

## Researchers join forces to battle bureaucracy

... a need to differentiate between clinical and organisational research...



**SDO Programme Commissioning Managers Phil Restarick, Michael Yates, Donna Cox and Barbara Langridge had their hands full administering close on 200 proposals associated with the SDO programme's first Limited Open Call Scheme: see full story on page 2.**

Unwieldy and bureaucratic processes are leading to considerable delays in research project delivery according to speakers at a recent SDO seminar on research bureaucracy.

The seminar was held towards the end of last year, in collaboration with the NHS Confederation. It was called to help define the scope of the bureaucracy problem and to devise strategies to tackle unnecessary research bureaucracy. It also provided an opportunity to examine the problems experienced by researchers in obtaining ethics committee approval and fulfilling research governance regulations.

"Good governance is vital to ensuring public confidence in health services research. But, unfortunately, the current system doesn't appear to be working as intended," said Dr Naomi Fulop, Director of the SDO National Co-ordinating Centre.

The seminar highlighted widespread agreement that the problem was particularly serious in relation to multi-centre health services research and research that did not include direct clinical interventions.

One important outcome from the seminar was the development of a joint submission outlining the current situation. The statement, which has been sent to the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on NHS Research Ethics Committees, said: "We have clear evidence that the current ethics/governance processes as currently implemented sometimes does more harm than good by wasting resources, delaying valuable research and discouraging talented people from undertaking research"

The submission goes on to call for a number of new measures such as the introduction of a uniform set of forms, a single simplified process and a more appropriate basis for research governance applications.

"The SDO Programme's work has been severely affected by current research governance requirements in terms of lengthy delays to funded projects and consequent delays in providing research findings to end users of research," added Dr Fulop.

Seminar delegates welcomed Health Minister Lord Warner's recent announcement that he had appointed a senior official to undertake a review of the system of NHS Research Ethics Committees, but called on the government to extend the official's remit to include research governance issues too.

After the seminar the Guardian's social affairs editor, David Brindle, wrote: "A big part of the problem is undoubtedly that rules designed for clinical research are being applied across the board. In the end, as one wits-end researcher put it, there is a world of difference between seeking to inject green dye into someone and wanting to look at their records".

Guidance issued by the Department of Health last year calls on the NHS to manage risk, minimise bureaucracy and facilitate research. There are many, however, who think this message is not getting across.

On a more positive note there are now strong indications that the Department of Health is keen to explore the possibility of a 'one-stop shop' for related checks, leading to a type of 'research passport' that NHS bodies would hopefully accept.

We will keep you posted on future developments.

## Director's message



During November the SDO Programme, in collaboration with the NHS Confederation, hosted a research bureaucracy seminar

which examined problems experienced by researchers in obtaining ethics committee approval and fulfilling research governance regulations.

There was a general opinion that unwieldy, bureaucratic processes were resulting in considerable delays to project delivery.

Research funders, researchers and interested parties made good use of the opportunity not only to share their personal experiences, but also to assist in the development of a statement on the issue.

A subsequent letter was sent to the responsible minister, Lord Warner, as well as the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on NHS Research Ethics Committees. We are hoping for a positive outcome.

Over the past six months the SDO Programme has continued to develop its communications programme, which included the finalisation of an interactive *Developing Change Management Skills* resource pack which has proved most popular.

There are also a number of new briefing papers, summarising latest research, in various stages of production due for publication.

We are expanding our partnerships with other health service organisations, most recently with the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE). Working with NICE, we are in the process of identifying SDO research requests to assist the development of NICE guidance.

Through such partnerships, we aim to increase the effectiveness of research findings in improving practice.

I thank you for your continued interest in the SDO Programme.

**Dr Naomi Fulop**  
Director, NCCSDO

## Open Call initiative attracts close on 200 proposals

The SDO Programme's first-ever Limited Open Call Scheme (LOCS) attracted close on 200 proposals from prominent researchers and institutions across the country. The closing date for applications was January 26.

