Over one hundred people from across the region braved wintry weather to hear about this exciting new venture.

Besides local clinicians, academics and research managers, those attending included senior managers & board members of county NHS Trusts, board members from South Worcestershire CCG, the University Vice Chancellor, the head of the West Midlands School of General Practice, the chair of Worcestershire HealthWatch & representatives from the West Midlands Academic Health Sciences Network, patient organisations & local medical charities, including St Richard’s Hospice.

It was held in the historic old Worcester Royal Infirmary building, where the BMA was founded by Dr Charles Hastings in 1840. Newly refurbished this now houses the University of Worcester’s City Campus.

In the first half of the meeting posters were on display in the Charles Hastings Board Room & Jenny Lind Chapel showcasing current health research in Worcestershire. Guests also visited the Infirmary Medical Museum & saw the new research facilities in McClelland Centre, which is already being used in clinical trials.

In the second half of the meeting Prof. Richard Lewis, consultant respiratory physician, gave a fascinating talk ‘The History of Worcester Medicine’, aptly setting the modern scene in its historical context. Dr Jo Smith, consultant clinical psychologist, followed with an inspirational account of how her own research career, dedicated to improving the treatment of young people with psychosis, had led from humble beginnings to eventual widespread recognition, for which Worcestershire is now known around the world.

The meeting was brought to a close by Louise Jones & Professor Veronica Wilkie.

“WHRC has been established to promote and support health research in Worcestershire through collaboration between NHS organisations, NIHR clinical research networks, the University of Worcester and other interested research partners. We are also promoting teaching opportunities for NHS professionals at the University.”
Posters on current projects were on display in the Board Room & Chapel
Copies & abstracts will also be made available on the WHRC website

- Prof Richard Downing: Strategies to improve clinical outcomes in pancreatic islet transplantation
- Rachel Potter: The Prevention of Falls Injury (PreFIT) Trial
- Helen Perry: Strengthening Healthy Communities - addressing health inequalities in Worcester’s deprived areas by investing in community-led research
- Mr Steven Thrush: Breast Cancer Rehabilitation - a new approach
- Prof Roy Kennedy & Louise Robertson: Investigating ocular allergy: can we determine a better measurement?
- Dr Gurjit Bhogal, Elaine Butcher & Aman Johal: Recent & current NIHR primary care research studies carried out in Worcestershire
- Dr Simon Evans: a) An evaluation of the Worcestershire Early Intervention Dementia Service b) An evaluation of the Dementia Adviser Service
- Dr Stuart Bourne: a) Health needs in Worcestershire: population level research b) Do public health interventions comply with the evidence?
- Dr Ruth Jones: Research at the Centre for the Study of Violence & Abuse
- Prof Jackie Stephen Haynes: The challenge of assessing & managing skin tears within nursing homes
- Dr Bart Sheehan & Dr Sukhi Dosanjh: The Dementia & Physical Activity (DAPA) Trial
- Dr Jasper Trevelyan & Angela Dougherty: Recent and current cardiological research studies undertaken at Worcestershire Royal Hospital
- Prof Ashok Rai: a) The use of Infra-Red motion capture to determine the range of movements of the small joints of the hands b) Novel genetic associations discovered in osteoarthritis: The ArcOGEN study c) Strengthening & stretching for people with Rheumatoid Arthritis of the Hands - The SARAH Trial
- Prof Nigel Stallard & Karen Rees: Turning research ideas into reality - How the Research Design Service can help
- Terry Martin: Support available from the CLRN clinical research nurses
- Mohammed Shaikh: Patient & public involvement in research
- Susan Thomas & Tracie Valler-Jones: Use of simulation in facilitating interprofessional working
- Dr Alan Farmer: a) Use of clozapine in first episode psychosis - Patient characteristics & outcomes b) Antipsychotic long-acting injections - Routes to prescribing in first episode psychosis, patient characteristics & tolerability
- Dr Bart Sheehan & Dr Sukhi Dosanjh: The Dementia & Physical Activity (DAPA) Trial

WHRC will develop a website & regular e newsletters to share information on research between member organisations. It will include studies already under way, new research opportunities, academic & clinical interests & identify key priority areas. This should both attract support & enable wider collaboration.

