



ADVANCING PRIMARY CARE: UNIT OF ACADEMIC PRIMARY CARE STRATEGIC PLAN

CONTEXT

Primary Care. Under-resourced. Over-stretched. Challenged by a diverse ageing population, growing numbers of patients with long term conditions and multi-morbidity, increasing need and demand, workforce shortfalls and financial constraints.

Creative ideas, innovation and new models of care are urgently needed, supported by excellent education and research.

Warwick's Unit of Academic Primary Care (UAPC) was established in 2017 under the leadership of Head of Unit Professor Jeremy Dale, to play a central role in advancing primary care, patient and community health.

We aim to push boundaries, challenge assumptions, and create new solutions.

The UAPC integrates primary care and public health approaches to individuals and communities through its multidisciplinary activities, drawing on the methods of community-oriented primary care.

Through research, education and innovation our goal is to develop new interventions, evidence and teaching practices that are sustainable and address the future health needs of individuals, families and communities in the UK and internationally.

We work closely with patients and the public, general practice and other primary care and secondary care providers, commissioners of services and policy makers. Our networks include over 50 research active practices and a similar number of practices involved in undergraduate teaching. We also actively engage with GP specialist training and supporting wider workforce development.

Our Vision

Excellence in Primary Care innovation, research and education to improve the health of individuals and communities

Our Mission

We undertake world class research and education, focused on creating and sharing knowledge, skills and interventions important to improving Primary Care and the health of people, locally, nationally and globally

Our Values

Commitment to Impact and excellence - Our key purpose is beneficial impact for patients and communities within the UK and internationally.

Dynamic and enterprising – We strive for excellence in all that we do and encourage thinking and activity that goes beyond traditional boundaries or paradigms.

Involving patients and the public - We engage with the public, respecting and valuing diversity of perspectives in all of our work, including disseminating our knowledge and research findings.

Respect, integrity and inclusivity - Our culture is one of informality, teamwork and friendliness in which our staff and students are valued and treated fairly and with dignity. We promote diversity across all our activities. We are committed to the highest standards of honesty, integrity, openness and professionalism in all of our activities. We are outward looking and seek partners with whom we can work effectively.

Realising individual potential - We actively support our staff and students to realise their potential and career aspirations. We uphold Athena SWAN principles and practices, with equality of opportunity for all in relation to our research, teaching and working practices. We support part-time working, flexible working and a healthy attitude to work-life balance.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Our strategy focuses on:

- **Advancing primary care through research, education and innovation**
- **Promoting leadership and continued professional development among our staff and students**
- **Developing strategic partnerships to support our work**
- **Embedding public and patient involvement as central to our activities**

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

The UAPC undertakes world-leading primary care research. We have substantial methodological expertise relevant to primary care research, including intervention development, qualitative and quantitative methodologies as well as leadership and teaching skills. We work closely with the NIHR CRN primary care research team for our area, giving us access to over 50 research active general practices in addition to research nurses, research facilitators and GP research champions.

PATIENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Involving patients and the public is central to the work that we do. In addition to including patient and public representation on individual projects we host a panel of individuals, through our public facing [Patient and Public Community Hub](#), who are interested in the work of the UAPC and willing to be consulted at short notice on research ideas. This group is kept informed about the work of the Unit and opportunities to be involved as a PPI member of individual projects through the distribution of a quarterly newsletter.

OUR RESEARCH THEMES

The UAPC's research strengths lie in the fields of complex interventions, pragmatic clinical trials, global health, digital health, epidemiology, ethics and decision-making. Our research focuses on the following four thematic areas in the context of primary care:

1. Digital Primary Care

Research Theme Lead: [Dr Helen Atherton](#)

Primary care settings globally are increasingly making use of digital tools and routes of access for patients to schedule and receive care, and this use has increased with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the digital primary care team we conduct research that critically evaluates the development, implementation and use of digital tools and routes of access in primary care settings. Our team utilises both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. We collaborate nationally and internationally with digital health researchers and our research has a direct impact on patient care and policy.

