

CASE STUDY - Stroke Nurse Alison goes from strength to strength thanks to CLAHRC NWC.



Developing the research capacity and capability of frontline NHS care providers and their staff is a key principle of the Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health and Research Care North West Coast's (CLAHRC NWC) work.

Alison McLoughlin (*pictured, left*), an Academic Research Nurse, joined CLAHRC NWC for a research internship, tackling health inequalities in stroke care provision, in 2016.

She has now reached another career milestone having secured a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Doctoral Fellowship in 2018. The NIHR Doctoral Fellowship is a three year full-time award that supports individuals to undertake a PhD in an area of research, relevant to the NHS, its

stakeholders and users.

Alison explains: "I have worked in clinical and multidisciplinary academic research since 2008, developing knowledge and skills which are an ideal platform for becoming an independent researcher. My initial role as a stroke research nurse involved recruiting to, and working on, a range of clinical trials and academically sponsored research studies."

"Over the years my role had developed and was more generic with an overall aim of increasing research capacity and capability at Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (LTHTR). I have showcased my fellowship research plan to colleagues at the Trust and will be working in collaboration with both them, and neighbouring NHS organisations during my research. Having that link with frontline colleagues makes the research grounded in the 'real' world."



“Doing a CLAHRC NWC internship was a positive opportunity for me to take a step towards achieving a doctoral fellowship and making a valuable contribution towards a field of patient care I really feel passionately about. It helped shape how I scripted my fellowship proposal and gave me an insight into literature reviews, project planning and learning about applying different research methods.”

Alison’s research, titled *Standardised Neurological Observation Schedule for Stroke (SSNOBS)* will build on the work of Professor David Barer, and develop a consistent plan of how the neurological effects of stroke are recorded and monitored over time (neurological observation schedule). Designed to promptly identify any changes and decide what should be done if the patient’s condition gets worse (a response protocol) with the aim of improving outcomes for patients.

“I have long appreciated the impact of stroke for patients, their families, health and social care. Stroke is the area in which I have specialised and I take every available opportunity to expand my networks, knowledge and skills. Four in ten people will deteriorate after coming into hospital with a stroke. Many of these patients could benefit if this deterioration was detected and treated early to prevent long term effects.” The stakeholder group meetings will be influential in informing the approach to service re-design, delivery and staff training. The research will allow the development of individualised services to improve patients’ experience and outcomes after stroke, and to reduce health inequalities. Although this research focuses on stroke survivors, some of the findings may be transferable to other disease groups.



Alison has presented her work at the NIHR Academy Conference in November 2018 (pictured, left) and sections from her NIHR Fellowship application have been used as beacons of good practice for fellow applicants by the NIHR Academy Executive.

“I really cannot believe that I am an NIHR Doctoral Research

Fellow. It is an amazing opportunity. I intend to grasp it with both hands to achieve the best possible outcomes in terms of the project, improvement in patient care and my personal development.”

Alison will be conducting her research as part of the Stroke Research at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), the only nurse-led stroke research group in the UK.



Led by Professor Dame Caroline Watkins (*pictured, left*), this prolific and experienced multi-disciplinary team of researchers delivers programmatic pure and applied research across several domains. The team has an international, stroke research profile

Professor Watkins, also Director of Capacity Building and Implementation for CLAHRC NWC, said: “To have witnessed Alison’s hard work on her journey from internship to doctoral fellowship has been really pleasing. I look forward to seeing her research outputs making a valuable contribution towards reducing

health inequalities in stroke care provision. With the launch of the new NHS long term plan in 2019, Alison’s research is both timely and topical and a great example of capacity building in action.”

Partners:

