

Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust response to the Review of UK Health Research led by Sir David Cooksey

The Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust (RFH) is an active member of the Association of UK University Hospitals (AUKUH), and as such we have contributed to and support the response that AUKUH has made to the questions posed by Sir David. We therefore do not propose to make a separate response to these specific questions, but instead would like to emphasise a general point concerning the importance of the relationship with our university partner.

As a large teaching hospital with a highly rated research portfolio, the RFH is committed to continuing its support for research & development. Indeed, a strategic review undertaken by the Trust within the last year has recognised R&D as part of our core business. In common with many other teaching hospitals, a fundamental component of our success is a long-standing relationship with our university partner (University College London). In practice this means that many of our senior clinical staff are UCL employees whose salaries and support costs are funded in some cases predominantly by UCL, in some cases predominantly by RFH, and often by a combination of the two organisations. Most of these senior staff are research active, in addition to fulfilling important clinical roles. Often they are involved in both basic science research and clinical research, and are thus ideally placed to understand the challenges of translational research.

The exact relationship between University and Trust varies between Departments, but the key objective is that a synergy is achieved that benefits both the Trust and the University. Our Centre for Amyloidosis provides an excellent example. Its staff are predominantly employed by UCL, but the unique national clinical service they provide is based within the Trust and funded by NSCAG. The Centre produces internationally recognised research in both basic and clinical aspects of amyloidosis.

The current reorganisation of NHS R&D creates many opportunities but also a number of important challenges. One of these is the preservation and strengthening of this key link between Trust and University. We believe it is critical that as R&D funding streams are redefined and reorganised, care is taken not to destabilise these carefully and sometimes delicately constructed partnerships. For example, Trusts and Universities should be allowed to determine locally whether research staff funded by NHS R&D (or a new combined MRC/NHS R&D) should be employed and/or based within the Trust or University. Indeed, we believe a policy that actively seeks to strengthen partnerships between Trusts and Universities will be most likely to deliver the highest quality research.

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