"I am delighted by the response and hope that this results in some really innovative pieces of research that contribute towards the provision of top class UK health services," says SDO Programme manager, Pamela Baker.

LOCS, relatively rare in healthcare organisation and development research, was made possible by additional grant funding from the Department of Health last year. It followed close on the heels of Health Secretary John Reid's March announcement promising an additional £100 million per year by 2008 towards health care research and development in targeted areas.

### SDO responds with broad-based funding mechanism

In response, the SDO Programme developed a new funding scheme which called on potential applicants to submit outline applications based on the UK Clinical Research Collaboration's (UKCRC) stated research priority areas of Alzheimer's, stroke, diabetes, mental health and medicines for children.

Applicants were also required to show linkages to current SDO Programme themes (*see shaded box*).

Potential applicants were also encouraged to explore possible extensions to existing or potentially emergent service delivery issues, once again, consistent with SDO Programme research themes.

Once assessed, projects of anything up to three years duration could stand to attract a maximum £300,000 in funding.

The application process has been divided into two stages, with outline proposals having been invited in the first instance.

Up to 10 projects are expected to be funded during the first round, with further calls for funding expected in the spring.

### SDO Themes

- Patient and Carer-Centred Services
- Workforce Issues
- Models of Service Delivery
- Change Management
- Studying Health Care Organisations
- Methodology Development

## Commissioned projects update

### E-Health

E-health has recently emerged as a priority topic for the SDO Programme from work we have undertaken with our stakeholders.

The area of E-health is potentially vast, and in the SDO Programme we are defining it broadly. E-health is "the health services organisation and societal approach to health and health services which result from the introduction of, and increasing access to, new digital technologies: including the Internet, other computerised networks and tele- or distant health care facilitated by new digital technologies."

The SDO Programme initiated a programme of work on E-health and the two scoping exercises have now reported. One, a literature review and conceptual map of the area, was undertaken by

Dr Claudia Pagliari at the University of Edinburgh. The other is a description of the policy context and a consultation with stakeholders by Professor Ray Jones, University of Plymouth. The reports have informed the forthcoming call for proposals under this research theme.

Both reports are available at:  
[www.sdo.lshtm.ac.uk/ehealth.htm](http://www.sdo.lshtm.ac.uk/ehealth.htm)

### Additional capacity

The SDO Programme plans, within the next few weeks, to appoint new part-time research associates to assist the programme's lead academics with the preparation of research briefs and strategies for the dissemination of results.

# SDO publications update

Further information on all of the publications is available at:  
[www.sdo.lshtm.ac.uk/publications.htm](http://www.sdo.lshtm.ac.uk/publications.htm)

## 1. Key Lessons for Network Management in Health Care

Clinical networks represent a change in ways of organising services and managers face special challenges in organising and making them work.

This report, drawn from a systematic review of networks across both public and private sectors, reveals important messages for network management in health care.

The research findings provided in this briefing paper are based on two longer reports by 6 P, Goodwin N, Peck E, Freeman T and Posaner R.

All currently available documentation can be accessed at: [www.sdo.lshtm.ac.uk/studyinghealthcare.htm](http://www.sdo.lshtm.ac.uk/studyinghealthcare.htm)

## 2. A Proper Break: Effective Respite Services for Carers of People with Dementia

This briefing paper summarises findings of a literature review and consultation which examined ways to improve respite services and short-term breaks for people with dementia and is based on a report by Arksey *et al* (2004).

The briefing paper and full report can be downloaded at: [www.sdo.lshtm.ac.uk/carers.htm](http://www.sdo.lshtm.ac.uk/carers.htm)

## 3. Spreading and Sustaining Innovations in Health Service Delivery and Organisation

This briefing paper presents the main findings of a systematic review of the literature on the spread and sustainability of innovations in health service delivery and organisation and is based upon a report by Greenhalgh *et al* (2004).

An article 'Diffusion of Innovations in Service Organizations: Systematic Review and Recommendations' resulting from this study was published in Millbank Quarterly in December 2004.