Our research covers three key areas as follows. [Please visit our theme webpage](#) to explore projects and studies currently being undertaken.

Digital Access to Primary Care

We conduct research that explores and evaluates digital routes of access to primary care and the consultation.

Digital Intervention

We engage in research that evaluates the use of digital interventions to support and improve patient care.

Digital Tools and Data Science

We utilize large scale NHS datasets and routinely collected NHS data to answer the key research questions facing primary care.

2. Women, Families and Primary Care

Research Theme Lead: [Dr Sarah Hillman](#)

Our research spans women's health needs throughout their life course from adolescent, preconception and perinatal health to longer-term health including around the menopause transition. Within this theme we also include research around the health needs of children and their carers and the wider family including the needs of older adults. Work includes prevention, diagnosis management, support and access to care.

[Please visit our theme webpage](#) to explore projects and studies currently being undertaken.

3. Life-limiting conditions and dying in the community

Research Theme Lead: [Dr John MacArtney](#)

The Unit's research focuses on the experiences of living and caring for people with life-limiting conditions in the community. Our work moves between primary and specialist palliative care and uses quantitative and qualitative methodologies to explore the clinical and social issues of dying. We collaborate closely with Marie Curie Hospice in Solihull, local ICSs, and hospital trusts. We are also a co-founding unit for [BRHUmB](#) - Building a Research Hub for Palliative Care in Birmingham and the West Midlands – an initiative that links us to palliative care researchers across the region.

[Please visit our theme webpage](#) to explore projects and studies currently being undertaken.

4. Quality and Safety in Primary Care

Research Theme Lead: [Dr Rachel Spencer](#)

We conduct research which answers important quality and safety questions in primary care. Our research aims to improve primary care systems to produce meaningful impacts on patient care and health policy. Our novel research on improving patients health literacy as a patient safety strategy is supported through our [PPI-E networks](#). We have links with [Warwick Business School](#) to support this theme by providing human factors and NHS management expertise.

[Please visit our theme webpage](#) to explore projects and studies currently being undertaken.

EDUCATION

Research

In cross-collaboration with our four academic themes we also produce educational research across the undergraduate and postgraduate spectrum. Recent projects include:

- [Post-CCT GP Fellowships in Urgent and Acute Care. Evaluation of pilots in the West Midlands and transfer to London and South-East](#)
- [Resilience Programme](#)
- [Understanding career plans of GPs.](#)

Teaching

The Unit of Academic Primary Care (UAPC) is actively engaged with both undergraduate and postgraduate education across the Medical School together with research student supervision.

Our undergraduate teaching is extremely highly rated by students, and we have nationally and internationally recognised programmes of CPD and Masters level courses focused on diabetes. Our Certificate in Diabetes Care, for example, has been undertaken and completed by over 14,000 healthcare professionals.

Through our undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing professional development programs we aim to provide high-quality opportunities to learn about and engage with primary care, its challenges and opportunities.

Undergraduate

We are thoroughly embedded in undergraduate education on both the MBChB and Health and Medical Sciences BSc. Our staff contribute to modules in all three years of the HMS BSc, including: illness, wellbeing, palliative care, methods of enquiry, interactions and supervise dissertation projects. We have designed quality learning materials including persisting e-learning objects, and contribute to exam setting and marking. UAPC members have contributed to module leadership.

Students undertaking the MBChB at Warwick Medical School have two opportunities to experience learning in the General Practice environment. We focus not only on the development of communication and examination skills but also on the students' abilities to problem solve and manage patients. We co-ordinate all of these placements across the multiple practice entities than exist locally.

In Phase II (second year), students have 22 days split over 3 different practices. The second is in Phase III (final year) when they have 18 days spent at one practice.

In Phase III, students also undertake 9 days of in-house intensive teaching by our GP Clinical Fellows which further enhances advanced communication skills and management of complex patients.

The education provided by our GP tutors remains one of the most appreciated learning experiences for the students, as reflected in the feedback collected both by the Medical School and the National Student Survey.

