

The only comments that I have to make at this stage are two general ones.

Appalling sums are currently spent in the UK on evaluating research proposals. As has been quantitatively seen in a recent study carried out on research proposal evaluation in Sweden, the sums exceed what is actually disbursed for carrying out the research (they are of the same order of magnitude, the cost of evaluation being somewhat more than 50% of total funds available). The real expenditure on my evaluation is moreover underestimated because much of the work involved in both writing and reviewing the proposals is actually unpaid.

Therefore, a very important element in ensuring that available funds are well spent in accord with the entirely laudable aim of "ensuring that the UK remains at the forefront of innovation in this area of science" is to implement a much "lighter" system of disbursing available funding among eligible researchers. This would enable an order of magnitude increase in the degree of innovation.

The second comment concerns funding for that area of work that follows the demonstration of proof-of-principle and/or feasibility in the research laboratory. It has been my own experience, and that of many others, that after having completed a research project and demonstrated something new in the biomedical field, the NHS is not interested because at that stage the apparatus (for example) is only suitable for use in the laboratory. What is needed are funds to construct a prototype suitable for testing in the hospital (or general practice, etc.), and which could then be taken up by an interested manufacturer.

Jeremy Ramsden