A key aim of WHRC is to promote & publicise existing health research more widely, so that people hear about it, become interested & then involved themselves, realising the opportunities & their own potential, for the greater benefit of everyone in the community.
Vision & aims of WHRC

1. Publicise & celebrate significant research that already takes place
2. Promote a culture of research within constituent organisations
3. Encourage collaborative working by all those involved in health research
4. Promote the local uptake & delivery of existing UK NIHR portfolio research studies
5. Develop new research programmes that address local health needs
6. Link with wider NHS and life science industry research networks & partners
7. Attract high level research grant funding
8. Focus on key local priorities to develop collaborative research Worcestershire
9. Foster joint academic clinical teaching posts between organisations

Information about the Guest Speakers

Professor Richard Lewis, DM Soton, FRCP, was consultant respiratory physician at Worcestershire Royal Hospital from 1986 until 2012. He was a member of the specialist advisory group for the British Thoracic Society on interventional pulmonology, & chaired committees on guidelines for bronchoscopy nationally & for the British Thoracic Society. He was also secretary of the Midland Thoracic Society. Richard maintained extensive research interests, despite a busy clinical practice, publishing widely on asthma, allergic conditions & bronchoscopy. He was Professor of Respiratory Medicine at the University of Worcester & Senior Research Fellow in the National Pollen & Aerobiology Research Unit, establishing important early collaborative links between the University & the NHS. He supervised a number of PhD students with theses published CPAP ventilation in the treatment of sleep apnoea, the relationship between weather & chest disease, treatments for allergic rhinitis, the role of fungi in exacerbations of asthma & the relevance of electrostatics to the pathophysiology of asthma. He was vice chairman of St Richard’s Hospice in Worcester, & vice president of Worcester Hospital League of Friends. Besides his clinical & research career Richard has an abiding interest in the history of medicine in Worcester, which was the theme of his talk; setting a historical context for present day research based medicine & the future opportunities it has in Worcestershire.

Dr Jo Smith, BSc Psychology Hons, MSc Clinical Psychology, PhD Psychology, is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist & the Lead for Worcestershire Early Intervention Service. For six years until 2010 she was also Joint National Early Intervention Programme Lead with the National Mental Health Development Unit, supporting Early Intervention development & implementation across England. Jo has been involved in research since undergraduate days & has written over 30 papers in refereed journals, 17 book chapters & 22 practice articles. She completed her PhD in 1990, whilst working full-time, the first PhD awarded for a collection of published papers by the University of Birmingham. Her work & research efforts were recognised through the award of a British Psychological Society Fellowship in 2003, acknowledging her outstanding & original contribution to the field of psychosis. She was recently selected as an international case study for a Mental Health Retrosight Project led by RAND Europe, which identified the most cited mental health articles on the subject of psychosis in the last 30 years. Jo & her colleagues in Worcester have been involved in a number of NIHR portfolio studies into aspects of psychosis over the years. Currently she is on the Trial Steering Group for two such Early Intervention studies: SUPEREDEN, a large scale national EI outcome study, & PRODIGY, a multi-site trial of social recovery in early psychosis. She is also a co-applicant, with colleagues from Lancaster, Manchester, Kings College London & Worcester, on the HTA programme REACT study to evaluate a Relatives’ Education & Coping Toolkit in improving outcomes for families of people with early psychosis, across England.
WHRC Practical Next Steps

1. Set up web site to promote and share information on research in Worcestershire
2. Secure infrastructure funding for WHRC office
3. Publish research strategies of member organisations, interests & priorities
4. Increase local take up & recruitment of NIHR portfolio research studies with NIHR clinical research network
5. Identify areas for collaboration on new research in light of local health priorities & commissioning needs
6. Develop links between NHS & University departments to attract MSc & PhD health research students
7. Appoint WHRC research fellow to help develop new local collaborative research
8. Develop partnership programme with life science industry research teams using shared approach
9. Develop undergraduate & postgraduate links between education & research for all health professions
10. Encourage collaborative use of research facilities across organisational boundaries
11. Facilitate dissemination of results of high impact research for adoption in clinical practice by affiliated organisations.

Acknowledgements

Particular thanks are due to the University of Worcester for enabling WHRC to use the splendid facilities in the Charles Hastings building for this inaugural event, for providing the refreshments, to the communications & events team who ensured the meeting ran smoothly & to the student ambassadors who helped provide a very warm welcome.

Especial thanks also to the guest speakers & all the busy clinicians & researchers who put time aside to share the results of their work in the poster displays.

Delegate contact list

We are putting together contact email addresses for all those who attended or who are on the WHRC mailing list. This will be made available to WHRC affiliated organisations to encourage future collaborative working.