

North Wales Centre for Primary Care Research Bangor University (Wrexham Site)

PhD Studentship

Project Title: Understanding barriers and enablers to the use of primary care remote consulting for suspected cancer symptoms among vulnerable populations

Studentship Details

Applications are invited for a full-time PhD studentship, jointly funded by and North West Cancer Research and Tenovus Cancer Care. The studentship is based at the North Wales Centre for Primary Care Research (NWCPCR), within the School of Health Sciences, Bangor University (Wrexham site), under the academic supervision of Dr Julia Hiscock (Bangor University), Professor Richard Neal (University of Exeter), Dr Grace McCutchan and Professor Katherine Brain (Cardiff University).

The studentship is for three years full-time. In addition to having tuition fees paid, the student will receive an annual tax-free stipend (£15,804 Year 1; £16,198 Year 2; £16,604 Year 3). Also included is funding for running costs of the project and for training and development. The studentship will commence in 2022. The specific start date can be subject to discussion and the agreement of the supervisors and funders.

Background

This study seeks to develop an intervention for primary care to improve early diagnosis of cancer, particularly for vulnerable groups, in the context of the increased use of remote consultation triggered by COVID-19.

It is known that vulnerable groups face more and different barriers to seeking help from primary care in general and are also more likely to receive their cancer diagnosis further in the disease progression. Timely diagnosis of cancer for vulnerable groups is therefore a key priority for policy and practice change. The COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 triggered a rapid and widespread adoption of remote consulting in primary care. This has created entirely new, and as yet barely studied, patterns of consulting, access and diagnosis of cancer in primary care. We do not yet know how remote consulting will affect vulnerable groups. While it may create further barriers, exacerbating existing patterns of late diagnosis, it could also be a facilitator in some ways or for some groups.

Research questions

Primary research question: What are the barriers and enablers to successful use of remote (telephone, video and e-mail) consulting for potential cancer symptoms in primary care?

Secondary research question: How are vulnerable groups in particular affected by GP practices' use of remote (telephone and video) consultations in seeking/accessing help for

potentially cancerous symptoms, and how might this be addressed in a supportive intervention for use in primary care?

Research Plan

The PhD studies will involve obtaining the views and experiences of patients and primary care teams in North West England and Wales (including North Wales). It is envisaged that this will be done through four phases:

Phase 1: Literature review of barriers and enablers to using remote healthcare consultations

Phase 2: In-depth qualitative interviews (approx. 20) sampling from vulnerable populations to explore their use and experiences of remote consulting and any barriers and enablers encountered.

Phase 3: Focus groups (approx. 6) with primary care teams, based on the findings of Phases 1 and 2, to discuss possible practice interventions to improve remote consultations for vulnerable groups with symptoms that could be cancer.

Phase 4: Further patient interviews (approx. 20) to refine and finalise the practice intervention.

The Educational Benefits and Opportunities associated with the Studentship:

The student will be encouraged and supported in a range of ways to acquire the expertise needed to complete this PhD, and prepare for a postdoctoral career. As the supervisory team spans three universities, the student will have access to the doctoral development activities in each of those universities.

Apply Now: The online application form is available here <https://apps.bangor.ac.uk/applicant/>.

The closing date for applications is 17/01/2022

Applicants must have a first class or upper-second-class undergraduate degree and preferably a Masters degree. Applicants should also demonstrate their research experience, training in research methods and evidence of interest in research with deprived or vulnerable populations.

Any queries should be e-mailed to richard.evans@bangor.ac.uk on or before 17/01.2022 .

The online application should include:

1. A full CV
2. A covering letter detailing:
 - a. Your interest in this PhD
 - b. Your suitability for this studentship
 - c. What you hope to gain from this studentship

- d. Optional: Any thoughts or ideas you have about how you may wish to develop this study and PhD