

NIHR CLINICAL RESEARCH NETWORK APPOINTS LIFE-SCIENCES DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

The National Institute for Health Research Clinical Research Network Coordinating Centre has appointed Dr Matt Cooper as Life-Sciences Development Director - a newly-created position.

In this important "new business" role, Dr Cooper will work in the UK and internationally to promote the NIHR Clinical Research Network, enhance its relationships with industry companies and contract research organisations across the globe, and encourage the life-sciences sector to place more studies in the UK on the back of improved performance.

The NIHR Clinical Research Network is the study delivery arm of the NHS. It invests some £300m each year into an infrastructure of specially-trained clinical research nurses and other clinical professionals across England, to support rapid study set-up and patient identification/recruitment into clinical research studies. In recent years, the Network has placed a particular focus on its support for the commercial life-sciences industry, which has resulted in year-on-year improvements in patient recruitment numbers for industry studies.

The appointment of a Life-Sciences Development Director represents the next stage in the Network's programme of work around the government's growth agenda. This programme has already seen the Network forge an international marketing relationship with UK Trade & Industry, promote the UK as a study destination at a series of conferences and trade missions, and attend meetings with the global HQ personnel of commercial life-sciences companies. As Life-Sciences Development Director, Matt will add new impetus and focus to this activity, helping the Network deliver the NIHR's ambition of "health and wealth for the nation."

Matt Cooper brings a wealth of experience to the post, having been part of the Network structure for many years. Prior to the Network's recent restructure, he was a member of the leadership team for the National Cancer Research Network, where he helped to improve patient recruitment to the extent that one in five patients diagnosed with cancer now participate in clinical research - a figure without compare in any other country. He was also influential in developing alliances between industry and academic researchers to explore innovative uses for new compounds - an initiative he hopes to extend into new therapy areas in his new role.

Following the Network's restructure, Matt has held the post of Divisional Research Delivery Director: Cancer, and he will continue to spend some time working specifically with the Network's cancer team, although the majority of his time will be spent on developing new business opportunities across the full spectrum of the Network's 30 specialty areas.

Commenting on the appointment, Jonathan Sheffield, CEO of the NIHR Clinical Research Network, said:

"Over this last year the Network has made huge strides in its ability to deliver industry studies to time and target. That gives us the perfect platform to go out and really sell the UK - and the Network - to industry on an international basis. From our conversations to date we have found that the picture global HQs have of the UK market has not kept pace with the improvements we have made over recent times. Through the post of the Life-Sciences Development Director, we will show industry decision-makers the evidence to prove that they can now place their studies here with confidence."

Matt Cooper said:

"The government's Life-Sciences Strategy was clear about the importance of the life-sciences industry to the UK's economic growth, so it is vital that we do everything we can to realize that strategy in practice. I am looking forward to promoting the Network as part of the wider NIHR infrastructure that provides support for industry R&D from bench to bedside."