

Health Inequalities

The impact of performance assessment on the "wicked issues" of health inequalities is being evaluated in Wales, England and Scotland. The project explores how different national approaches to performance assessment shape the 'construction' of health inequalities by local stakeholders and how these constructions vary with the position of stakeholders in the local policy systems. **AWARD** member Professor Gareth Williams of Cardiff University is working with academics from England and Scotland on this ESRC funded study.

Project contact: Gareth Williams
(WilliamsGH1@cardiff.ac.uk)



Effectiveness of joint working across health and social care

As part of the Welsh Assembly Government's Health and Social Care Review programme, the Workforce Redesign subgroup commissioned **AWARD** to undertake an overview of the literature on workforce redesign issues between health and social care providers. Phase 1 consisted of a scoping study identifying and summarising the quantity, type and focus of references. Following feedback from Welsh Assembly Government policy colleagues, phase 2 consisted of an overview of the published literature. This aimed to describe and appraise the evidence concerning effectiveness of services delivered jointly by health and social care providers in the UK, in order to: identify specific workforce issues; highlight areas of good practice; and identify questions for further research. The report is in its final stages of preparation and will be available on the website shortly.

Project contact: Julie Peconi (j.peconi@swansea.ac.uk)

Working in the research community

In this section we profile AWARD's role and activity to support and promote high quality research in Wales

New manual to help develop and evaluate health policies

AWARD is developing and piloting a user-friendly manual to inform the development and evaluation of health and social care policies. The manual focuses on cluster randomised trials to evaluate area-wide health and social care policies. It builds on a framework published by the Medical Research Council for developing and evaluating complex interventions. The manual sets out the MRC's five steps; review relevant theory, model, pilot and evaluate the intervention, implement it in the long term.

The manual is called 'Policies for Health & social care with Area-wide Impact: Manual for development & Evaluation' and shortened to the acronym PHAIME 2 (pronounced 'fame').

The PHAIME team conducted a series of workshops in December to promote the manual and advocate the rigorous development and evaluation of health and social care policies.

The philosophy of careful development and rigorous evaluation is also relevant to public health interventions. The PHAIME team is working closely with the National Public Health Service for Wales, designing and initiating projects to develop and evaluate:

- national primary care guidelines for the care of needlestick injuries
- practice guidelines in Swansea for the detection and management of pre-diabetes
- modernising housing in Wrexham to improve the health of children with asthma

More information is available from Emma Bedson (e.bedson@bangor.ac.uk)

Thematic Networks

Nine thematic research networks and three infrastructure support services have been recently commissioned by the Wales Office of R&D. AWARD will be working with these networks to boost health and social care-based research activity enabling research teams to initiate and take part in high quality large-scale research initiatives.

Thematic Research Networks

- Children and young people
- Dementia/neurodegenerative disorders
- Diabetes and endocrinology
- Emergency and unplanned care
- Epilepsy
- Learning Disabilities
- Mental health
- Older people and ageing
- Public health improvement

Infrastructure support services

- Equality and diversity
- Health economics
- Research governance & management

The newly funded networks will also be forming strong links with the newly established Clinical Research Co-ordinating Centre for Wales (CRCC Cymru). AWARD will provide methodological expertise and advice to the thematic networks, alongside colleagues in the infrastructure support services. AWARD will also build on the scoping studies undertaken across a wide range of topics and develop links with those networks that were not successful in this round of funding. AWARD hopes to benefit from the groundwork undertaken and take forward research ideas in these areas.



AWARD members Helen Snooks, Julie Peconi (pictured) and Sarah Gaze were funded through project incomes to attend the Health Technology Assessment International Conference in Rome in June 2005 to present oral and poster findings from the NHS Direct Wales evaluation and the OMEGA Trial which evaluated the management of non serious 999 calls with telephone advice.

Work by AWARD member Dr Myfanwy Davies is included in a new book published shortly. The chapter entitled 'Notions of Motherhood and the maternity needs of Arab Muslim women' is found in *Transcultural Care: a guide for professionals* edited by I Papadopoulos and published by Elsevier.

AWARD members Diane Seddon and Catherine Robinson consider the recent policy initiatives and key challenges facing carers in their daily lives, in 'Carers and Caregiving in the Context of Intermediate and Continuing Care'. This chapter, which draws on existing policy, practice and research literature, is in *Intermediate and Continuing Care: Policy and Practice* edited by B Roe and R Beech 2005 and published by Blackwells, Oxford.



AWARD staff supported projects funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, Sustainable Health Action Research Programme and are contributing to a forthcoming book (Policy Press 2007) about issues of health inequalities and community participation. Pembrokeshire SHARP members are pictured above.



AWARD was launched at the WORD research strategy conference. Dr Helen Snooks, Regional Director, is pictured at the event (back row, second from left). Other speakers include: Dr Brian Gibbons AM, Minister for Health & Social Services (front row, second from left) and Professor John Williams, Director of WORD (back row, left).



HOW YOU CAN WORK WITH AWARD

AWARD is keen to give good research ideas the best chance, says **AWARD** Regional Director Dr Catherine Robinson, in order that research in Wales can generate demonstrable benefits to patients and service users.

"Competing priorities and limited resources within all organisations make it important that quality ideas are identified and pursued. For this reason, **AWARD** is careful to focus on what can be achieved and complement available skills and knowledge."

AWARD publishes research findings in peer-reviewed journals which are influential and respected by academics and practitioners in Wales and internationally. **AWARD** also works to raise awareness of research and its findings among a wider audience.

In order to work with you **AWARD** will need to see that your study:

- Addresses the health and social care priorities of the Welsh Assembly Government
- Has been agreed by your health/social care agency, through research governance or other internal arrangements
- Will involve a range of people from the disciplines, professions and sectors that are relevant to the topic area
- Will build on the evidence base
- Has a good chance of attracting research funding
- Will result in publication



AWARD staff and partners described projects and joint working at a presentation to Medical School staff in University of Wales Swansea recently.

AWARD members are happy to meet with organisations and individuals to discuss research ideas.

If your organisation would like to receive a presentation from **AWARD**, please contact us.

AWARD can provide advice on:

- Applying for research funding
- Defining your research question
- Study design and ethics applications
- Research project management, data analysis and interpretation
- Preparation of reports, abstracts and papers for publication
- Presentation of findings
- Specialist knowledge regarding research methods and how to win research funding
- Identification of sites for recruiting patients or service users

AWARD can act as:

- A partner in developing and undertaking research, contributing professional knowledge and expertise to a research team



CONFERENCES

Swansea Conference on 21 June

AWARD is hosting a conference series in 2006. The overarching theme of the conferences will be **Building R&D in health and social care in Wales: improving health; improving care; improving knowledge**. Conferences will be held in the three **AWARD** regions and provide opportunities for sharing knowledge and good practice and promoting new research findings through poster displays and oral presentations. The conference series starts in Swansea on 21 June to be followed by events in Cardiff and North Wales in the autumn and winter. Look out for invitations to submit your abstracts in the near future. Find out more on the **AWARD** website, email sarah.macdonald@swansea.ac.uk or phone 01792 602346

HOW YOU CAN CONTACT AWARD

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

Telephone: 0845 601 8545

Post: FREEPOST AWARD

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 Sarah Macdonald (tel 01792 602346 or email sarah.macdonald@swansea.ac.uk).

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