

Becoming Research Active:

Overview

The motivation for Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) to become active in research has never been so strong. Engagement in research enables AHPs to lead research which impacts clinical practice and improves patient care. These top ten tips represent an accessible overview of how to **become research active** and highlight some of the barriers and enablers to research activity. The tips are written by research active AHPs, some of whom are currently undertaking doctoral studies or have recent experience of successfully completing a doctorate in clinically related research.

Tip 1 – What does being research active mean?

Being research active means you have an appreciation of how research can benefit patient care and outcome. Being active in research can mean everything from having a research idea, designing a study protocol, engaging in journal clubs, attending or presenting at conferences, responding to drafts and calls to participate in research, being involved in data collection or analysis and implementing research findings.

Tip 2 – How can I get involved with research?

There are many ways to get involved in research and there is no 'right' way of doing this. Make a start by finding out what is happening in your area of interest. Contact people who may be able to help such as local research and development teams, researchers at work, NIHR (National Institute for Health Research) CAHPR AHP Research Champions and universities. Your professional body or CAHPR can also direct you to a suitable mentor. Online courses and research modules are also a helpful way to get involved.

Tip 3 – What are the challenges?

Employer support for research varies greatly. Service demands and organisational culture may make it difficult for you to get involved in research. Some of the practical barriers which may hinder your journey into research include time, lack of funding, difficulty balancing a research career with clinical work and access to training. You may also experience challenges in identifying a project, finding a mentor and accessing peer support.

Tip 4 – What are the enablers?

It is important to find good mentors to support and guide you in the first steps. This may involve attending post-graduate courses to develop research skills. Research communities (e.g. NIHR, CAHPR, Healthcare Professionals in Research Facebook community, Research and Development (R&D), Clinical Research Network (CRN)) will provide connections, guidance and peer support. The Research Design Service (RDS) is another excellent resource to provide advice and signposting on research.

Tip 5 – Research pathways

Although not essential, following a research framework (e.g. the Health Education England (HEE) Clinical Academic Career Framework) will help you to develop key research and clinical skills. Alternative pathways exist but are less well known. These tend to be profession, condition/disease or region specific. Your professional body, charities and local Research and Development teams will be able to signpost you to these opportunities.

Tip 6 – Funding your research

Knowing where to find funding can be challenging if you are new to research, but there are lots of people willing and able to help. Reach out to your mentor, a research active peer, potential supervisor or R&D department for guidance. Your professional body, health research organisations (e.g. NIHR, NIHR Applied Research collaborations (ARC) and CAHPR) have funding opportunities. However, you may not need your own funding. You may be able to join other team/project with existing funds. For people new to research, there are a NIHR internship opportunities which provide protected research time to undertake small research projects.

Tip 7 – How do I prepare for a career in research?

Network by seeking a mentor through your professional body, contacting your local Research & Development (R&D) Team and/or local CAHPR hubs. Twitter has a huge community of AHP active researchers. Search for [#AHPsInResearch](#) or [@OfficialCAHPR](#) in the first instance.

Your local R&D Team will tell you about research projects being delivered locally. This may provide opportunities to collect data or deliver treatment for a research study. Contributing to a systematic review or writing up publications are a great way to learn more about research (see <http://www.icmje.org/> for guidance regarding authorship roles and responsibilities).

Tip 8 – Opportunities and Expectations

Don't assume that everyone knows what you're doing. Put yourself out there. Discuss your research interest with your line manager so they can support you. Share your findings and experiences by presenting to colleagues and at conferences. Get creative: posters are a great conversation starter. Social media is a great place to learn, make contacts and canvas opinion.

Tip 9 – Considerations for further research

Making a difference to clinical care by leading your own research requires doctoral research training. Consider the type of doctorate you may want to do (i.e. full time, part time or a professional doctorate).

Read around your area of interest to develop your curiosity and talk to other doctoral students to understand what is involved. You will need to develop a deep understanding of research philosophies, methods and ethics.
Use your network to discuss your ideas and shape your proposal. The NIHR Research Design Service may also be helpful in this regard.

Tip 10 – Free resources

There are many resources that are freely accessible if you are interested in becoming or are already research active.

The Council for Allied Health Professions Research (CAHPR) have accessible **Top Ten Tips** which include simple tips on research implementation, preparing a poster, getting an abstract accepted for publication or navigating doctoral studies

<https://cahpr.csp.org.uk/content/cahpr-top-ten-tips>.

There is also an online **Facebook community** for Healthcare Professionals in Research (HPiR) supported by CAHPR

<https://cahpr.csp.org.uk/news/2019-09-26-healthcare-professionals-research-facebook-group-launched>

Check out a **Podcast** to complement these ten top tips

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtJHtZRvQ9g>

For contact details about your local hub and for further information about **cahpr** please visit our website <https://cahpr.csp.org.uk>

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