In addition, our staff supervise several SSC2 placement MBChB students each year where we encourage students to assist us with research projects or literature reviews; several lead to quality publications. We also teach throughout the MBChB curriculum on ethics, clinical skills, women's health, research methods and quality improvement.

We are also involved in developing a new undergraduate degree apprenticeship course for health and wellbeing science practitioners as part of a collaboration between the Medical School and the Warwick Manufacturing Group.

Postgraduate and Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

We have a portfolio of Continuing Professional Development, and Taught Masters and Masters by research programmes.

Our evening education programme for newly qualified GPs (New To Practice Programme) led by Prof. Simon Brake is important for developing the upcoming generation of GPs and will lead to long-lasting links important for future strategic development.

We provide support to the Public Health Masters programme, with staff supervising and marking both dissertations and the professional project module.

We deliver diabetes education to healthcare professionals on site at Warwick, offsite around the UK, and through e-learning. The 9-month part time Certificate in Diabetes course offering primary care postgraduate diabetes training has been completed by over 14,000 students and continues to be a highly valued course for GPs, practice nurses and other healthcare professionals delivering diabetes care in the community.

The Diabetes Masters course can be studied either part-time or full-time and is available to take as a Postgraduate Certificate, Diploma or full MSc comprised of 3 and 6 modules respectively.

Doctoral Research Students

Our community of doctoral research students are an integrated and valued part of the Unit. We encourage our students to take full advantage of working in a supportive interdisciplinary research environment, to develop their research interests and expertise, to develop their presentation skills, and to take on collegiate responsibilities. This includes a monthly journal club organised and hosted by doctoral research students and monthly researcher meetings with all researchers from across the unit. We are supportive of students gaining teaching experience.

Our doctoral research students are funded from a range of sources and include students working with industry as part of their studies. We strive to develop students as researchers and to maximise their potential during their time with us.

Academic Clinical Fellows and In-Practice Fellowships

We work with NIHR and HEE to identify and host ACE, IPF and ACL researchers. Through the Integrated Academic Training programme (IAT), we develop future clinical academics in primary care, providing a supportive environment both within the unit and the wider medical school (including a weekly education programme).

Further, by engaging closely with the local health economy and Health Education England, we will proactively develop locally funded programmes. We are developing (with local vocational training schemes) Innovative Training Posts (ITPs), for ST2 level doctors, to experience academic General Practice and develop their research skills.

In addition, we seek funding from statutory and charitable organisations for researchers, including early researchers.

We promote Unit activities and opportunities at local, national and international events.

PROMOTING LEADERSHIP AMONG OUR FACULTY AND STUDENTS

Developing the leadership skills of our staff and students is a key goal for the Unit. We actively promote the leadership courses available within the University of Warwick for those looking for formal training. Recognising the need for day-to-day opportunities for leadership we offer these for both staff and postgraduate students, for example, we use a rotating chair in our monthly researcher meetings.

With a proven track record in supporting our research staff and postgraduate students to independence, we provide the time and support to lead their own research, appropriate to their ability. We encourage research staff to engage with teaching, with opportunities to obtain a teaching qualification available within the University. We encourage our teaching staff to consider the opportunities we offer to engage in research, with active membership of the newly formed Medical Education Research Community at Warwick Medical School.

Students are regarded as key contributors to Unit activity. We offer support to medical students wishing to engage with primary care research, for example by supervising student projects, hosting undergraduate research support scheme projects and encouraging students to attend major conferences.

We support the Warwick Medical School General Practice Society, encouraging medical students to exhibit leadership in promoting general practice as a career choice.

DEVELOPING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS TO SUPPORT OUR WORK

We have close ties with primary care academic teams and units throughout the UK and internationally, local NHS trusts and commissioners, Health Education England, the Royal College of General Practitioners, the Society for Academic Primary Care, as well as local authorities and numerous third sector organisations. Together, we use our global reach to increase our international networks in promoting primary care globally as well as locally.

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