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Stroke
association

Supporting
world-class stroke
research in
Scotland



Stroke research saves lives and transforms care

Stroke is a sudden and devastating condition which can take and transform lives in an instant.

Scotland has the highest stroke incidence of all the UK nations - about 15,000 strokes every year – and the highest proportion of its population living with stroke of all the UK nations – about 117,500 people. In fact, stroke is the fourth commonest cause of death in Scotland.

Research has been instrumental in driving forward developments in stroke care across the UK. These include:

- the wide implementation of stroke units in hospitals, which has had a significant role in reducing deaths and improving recovery
- the development of clot-busting drugs which can significantly reduce the disability associated with a stroke
- guidelines supporting the use of leg compression devices (IPCs) to prevent deep vein thrombosis (DVT). This could help about 60,000 stroke patients in the UK each year.
- the increasing prospect of mechanical devices to remove blood clots immediately after someone has a stroke, thus preventing further damage.

Our investment in stroke research in Scotland

We are extremely proud to have supported high quality research in Scotland which has made truly outstanding contributions to clinical practice. Over the past 10 years, we have invested £4.2 million in Scotland to fund 30 research grants. We have also leveraged a further £2.4 million in matched funding.

Scotland has strength in the breadth and depth of its stroke research. We have funded stroke research at:

- Glasgow Caledonian University
- University of Aberdeen
- University of Dundee
- University of Edinburgh
- University of Glasgow
- University of Strathclyde

We have committed to building capacity in future stroke research by:

- supporting five outstanding, allied health professionals with fellowships to develop their careers in stroke research
- funding three Princess Margaret Research Development Fellowships to allow clinicians to develop their research careers in stroke
- supporting the annual Edinburgh Stroke Winter School to develop the skills of clinical academics in the early part of their careers in stroke research.

Dr Maggie Lawrence, a Stroke Association Postdoctoral Fellow at Glasgow Caledonian University says: "This support was critical for my family-centred research, which could help stroke survivors reduce their risk of a second stroke and help them to live healthier, happier lives for longer."

Key achievements

The FOCUS trial is investigating whether the drug fluoxetine, which is used to treat depression, can also improve people's recovery after stroke.

We funded the start-up phase, which was successful. This led to the NIHR (National Institute of Health Research) funding the full trial.



Principal Investigator, Professor Gillian Mead, University of Edinburgh says:

"At least a third of all stroke patients could be eligible to receive fluoxetine. It could enhance limb strength, memory, communication and participation in daily activities. So this drug could be really important in stroke recovery."

AVERT (A Very Early Rehabilitation Trial) is an international study which published its initial findings earlier this year. We helped fund the UK arm of AVERT.

Professor Peter Langhorne, University of Glasgow, and lead investigator of AVERT-UK says:



"We found that early rehabilitation was safe, with low death and low complication rates in the vast majority of patients. This is a testament to the modern stroke unit care these patients received."

Results from AVERT have the potential to transform clinical practice in the early stages after stroke, worldwide.

The ATTEST trial is investigating a new clot-busting drug called tenecteplase compared to the current drug alteplase for improved performance in breaking down clots immediately after stroke.



We funded a positive pilot trial, and have now gone on to co-fund the definitive trial with the British Heart Foundation (BHF).

Professor Keith Muir, University of Glasgow and Principal Investigator says:

“Every minute is crucial in treating stroke and we need better treatment options. Any treatment that is easier to deliver and potentially safer could mean the difference between a good recovery and someone suffering seriously debilitating long term effects.”

We also funded the original pilot phase of PISTE which follows a number of recent trials which have shown that mechanical devices can be safe and effective for the retrieval of clots in the early hours of stroke, greatly benefitting patient outcomes when used in addition to standard care.

PISTE aims to confirm that these findings can be replicated in a UK NHS environment.

Thanks to the successful pilot, the National Institute for Health Research, Health Technology Assessment Programme is now funding the definitive trial. Professor Keith Muir, University of Glasgow and Principal Investigator says:

“The success of the PISTE start-up phase allowed us to achieve further funding from HTA to take forward research in this important developing field.”

What's coming up next?

We are taking our pledge towards building the stroke research leaders of tomorrow one step further.

As part of a new lectureship programme, we are funding two outstanding, clinical researchers in Scotland:

- In collaboration with the Chief Scientist Office (CSO), we will be supporting the Senior Clinical Lectureship of Dr Terry Quinn at the University of Glasgow. He will be exploring how to identify and treat problems of mood, thinking and memory after a stroke.
- In partnership with the Garfield Weston Foundation, we are supporting Dr Fergus Doubal at the University of Edinburgh to undertake a Senior Clinical Lectureship. He will be exploring how to improve trials of new treatments for stroke and dementia.



Our new Priority Programme Awards aim to address critical gaps in stroke research evidence, and include an award co-funded with the CSO in Scotland:

- Dr Terry Quinn has recently received the new, joint Stroke Association & CSO Priority Programme Award to further his research into the psychological consequences of stroke.

One of our clinical research fellows has also been awarded follow-on funding from the CSO in Scotland:

- Dr Yvonne Chun, University of Edinburgh, began her clinical research with one of our Princess Margaret Research Development Fellowships. She has recently won a CSO Clinical Academic Fellowship to continue her work investigating post-stroke anxiety.



Dr William Whiteley, who leads on the Princess Margaret Research Development programme at the University of Edinburgh, says:

"This award supports clinical fellows to develop skills and gather pilot work to put them in a strong position for competitive research training fellowships from large funders, such as the CSO. It has also supported the annual Edinburgh Stroke Winter School. The School offers intensive training in the methods of clinical stroke research, and so far 19 Fellows have been through the program."

Scotland has delivered stroke research of exceptional quality and clinical relevance and we are proud to have funded such important work. We look forward to continuing our support for stroke research across Scotland and collaborating with exceptionally talented researchers, other key funders and institutions.

Together we can conquer stroke.

We are the Stroke Association

The Stroke Association is the leading stroke charity in the UK. We believe in the power of research to save lives, prevent stroke and ensure that people make the best recovery they can after a stroke.

We're here for you. If you'd like to know more, please get in touch.

Stroke Helpline: 0303 3033 100

Website: stroke.org.uk

Email: info@stroke.org.uk

From a textphone: 18001 0303 3033 100

Our research programme relies on voluntary donations.

Please help us to fund more vital research.

Call our Donations line on **0300 3300740**,

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Together we can conquer stroke.

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