The briefing paper and full report can be downloaded at: [www.sdo.lshtm.ac.uk/changemanagement.htm](http://www.sdo.lshtm.ac.uk/changemanagement.htm)

## 4. Access to Health Care for Carers

A summary of findings of a literature review which examined the barriers to and ways to improve access to health care for people with learning disabilities. This briefing paper is based upon a report by Arksey *et al* (2004).

This briefing paper and full report can be downloaded at: [www.sdo.lshtm.ac.uk/access.htm](http://www.sdo.lshtm.ac.uk/access.htm)

## 5. Developing Change Management Skills: A Resource for Health Care Professionals and Managers

On 25 November 2004 the SDO Programme launched a further publication under the 'Managing Change in the NHS' banner, entitled: 'Developing Change Management Skills: A Resource for Health Care Professionals and Managers' by V Iles and S Cranfield.

This publication and web-based resource aims to help those leading change in health care to use the literature in this field to inform practice by:

- describing some of the relevant theories and approaches that have been used to guide change management
- illustrating the use of these theories in practice in a variety of settings in health
- encouraging readers to reflect on and evaluate change processes and how they might apply these to different settings.

## 6. Studying the Organisation and Delivery of Health Services

On 26 October 2004 the SDO Programme officially launched 'Studying the Organisation and Delivery of Health Services: A Reader' edited by Aileen Clarke, Pauline Allen, Stuart Anderson, Nick Black and Naomi Fulop.

The book brings together thirty examples of high-quality research into service delivery and organisation using a range of methods and from a wide range of disciplines, including organisational studies, epidemiology, sociology, history, health economics, anthropology and policy studies. Expert editorial commentary highlights different themes and methodological issues.

# News in brief

## SDO Symposia

In November 2004 the SDO Programme hosted two symposia on Continuity of Care and Evaluating Models of Service Delivery and Organisation in London. These events, which attracted between 30 and 40 researchers each, proved a useful forum for sharing interim findings and discussing methodological and conceptual issues.

## Chief Executive's Forum

A total of 23 guests attended the SDO Programme's most recent Chief Executive's Forum. Dr Rod Sheaff, Senior Researcher at Manchester University gave a presentation on 'Organisational Factors and Performance: A Review of the Literature', and Professor Huw Davies, Deputy Director of the SDO Programme, presented a piece on 'Understanding the Spread of Good Ideas'. The next Forum meeting is scheduled for May 12, 2005.

Facilitated by Malcolm Lowe-Laurie (Chief Executive, King's College Hospital) the forum – which meets every six months – acts as an intermediary body promoting research findings to NHS Trusts and giving advice to the SDO Programme and academics on NHS research priorities.

## Publication nominated for award

A recent article entitled: 'Diffusion of Innovations in Service Organizations: Systematic Review and Recommendations', resulting from Greenhalgh *et al*'s: Spreading and Sustaining Innovations in Health Service Delivery and Organisation, was published in Millbank Quarterly in December 2004. It has since been nominated for Academy of Management Paper of the Year Award. [www.millbank.org/quarterly.html](http://www.millbank.org/quarterly.html)

# Delivering Research for Better Health Services

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## ABOUT THE SDO PROGRAMME

The NHS Service Delivery and Organisation (SDO) R&D Programme is a national programme of research funded as part of the Department of Health's research and delivery agenda.

The SDO Programme has been established to consolidate and develop the evidence base on the organisation, management and delivery of health care services.

The National Co-ordinating Centre for the SDO Programme (NCCSDO) is based at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and manages the SDO Programme.

For further information about the NCCSDO or the SDO Programme visit our website at: [www.sdo.lshtm.ac.uk](http://www.sdo.lshtm.ac.uk)

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In order to produce a newsletter that is both informative and newsworthy your feedback would be greatly appreciated. Please email comments, suggestions or ideas to: [Gary.Sutter@lshtm.ac.uk](mailto:Gary.Sutter@lshtm.ac.uk) or call 020 7612 7984.



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